



JASCULCA TERMAN
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

River Forest Community Dialogues – 10.9.24 – 600 Block of Thatcher
Notes from Resident Comments

Who was in attendance?

- 15 residents
- Jessica Spencer (Assistant Village Administrator)
- James Chase & Nell DeCoursey Brennan (Jasculca Terman Strategic Communications)

River Forest General

- River Forest is a very walkable community
- Small town feel
- Schools were a draw for many
- Sense of safety
- Many noted high property taxes, but they still wouldn't want to live elsewhere

Future Wants/Concerns

- Timeline for Development
 - One resident stated that developments in Oak Park seem to be announced and completed according to a dependable timeline. They asked if Oak Park and River Forest have different approaches, policies, etc. related to development.
- Information from the Village should be communicated in a wide variety of forms to reflect differing preferences and habits of residents.
 - Opinions of the weekly newsletter were positive
 - Publicize events and other public input opportunities in Wednesday Journal
 - Public meetings should continue. Zoom could be used for development-related presentations to reach more residents who can't attend in-person events.
 - Presentations of development proposals should come early on. Don't wait too far down the line in the process.
- "Pre-developer communications"
 - Showcase the thought process Village leaders been going through about what kinds of development they want to attract and why
 - Communicate the pros and cons for residents to consider
 - Summarize conversations with developers, any input from consultants, marketing studies, etc.

- Village should put out a “straw man argument” for development based on what developers are willing to do within and outside of current standards/zoning. This could give residents something to react to, positively and negatively, and the Village can use that feedback.

Concerns and Wants re: Madison and Ashland Property

- How can we avoid what happened at Lake & Lathrop from happening on this property
 - Village should do more to ensure its approving trustworthy developers
- Commercial
 - High-end, quality restaurant(s)
 - Other residences were opposed to commercial-only development
- Housing on the Lot
 - While a few expressed being okay with condos/50 ft buildings, most of the group was against taller buildings.
 - All agreed there should be a height limit and nothing “monstrous”
 - Avoid the high-rise/city feeling
 - If condos, one resident mentioned the importance of design/architecture, adding that an appealing design may mitigate some residents’ concerns about building height or a general aversion to condo buildings. Other residents chimed in with thoughts on design:
 - Design of the roof should be in keeping with the look and feel of the houses nearby (try to avoid flat-tops that feel like the city)
 - Courtyards
 - Green space
 - Entryways designed with curb appeal in mind
 - “We just want something attractive”
 - Need for more affordable housing options in River Forest
 - Not necessarily the government definition of “affordable housing.” Rather, there’s a general need for more affordable, smaller spaces for people in their late 20s and early 30s
 - Some residents are against a condo building due to concerns it would negatively impact the residences directly next to it
 - Townhomes/rowhouses brought up as a good option
 - Homes at Franklin & Lake mentioned as an example
- Lots/houses close to the property are more impacted, including by small things that may not occur to residents who live further. Nearby residents’ concerns should be prioritized.
- Recreation center
 - Seniors, young adults, and others are missing space dedicated to recreation
- Is there an opportunity to sell the property to the Park District?
- Mixed-Use

- Opportunity to get commercial property tax revenue from business(es) on the first floor
- Others supported a recreation center on the first floor
- No matter what is developed, adequate parking should be considered
 - EV charging should also play a role
 - Busy streets with parked cars around that area currently
- Small number of residents mentioned that trying to get the best amount of tax money should be a priority

Other

- Lake & Lathrop
 - Sense among residents that Village did not do enough due diligence to make sure trustworthy developers were selected
 - Some residents said the experience at Lake & Lathrop has caused the Village to lose credibility when it comes to development issues.
 - In discussing Lake & Lathrop, residents also brought up questions about the empty parcel across from Village Hall, which they say affects the community's perspective similarly—though to a lesser degree than Lake & Lathrop
- Some residents asked if the Village has considered polling/surveys as an option to gather opinions on development
- Town Hall with all River Forest taxing bodies present so residents can hear from everyone in one space. Development affects all taxing bodies, not just the municipality.
 - One resident asked if more collaboration between taxing bodies would be helpful to the Village's efforts