

**VILLAGE OF LAKE BLUFF
JOINT PLAN COMMISSION & ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
ARCHITECTURAL BOARD OF REVIEW
JOINT SPECIAL MEETING**

OCTOBER 30, 2019

APPROVED MINUTES

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Village Administrator Drew Irvin called to order a special meeting of both the Joint Plan Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals (PCZBA) and the Architectural Board of Review (ABR) of the Village of Lake Bluff on Wednesday, October 30, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. in the Village Hall Board Room (40 E. Center Avenue).

The following members were present:

PCZBA Members: David Burns
Jill Danly
Susan Rider
Gary Peters, Chair

ABR Members: Edward Deegan
Robert Hunter, Chair

Also Present: Kathleen O'Hara, Village President
Megan Michael, Village Clerk
Drew Irvin, Village Administrator (VA)
Michael Croak, Building Codes Supervisor (BCS)
Glen Cole, Assistant to the Village Administrator (AVA)

2. Non-Agenda Items and Visitors (Public Comment Time)

VA Irvin welcomed the workshop attendees and stated that the Village allocates 15 minutes at each public meeting for those individuals who would like the opportunity to comment on any matter not listed on the agenda. Each person is asked to limit their comments to a maximum of three minutes.

There were no requests to address the meeting.

3. Missing Middle Housing Workshop

Introduction

VA Irvin stated that, periodically, the Village holds workshops to provide an informal setting to discuss new projects, programs, policies, services or ideas. He stated that tonight's workshop is focused on Missing Middle Housing.

He stated that, earlier this year, the Village participated in a design competition focused on Missing Middle Housing organized by the Illinois Chapter of The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU-IL). The goal of the competition was to bring new ideas to real sites within Illinois cities in order to demonstrate how new infill housing --- "missing middle" housing --- can help meet the growing demand for medium scale housing in the greater Chicagoland urban and suburban neighborhoods. Lake Bluff Village leadership viewed this competition as good way for the Village to further our strategic plan objective to "engage the entire community in an examination of what it takes to enjoy a variety of quality housing options."

He introduced two local architects who had agreed to serve as panelists, Rob Douglass and Scott Streightiff. He stated that Larry Booth was to be the third panelist, but that he had unfortunately fallen ill. He also presented representatives of the two firms who had submitted for the Lake Bluff site during the CNU-IL competition – MorganteWilson and Edward Deegan Architects.

Missing Middle Overview

VA Irvin returned to the concept of Missing Middle housing, which he described as a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types that are compatible in scale with detached single-family home. Missing Middle Housing is primarily about the form and scale of these buildings, designed to provide more housing choices in low-rise walkable neighborhoods, although it also tends to be more affordable than other new housing products currently being built. They are called “Missing” because they have typically been illegal to build since the mid-1940s and “Middle” because they sit in the middle of a spectrum between detached single-family homes and mid-rise to high-rise apartment buildings, in terms of form and scale, as well as number of units and often, affordability.

VA Irvin continued to say that, while they are “missing” from new building stock, these types of buildings from the 1920s and 30s are beloved by many who have lived in them. These are two to four flats, bungalow courts, townhomes, granny flats, and mansion apartments. These units provide diverse housing options to support walkable communities, locally-serving retail, and public transportation options.

VA Irvin stated that this critical link in Chicagoland’s housing supply is disappearing in some communities -- and it’s not being developed in others. Generally, development gravitates to either end of spectrum: big, multifamily (often heavily subsidized or geared to a luxury market) or single-family houses, either subdivisions or one offs. Missing housing typologies are not being constructed in current real estate markets because they don’t fit into financial programs and more often than not, they are illegal to build under most local zoning codes.

VA Irvin presented data from the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies that shows major anticipated growth in the number of single persons and married persons without children entering the housing market, especially at older ages. While there would be some growth of millennials married with children in the 35-44 age group, most of the demand will be in these groups that desire smaller housing.

Competition Overview

Turning to the CNU-IL competition, VA Irvin stated that the competition had been modeled after a similar joint exercise in Michigan conducted by CNU and the American Institute of Architects. He listed the competition goals:

- Improve the quality of life in our existing neighborhoods with buildings that enhance the public realm.
- Respect and compliment the site, while being responsive to regional issues, character and materials.
- Utilize affordable and creative design solutions that spur economic development and add local value.
- Demonstrate how proposal meets the needs of society’s shifting demographics and contribute to a diverse neighborhood character.

He stated that the competition was open to designers located anywhere. Competitors were asked to provide a housing solution for one of three predetermined sites and to include a site plan, unit plans, illustrations, and a financial plan (pro forma). This meant they had to not only make it visually compelling but also had to calculate income and expenses, based on local construction costs and housing values, and show a feasible development to construct based on market conditions.

One of the priorities of CNU's site selection was to represent the various types of places in our region that are grappling with missing middle. This included:

- Urban neighborhoods that are trending towards transit-oriented development and losing 2-4 flats at a rapid pace;
- And mid-size cities that can provide a more affordable, urban housing option but often struggle to deliver new or quality housing options; and
- Suburban communities struggling to attract, maintain, and stay affordable to a diverse population.

Thus, CNU selected three sites located in:

- The Albany Park neighborhood of Chicago, just east of the North Branch of the Chicago River and within walking distance to the Brown line.
- Peoria, a mid-size city in central Illinois with a population of approximately 115,000.
- And Lake Bluff, a suburban community of about 6,000 located on the North Shore.

VA Irvin stated that Lake Bluff participated in the competition to:

- Engage the entire community in an examination of what it takes to enjoy a variety of quality housing options (strategic plan initiative)
- Look for new ideas
- Examine how new infill housing can help meet the growing demand for transitional housing
- Improve the Village's tools for communicating the design intent for future redevelopment and evaluating proposals
- Ensure quality development that employs sound planning and design principles
- Identify design elements that should be encouraged in Lake Bluff's downtown
- Continue to promote the themes and characteristics that are unique to Lake Bluff

As part of the competition, CNU developed three example resident profiles to describe who would want to live within a Lake Bluff Missing Middle housing project:

- Ashley is a single female in her mid-20's who just completed her third year of teaching at Lake Bluff Middle School. She walks to and from work and, on Sundays when the weather is nice, grades her student's work on Sunrise Beach. She enjoys spending time at music concerts, perusing the farmer's market, and listening to podcasts. She is also trying to convince her younger sister to move in her second bedroom to become her roommate and help her share rent costs.
- Thomas and Mary are a married couple in their upper 60's. Thomas retired a few years ago. They are looking to downsize from their large single-family home but stay in the same community. They both love arts and culture and are board members for the Lake Bluff History Museum. They can often be found outside, golfing, gardening and spending time in downtown Lake Bluff dining with long-time friends or entertaining visiting family.

- George is recently divorced in his late 40s. He works at a nearby major pharmaceutical company as a lead project researcher. He has two sons, Andrew and Christopher, and he shares custody of them with their mother Amanda in Lake Forest. George wants to relocate somewhere close to his children and place of employment. He enjoys riding bicycles competitively as well as boating.

Finally, he presented the design standards for the Central Business District as well as area maps of the site, located in the northwest quadrant of Block 1 of the District.

Presentation - Edward Deegan Architects

Edward Deegan, principal of Edward Deegan Architects and member of the ABR, came forward to present his firm's submission, "Assembly Required", which won a merit award in the competition.

He said that the title summarizes his firm's approach to the project – "Assembly Required" – that these projects are not something that you would buy your children right before Christmas and have to assemble the night before. Their approach was to take the numerous housing types and make a more modular approach to the architecture. They thought about ways that it could be addressed at the Lake Bluff site as well as how that approach could be adapted to different sites and program requirements.

The result is a "kit of parts" that lessens design time, lowers costs, and makes construction more affordable. He said that it would reduce the time spent to apply a design to a unique site and varying program requirements, and may help increase affordability and reach a wider audience. He also said that this approach would create flexibility. It would allow appropriate material selections based on the context as well as adaptation to different site considerations such as pedestrian walkability, vehicle parking, solar and natural factors, and the fabric of the streetscape. He said that such a focus for the Lake Bluff site was the marriage between the Central Business District (to the south) and single-family housing (to the north).

He said that the "kit of parts" included multi-family buildings, mixed-use and walkup buildings, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and townhouses (although townhouses were not proposed for the Lake Bluff site). He showed floor plans for each unit. For multifamily units, he noted that the modular design was intentionally structured to allow horizontal or vertical expansion. It could be scaled up to meet an intensive program or scaled down for smaller sites. For mixed-use and walkup units, he noted that these could be constructed with party walls (horizontally extended) or as standalone units. The lower level is commercial and the upper is a one-bedroom dwelling or a loft. Finally, for ADUs, these were very small single-family units. The first floor could provide ADA accessibility, and the second floor could be a walkup. They could be owned together or partitioned into two units. Rearranging these ADUs could solve many issues on different sites.

Mr. Deegan introduced Kevin Leong, an associate with his firm. He said that Kevin had been a key contributor to the project and would describe how they treated the Lake Bluff site specifically. Mr. Leong said that the site was ideal for Missing Middle development as it has a lot of amenities within a ten-minute walkshed. He discussed the intersection, its surroundings, and the sixteen different amenities within a ten-minute walk.

Mr. Leong said that, given the site, they proposed a program of two multifamily apartment complexes; three mixed-use units, horizontally connected; and two ADUs. The mixed-use units would front Sheridan Road, wrap the commercial corridor around, and attract Metra commuters and bicyclists from

the McClory Trail. The multifamily apartments would wrap around North Avenue to integrate with the adjacent multifamily condominiums to the east. Finally, the ADUs would be tucked into the back of the lot. They would push the setback back from North Avenue to create space; add a crosswalk from the Metra station into the courtyard space; incorporate new street trees; add windows looking down onto the street to improve pedestrian safety; and add balconies to activate the façade.

Mr. Deegan returned to the podium. He summarized the presentation and said that their proposal was intended to create “Scranton Alley”-type intimate spaces; respond to the different contexts adjacent to the transitional site; establish a gentle sense of arrival at the intersection of these different uses; attract demographic and life-stage diversity; and cross-pollinate residential life, commercial activity, and recreation.

Presentation – MorganteWilson

Two architects from MorganteWilson came forward to present. Mary Meyers described the firm and their work, noting that they are based in Evanston and primarily work on luxury single-family residential products as well as some multifamily products. She said that this competition offered their firm an interesting way to explore the transition between these products and to support diversity in housing. She said that this site was attractive among the three possibilities because it was on the North Shore, close to the Central Business District and Metra, and was a natural place for density and infill work.

Mary Meyers said that they were inspired by the courtyard buildings with a rich history in Chicago. Their design would fill in the block to the extent allowed by the zoning code with interior parking, a retail zone on the corner wrapping from the existing commercial space of Block 1, and provide 11 total dwelling units plus the commercial square footage. This would maximize the available density at this site and extend the CBD around to the corner of North Avenue and Sheridan, extending the corridor. They place the main entry through the courtyard and provide accessible units on the first floor. She walked through the elevation and floor plans.

In response to a comment from Mary Meyers, VA Irvin responded that CNU did not require the plans to satisfy the zoning code as part of the competition. He said that CNU was looking for new ideas and not necessarily projects that reflected existing zoning constraints. He described the various zoning rules applicable to the site with an emphasis on parking. He stated that, in the planning world, parking standards are being reduced and the burden is shifting to the developer to determine how much parking they need.

Panel Discussion

VA Irvin asked the panel to consider five questions in their discussion of the proposals:

- What is your design process for projects of this nature?
- How would you evaluate these proposals?
- What do you see as strengths/weaknesses of the submissions?
- What planning and design elements would you want to see more of in Lake Bluff (encourage/discourage)?
- What themes and/or characteristics that are unique to Lake Bluff did you see in the submissions?

Rob Douglass said that he was involved with the Block 1 redevelopment over 12 years ago. He said that his approach was as a contextualist and that his inspiration was the John Griffith Building where

Bluffington's was located. This site is different because, with his project, there was an opportunity to bring closure to the Village Green architecturally. By comparison, this site has a residential edge. These challenges make this site quite unique because the two districts abutting each other creates a challenging transition issue. He recalled the Block 3 development discussions in 2016 and said that both were unique and challenging sites. There are many forces active on the perimeter that inform what should go on in this particular parcel. He said that this was his viewpoint based on his experience with his project.

Scott Streightiff said that he was currently working on a transition duplex development in Lake Forest. He believes there is a clear need in Lake Forest and Lake Bluff that is echoed by many people looking for places around town. He asked the submitters if they contemplated specific materials or prepared streetscape elevations.

- Edward Deegan responded that masonry is shown. His firm took more of a modern or contemporary approach but it could be tailored. They didn't get to the streetscape detail because they were articulating larger concepts for numerous sites, but they would want masonry and brick to match Block 1 and the Metra station. He said that they would likely use horizontal clapboard siding as well to break up the modulation and the bays.
- Mary Meyers said that they had masonry in mind to reflect the Metra station and a "main street" feel. She said that she imagined costs may reduce their materials choices. John Leonard said that the building had more of a contemporary flavor originally with wood, stucco, and metal. As the design developed, they were more influenced by the train station and neighboring commercial. They tried to integrate more classic details, or as it may be described, contextual materials.

Scott Streightiff asked if the proposals were consistent with the height of other downtown buildings.

- Kevin Leong, of Edward Deegan Architects, said that they did an isometric study. They looked at North Avenue heights as well as those on East Scranton. He described the study detail. Returning to the concept of materials, he said that they were trying to avoid a specific materials discussion. They wanted to convey flexibility and the ability to adjust the materials based on context. Here in Lake Bluff, they envisioned masonry and clapboard; but the same forms work well with metal panels or stucco. The concept is made to be flexible and adjusted to the site.
- Mary Meyers said they did not take measurements but aimed for the 35' zoning maximum. They intended the height to fit in with the existing building and bank around the corner.

VA Irvin replied that one of the things that struck him about the proposals is that the tallest structure is a punctuation mark at the edge. He expected that the heights would scale down as it moved closer to the adjacent single-family residential buildings, not the reverse. ABR Chair Hunter provided his response to this discussion as well as some of the height decisions made during the redevelopment of Block One. He said that the height was raised as part of those discussions. He also discussed his love for courtyard buildings such as those in Evanston as this concept related to the MorganteWilson project.

VA Irvin asked the panelists to discuss the proposals in more detail.

Rob Douglass said that one project presented more residential forms, and that the other presented more Chicago-style courtyard forms. He completed the Edward Deegan project for its modular approach that was very unconventional. He said that, looking at both projects, he thinks the Village needs to investigate incentives into how to get an end result everyone will be happy with. He described how the Village's current incentives for open porches (in its floor-area ratio regulations) create good architecture and break down vertical walls on the streetscape. There are always tension points at the transition

between two different zoning districts, and he believes that the community needs a carrot to help get results it can buy into.

ABR Chair Hunter said that Lake Bluff originally had a huge diversity of duplexes and other mixed types of housing some years ago. There are still original cottages as well as 25'- and 50'-wide lots that can accommodate duplexes. He suggested that the Village should reconsider its position that a 100'-wide lot should only accommodate a single dwelling unit and believes that it can accommodate a duplex or a triplex comfortably.

From the audience, Ms. Deborah Fischer responded to a point raised about older people not being able to ascend stairs quickly. She asked if these plans would accommodate an elevator. Mary Meyers said that an elevator could be added in the lobby. Mr. Leong said that there is a circulation space that could take an elevator, but that elevators are very expensive relative to the cost of small buildings.

Scott Streightiff said that most of downtown Lake Bluff has a two-story cornice line that helps to bring the scale down to be more pedestrian friendly. Rob Douglass, in response, said that a 2.5-story approach could help keep scale matching the downtown while adding program. He said that there are many other things that need to be done as well. He said that he observed the public debate on Block 3 and wants to persuade some of these opponents and meet these unmet housing needs. The Village needs to make a path for developers to hit the square footage amount needed for a development to be viable. The Village also needs to incentivize compatible aesthetics. He said that these were very different projects but that both have great potential.

In closing, VA Irvin said that they were excited to have many professionals look at this site and come up with creative ideas. They hope to glean points to inform the development community and help them craft responsive projects. He said that projects will come forward sooner rather than later and that, when he was last presenting a downtown design charette to the community, there were developers working on a plan unbeknownst to any of the participants. These people are always at work, and so is the Village. He thanked the competitors and the panelists for their time and efforts.

4. Adjournment

As there was no further business, VA Irvin closed the workshop and adjourned the public meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Drew Irvin
Village Administrator