

CITY OF WEST CHICAGO

WHERE HISTORY & PROGRESS MEET

Approved November 9, 2020.

MINUTES

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

October 12, 2020 7:00 P.M.

The Development Committee meeting of October 12, 2020 was held part remotely and partly in person due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Establishment of a Quorum.

Alderman Stout called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and announced that Mayor Pineda has determined that in-person meetings are not practical and prudent.

All Aldermen in attendance were present remotely unless indicated otherwise. Roll call found Aldermen James Beifuss, Matthew Garling, Jayme Sheahan and Rebecca Stout (in person) present.

Also in attendance was Community Development Director, Tom Dabareiner (in person).

2. Approval of Minutes.

A. September 14, 2020.

Alderman Beifuss moved and Alderman Garling seconded a motion to approve the minutes. Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Garling, Sheahan and Stout. Voting Nay: 0.

3. Public Participation. None.

4. Items for Consent.

A. 1850 Roosevelt Road – The petitioner requests an extension to their Special Use Permit.

Alderman Beifuss moved and Alderman Sheahan seconded the motion to approved this Item for Consent. Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Garling, Sheahan and Stout. Voting Nay: 0.

Development Committee Minutes
October 12, 2020

5. Items for Discussion

- A. Draft Economic Development Plan** – Staff drafted the City of West Chicago Economic Development Plan. Discussion will occur about the first sections of the Plan up to page 19. Copies of the Draft Plan were distributed last month.

Tom Dabareiner provided this staff update. He explained they would be covering roughly the first half of the Plan tonight and discussing the latter half at next month's meeting. He began by describing the City's demographics. The City has a population of 27,045 residents. He shared some preliminary information about the 2020 Census. While West Chicago has experienced small population growth, the State has seen a decline of 1%. The Census projects flat growth for the future, but the City is looking to add more rooftops to the community, such as apartments and townhomes downtown and possible homes north of St. Andrew's Golf Course. Adding more residences equates to more spending. He then shared a graph depicting population growth comparisons. Mr. Dabareiner stated that 53% of the City's residents identify as Latinx. This multicultural diversity is a source of pride in the community and it would also be a draw for Millennials looking to move here. He then shared a graph about ethnicity and age groups. The City has a younger population than DuPage County or the State. On the other hand, it has fewer seniors. This is something that they need to keep an eye on to keep senior residents here. Alderman Beifuss asked what might account for the fact that seniors seem to be moving out. Mr. Dabareiner replied that they do not have an explanation for this. It may be that they are moving out to senior housing elsewhere in the area. However, there are some current opportunities being discussed with developers for senior housing in West Chicago.

Mr. Dabareiner stated that, in terms of income, West Chicago's median income is slightly lower compared to the rest of DuPage County, although above the State's. The per capita income level is also lower. This difference may be explained by education levels. He shared data contained in the Plan showing how income levels correlate to educational attainment. While employment is predicted to contract in the next 10 years, the demand for employees with a post graduate education will increase. One question to consider is how to keep the City's educated youth here. Bringing additional housing with amenities to the City, which would attract a more highly educated consumer, is one such idea. Alderman Garling pointed out that the income gap may stem from not only education, but also because there are fewer residents in West Chicago in their peak earning years. Mr. Dabareiner agreed.

Mr. Dabareiner went on to discuss employment, stating West Chicago is an employment center, with 16,000 workers. This is a significant number given there are only 27,000 residents. Ten percent of those workers are residents of the City. In terms of employment type, manufacturing represents 25% of the employment base. Other areas of employment are waste management and wholesale trade. While the data in the Plan is a few years old, he believes the wholesale sector has increased due to the growth in the DuPage Business Center and it will have surpassed waste management. He provided employment data on other sectors such as retail, construction and healthcare. Alderman Beifuss commented that the transportation and warehousing sector is probably larger now than what is shown. Mr.

Dabareiner agreed, given the amount of growth in the City in the past two years. Alderman Garling asked if the data on the number of workers is also a couple of years old and if the data is from prior to General Mills closing, as that would have affected the manufacturing data. Mr. Dabareiner replied that data is from after their closing and all from the same data source, which is a couple of years old. Alderman Beifuss asked if they have data on what the 12,000 people who work outside of West Chicago do. Mr. Dabareiner said this is not something they looked into, but it is an interesting question. They would typically look at data from nearby counties in order to make an assumption about how those people might be employed. He commented that they could look and see if they can draw some conclusions. He mentioned the Census has data on employment type for residents, but it would be much older data. Alderman Garling asked if other communities have this type of data available. He imagined that some must be similar in terms of importing or exporting employment the way West Chicago does.

Mr. Dabareiner then addressed location quotient, which is a graph that depicts the concentration of job types vis-à-vis the rest of the nation. This data can help to determine ways to consolidate or even conversely, diversify sectors. Alderman Beifuss asked if there is a pharmaceutical company in town, and Mr. Dabareiner replied that the data includes companies that support pharma, but may not manufacture it. Alderman Beifuss asked how Ball Seed would be classified, and Mr. Dabareiner replied that it would fall under agriculture.

The Leakage/Surplus Factor was discussed next. What people come to West Chicago to buy, for example, are building materials, lawn and garden equipment and supplies, and auto parts accessories. What people leave the City to buy, for example, are automobiles (although, he commented this probably will have changed in recent years) and department store goods. Alderman Stout asked if the addition of Thornton's Gas and other gas stations is accurately reflected in the chart data. Mr. Dabareiner replied he was not sure if those would have been included or not. He pointed out that this data will be updated in the Comprehensive Plan process, and he commented that the data they purchased is quite expensive, but it is worthwhile to get a good picture of the community. Alderman Beifuss questioned the data about furniture stores, and Mr. Dabareiner replied it could include the sales of patio and institutional furniture. Alderman Garling commented it is difficult to interpret some of the categories and understand what is actually included. Mr. Dabareiner indicated they would look into defining these categories more. He added that the data does include online purchases, which may occur outside the community.

A discussion of sales tax followed. While the City currently is looking at a 5 to 10% decline in revenue, they were doing well prior to the recent recession. He commented that while retail jobs are on the lower end of the pay scale, retail adds to the feel or character of a community and its downtown. However, it is truly an uphill battle to recruit retailers now, especially now with COVID-19 and the increase in online sales.

Mr. Dabareiner moved on to housing and the economy. Housing is linked to economic development in that new housing attracts new residents and the new residents in turn, spend

money locally. West Chicago possesses a diverse housing stock that meets the needs of a range of individuals and families. The median house price in West Chicago aligns with the median household income. The City has a lot of rentals. One of every three residences is renter-occupied, but much of this stock is older and lacks amenities. A typical percentage found in other communities is about 25%. Rents are also relatively low in West Chicago compared to other communities where highly-amenitized apartments can be found. Alderman Beifuss asked about rental rates on a square footage basis. Mr. Dabareiner promised staff would look into this. Alderman Beifuss asked which amenities he referring to, and Mr. Dabareiner said things like granite countertops, dog runs, bicycle storage, fireplaces, laundry appliances, workout facilities, etc. Alderman Stout asked if the rental data included Single Family Homes that are rented, and Mr. Dabareiner agreed to have that looked into. He continued that the vacancy rate or abandoned property rate is at 2.1%, which is almost twice that of surrounding communities.

In terms of infrastructure, West Chicago does well as it has three State highways, they are only a short distance from I-88, Metra, and they have the third busiest airport in the State. He commented on some recent changes in private jet use and in commuter patterns, however. They have good electricity and natural gas sources, fiber optic and cable services. He concluded the presentation by previewing the topics to be discussed at next month's meeting.

Alderman Garling commented that there are big unknowns such as how much will the rail station and air travel be impacted by COVID-19 and how will online purchasing impact the future of the City's retail makeup. Mr. Dabareiner stated that COVID-19 is a game changer, and in particular, for online purchasing and merchandise pickups. However, it is hard to project the ultimate outcome. Alderman Garling added that these changes may affect zoning, and how much parking lot space is required for merchandise pickups. Alderman Beifuss stated there are two sides of the equation: how you serve and maintain business while serving and maintaining the residents. Other important elements are schools and maintaining the quality of life and offering amenities so that residents will want to stay and invest in West Chicago. Mr. Dabareiner agreed and added to that the need to balance all of that with the goals of the CEO.

6. Unfinished Business. None.

7. New Business.

Alderman Beifuss asked if the representative from Cascade will be returning to Plan Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals (PC/ZBA) at a later date. Mr. Dabareiner replied they are trying for them to attend the November 4, 2020 meeting. Staff drafted an update to the legal non-confirming land use section, which they believe will allow them to move forward with the drive-in theater. Cascade is not the only project that this would apply to and benefit from. The update would allow people to turn around a project, and assuming it meets certain criteria and does not increase the impact to the area, they could move forward.

8. Reports from Staff.

- A. Mosaic Shopping Center TIF Disbursement** – A copy of the lease was received but no permits are ready to be issued. An application for a remodeling permit was received, but the permit has not yet been issued. He stated this agenda item might return to the Committee at their November or December meeting.

9. Adjournment.

Alderman Garling moved and Alderman Sheahan seconded the motion to adjourn the Development Committee meeting at 8:04 p.m. Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Garling, Sheahan and Stout. Voting Nay: 0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Burke