

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE LITCHFIELD PARK PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
May 14, 2019**

I. Call to Order

The meeting was held in the Community Room at the Litchfield Library and called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Chairman Ross.

Members Present: Chairman Ross; Vice Chairman Faith; and Commissioners Alvey, Lawrence, and O'Connor.

Members Absent: Commissioners McCarthy and Ledyard.

Staff Present: Jason Sanks, Planning Consultant; and Pamela Maslowski, Director of Planning Services.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Ross led the pledge.

III. Business

A. City Center Concept Plan and Design Guidelines

Mr. Sanks stated that Scott Phillips, of Destination LP, will be providing a presentation for this item as the project documents originated with his firm through a City working group. The presentation will include two documents that were included in the agenda packet. One is the planning document which includes land use, character, economic development concepts, etc. The other document contains design guidelines for the Center which would help guide development in terms of exterior aesthetics, pedestrian walkways, streetscapes, building architecture, signage, lighting and landscaping. This item is being presented at a special meeting tonight because it is not tied at this time to any rezoning request or being adopted as a specific plan by resolution. It will not be a regulatory document. It is a document that will be presented to Council for possible acceptance. Following that, Staff will probably take the time to prepare General Plan and rezoning requests. However, Staff will not know that for certain until Council acts on the entitlement path/process that the City Attorney has prepared for their review. This item is not on the agenda tonight for action. It is a presentation, and any comments and/or concerns will be noted and presented verbally to Council.

Mr. Phillips explained that his company was brought on to be somewhat of a master planner, with an eye toward also being a developer for the property that the City purchased over a number of years. Development is not part of the current contract, but they have a right to negotiate. They wanted to develop a plan that was viable and acceptable to the community, and he believes they have succeeded.

Mr. Phillips reviewed and discussed his PowerPoint presentation of the City Center Plan:

- The overriding theme is how to build upon the community that is already here. The reason this concept is unique is that they do not have to fabricate anything. The goal is to take what is already here and enhance it.
- Vision and Guiding Principles: These included creating a visual draw; having a place for people to meet; extending the value of Old Litchfield Road; having a mix of uses, but not a dense urban center; providing linkage to the Wigwam and enhancement of the experience; and orienting the project to the quality of life and culture of Litchfield Park.
- Market Conditions: This is a unique opportunity because the quality of life and culture is already established. The retail demographics may not be great, but a lot of retail is now destination-

oriented. They need to find how to attract the right users to the destination concept, and with the right atmosphere, there will be a solid demand for office space. The City owns the property, so the City can make decisions on an ongoing basis and respond to the market. If there is quality, the critical mass will be created to get the project started

- **Public Participation:** The goal was to garner as much information from the community as possible. Community outreach meetings were held, and there were a number of City Manager Working Group meetings, as well as many emails received from the public.
- The Visual Preference Survey found that the community likes green space and quality architecture, but not overly complicated architecture – simple but elegant. Specialty restaurants are desired, but chain stores are not.
- A full build-out conceptual land use layout is included in the Plan. It includes a combination of retail, office, residential, and civic uses, along with a tremendous amount of open space. The concept is that the park will be the center piece of the project.
- **Phasing:** Conceptual layouts for four phases were displayed. Phases one and two are the most certain. He believes they can get the retail and office interest, but it will not be certain until all the marketing is done and there is an understanding of what all the costs will be. His company will have 90 days to negotiate with the City for development rights after the plan is accepted. Their preliminary estimation is that there is a good solid demand for the retail and office in the first phase. It is critical that the park be part of the first phase.
- The City has expressed its desire to relocate major festivals from Old Litchfield Road and Wigwam Boulevard onto the park open space. To help accomplish that, a lot of parking must be accommodated, and some surface parking was included in the first phase. Preliminary programming was done to determine the amount of space that would be needed to accommodate the City's festivals and parking.
- The City Working Group and the community noted that the businesses and buildings need to have access to the open space, and that connected open space is desired. He believes they have accomplished that.
- Phase three includes additional buildings and determination of long term plans for civic facilities. Eventually, there will probably be a need for parking garages, especially when approaching Phase three.
- Architectural modeling/renderings were included and indicate a clean classy look with lots of green space, shade and connectivity. It is not overpowering and fits in well with the community. The density and uses will not be focused on a main street; they will be focused on the park.
- The concept was designed to disburse traffic. They wanted to focus traffic on a few different locations, mostly Litchfield Road and Wigwam Boulevard. They do not want the traffic to spill out into the community.
- Palm trees, like the ones on Old Litchfield Road, will be included. Citrus trees were limited due to maintenance and water use issues. Once site plans are prepared, a deeper look into specific landscape plans will be done. Green plants, grass, palm trees and shade are needed.
- A financial analysis was provided within the plan.
- They are working with the City Engineer to put some more detail on the infrastructure plans. They are also waiting on Liberty Utilities to provide an updated master plan. The existing infrastructure will need to be upgraded and some lines will need to be relocated.
- Sustainability was addressed which will also help to reduce operating costs. Utilizing bioswales, solar, shade, and field turf instead of grass will help.
- Lots of pedestrian routes will be provided.
- The plan was designed to limit vehicular through-traffic. A successful center will require traffic because people will want to get to the project; however traffic through the community needs to be limited. The circulation plan and some access limitation along Village Parkway and Old Litchfield Road will help.
- An implementation plan was included that provides the next steps and phases.

Discussion included:

- The street width is undetermined at this time. Mr. Phillips noted he advocates for narrow streets for walkability. However, there must be a balance between walkability and fire department operations.
- In response to a question regarding public restrooms, Mr. Phillips replied that he believes the City budgeted money for one at Scout Park. Expanding that facility and moving it to the south side of the road has been discussed. For the City's festivals, there are requirements for a certain number of portable facilities, so they identified places on a preliminary program where those could be located.
- Olive trees have been suggested, but they require a lot of maintenance and can be messy. Mr. Phillips noted that they identified Olive trees as accent trees. They will only plant fruitless olive trees, but this comment will be taken under consideration.
- Mr. Sanks stated that the street sections will be studied and determined by the City Engineer, this Commission and City Council before they are adopted. They will be reviewed for safety aspects and aesthetics. The final landscape palette will probably be determined through the Design Guidelines and adopted by ordinance.
- The expanse of dirt on the lot located north of the church has been purchased, and it is currently under construction for a private residence. It was noted that should be designated on the plans as private property.
- One of the slides indicates a parking garage, and it was asked if there could be some retail or something in the front so the garage is not part of the streetscape. Mr. Phillips replied that there should be either a well-developed skin or flexible space built into the bottom floor. Creating a better skin to make it more visually pleasing is a good idea.
- It was asked what is meant by the term "destination" which keeps coming up. Mr. Phillips responded that the "destination" is the park. The park will be the heartbeat of the City Center. Having a feature like that will create the major destination. The other uses and streetscape will also be part of the destination.
- The concept of bringing in waterways and changing the path of the irrigation water sounds like a good idea, but he does not know how it can be done in this space. The project will be oriented toward the community of Litchfield Park. That does not mean that they do not want to attract people from other cities or the Wigwam guests. It will not be the San Antonio River Walk; it is Litchfield Park and specific to Litchfield Park. It will not be a world-wide destination.
- At the last Council meeting, when a water feature was brought up, it was noted that the City has a lake. Some sort of pathway could be created with a trellis or red bricks that could lead people to the lake. It can provide shade and direction.
- Robert Darre, a City resident, commented that this concept fits with what he was looking for when he moved to Litchfield Park. It was worth investing the time and energy to get the plan to where it has become.

Mr. Phillips stated that the set of Design Guidelines were built upon some great work that City Staff had prepared, looking at the land uses, landscaping, architecture, walkability, and all the things expected in quality places and spaces. He then reviewed and discussed the City Center Design Guidelines as part of his PowerPoint presentation. This included:

- The vision history, introduction, goals and location of the project are provided.
- The Guidelines are meant to be illustrative.
- The design concepts were modeled after the current designs of the Wigwam, current retail, and the Church.
- They did not provide information on signage and graphics, but a program for this will be provided in the future. Mr. Sanks noted that Staff will address signage through the Zoning Ordinance.

- They wanted to build in enough flexibility with the site development design to allow the City to get what it wants.
- Parking structures and hiding them or making them fit in is addressed. Skinning them or putting something on the bottom floor, as noted previously, is a good idea.
- The streetscape includes pedestrian walkways. Street furniture, flower pots, lighting, and other interesting items are needed to facilitate people walking around. Cross section samples were included.
- The Architectural Character element was based on comments received. It has been expanded because there are a lot of quality styles that could fit in here. Mr. Sanks noted that the Guidelines will be vetted by the City's Design Review Board.
- Landscape Guidelines were also provided.

It was asked if there will be four way stops or roundabouts at the corners. Mr. Phillips responded that they are looking at all the options. The traffic study indicated that, internally, roundabouts work really well; however he knows there has been some consternation regarding those. It was noted that a greater area is required for the roundabouts. Mr. Phillips stated that he believes that the roundabouts would work well internally, but they have to be cautious of the impacts that might have.

It was asked if a stop light would be required if a new access point is created on Litchfield Road across from Village Parkway. Mr. Phillips replied that some type of traffic control element will be required. A large traffic circle there was once discussed. The traffic study indicates that would be possible but not ideal. They can be disruptive for pedestrians on a larger road, and they want to be sure to facilitate pedestrian accessibility across Litchfield Road.

IV. Adjournment

Vice Chairman Faith **moved** to adjourn; Commissioner Lawrence **seconded; unanimous approval**. The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

APPROVED:

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Frank Ross, Chairman

/pm