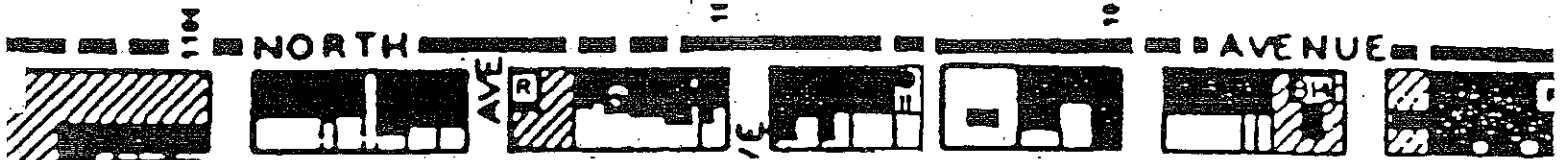




Oak Park

Plan Commission



NORTH AVENUE STUDY

FINAL REPORT

November 1996

OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION
NORTH AVENUE STUDY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
II. DIRECTION FROM VILLAGE TRUSTEES	2
III. PROCESS	2
IV. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY	3
V. ISSUE IDENTIFICATION	3
A. Illinois Department of Transportation Expectations	4
B. Functionally Obsolete Buildings	4
C. Small Lot Sizes	5
D. Restrictive Zoning	5
E. Neighborhood Concerns	6
F. Lack of Recognition of Redevelopment Opportunities	6
VI. RECOMMENDATIONS	6
A. Community Expectation	7
C. Zoning	9
D. Parking	10
E. Parcel Assembly	11
F. Tax Increment Financing	12
G. Cooperation and Partnership	14
VII. APPENDIX	
A. Exhibits	
1. North Avenue Study Recommendations	16
2. North Avenue Land Use by Percent 1996	17
3. Land Use Along North Avenue by Block	18
4. North Avenue Assessed Valuation Change	

November 21, 1996

	1993-1996	19
5.	North Avenue Change in Land Use by Square Foot Area 1993-1996	20
6.	North Avenue Change in Land Use by Buildings	21
7.	Comparison of B-1 and B-2 Business Zones	22
B.	Background on Tax Increment Financing	23
C.	Minutes from Plan Commission Meetings regarding North Avenue	26

November 21, 1996

OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION NORTH AVENUE STUDY

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January of 1996, the Village of Oak Park Board of Trustees charged the Plan Commission with the task of reviewing the issues and identifying policy recommendations to further the economic development potential of the North Avenue Business District. Working with representatives from Gruen, Gruen & Associates, an economic, market and financial analyst consulting firm, the Plan Commission set out to evaluate the current issues facing the North Avenue corridor and to identify recommendations to respond to the directives from the Board of Trustees. Without addressing these issues the Village of Oak Park will be faced with a section of the community which may decline.

To complete this task, the Commission identified a number of issues through a series of public meetings with developers, local community and business organizations, business owners and residents. In addition, the Commission sought information from the Illinois Department of Transportation as well as from planning counterparts from the City of Chicago and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC). The Commission developed block by block land use analysis and spent considerable time identifying the issues and recommendations which will enable the Village to move forward in the long and short term planning for this important quadrant of the Village.

The following report outlines six issues which were identified and evaluated. These issues are:

- * Illinois Department of Transportation issues
- * Functionally obsolete buildings
- * Small lot sizes
- * Restrictive zoning
- * Residential concerns
- * Lack of recognition of redevelopment opportunities

To respond to these issues, 20 recommendations categories were identified which the Plan Commission felt should be implemented in order to revitalize the North Avenue business corridor. These recommendations focus on the

November 21, 1996

following:

- * Community Expectations
- * Zoning
- * Parking
- * Parcel Assembly
- * Tax Increment Financing Districts
- * Cooperation and Partnership

These recommendations challenge the Board of Trustees to address the critical issues which face the North Avenue corridor while keeping all parties involved with the ultimate decisions. The Plan Commission recommends that it continue to be involved in this process and provide oversight to the issues identified in this document. Implementation of improvements to North Avenue corridor will require cooperation and coordination of Village staff and select Commissions to respond to specific issues identified in this document. It is ultimately the Board of Trustees which must determine the appropriate Village staff and Commissions to oversee specific issues.

II. DIRECTION FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

In accordance with the January 9, 1996 directives from the Village of Oak Park Board of Trustees, sitting as a Committee of the Whole, the Plan Commission was instructed to consider the following issues and to make policy recommendations in regards to furthering the economic development potential of the North Avenue Business District:

- * Zoning
- * Parcel assembly
- * Formation of a Tax Increment Financing District
- * Status of IDOT's North Avenue widening project
- * Mixed use, multi-family residential uses
- * Creation of a uniform development concept between Village of Oak Park and the City of Chicago

III. PROCESS

In order to comply with the directives from the Board of Trustees, the Plan Commission has engaged in a number of activities to investigate the current

November 21, 1996

status and future potential of the North Avenue Business District. A thorough study was made of the Gruen, Gruen & Associates reports dated December, 1994 and April, 1995. The Commission developed block by block maps of the area detailing building ownership, tenants, square footage, condition, parking availability, assessed valuation and tax revenues. Testimony was heard from representatives from Gruen & Gruen and Associates, the North Avenue Business Association (NABA), local development companies, real estate agents, local businesses and residents of the 1200 block adjacent to the area under study. The Commission also met with representatives from the Planning and Economic Development Departments from the City of Chicago, as well as various state transportation and development officials.

IV. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

Detailed reports of all testimony heard by the Plan Commission are found in the meeting provided in the attached Appendix. To summarize, there appears to be general agreement that:

- * definite action needs to be taken to reverse the overall economic decline of the North Avenue Business District;
- * care should be taken to minimize the impact of such actions on adjacent residential areas;
- * the Village should adopt a flexible and "user-friendly" approach in dealing with developers and the business community; and
- * a number of problematic issues need to be addressed directly.

V. ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

The Commission has identified a number of issues which must be addressed in order for substantive economic development to occur along North Avenue. In general, these issues resolve themselves into six categories:

- A. Illinois Department of Transportation plans which were the impetus for this study;
- B. Existing buildings which are functionally obsolete;
- C. Lot sizes which are too small to accommodate contemporary retail and commercial activity;
- D. Restrictive zoning;

November 21, 1996

- E. The concerns of residential neighbors who fear negative impacts from commercial activity along North Avenue; and
- F. A lack of recognition on the part of the development community of the redevelopment potential of the North Avenue corridor.

A brief discussion of each issue follows.

A. Illinois Department of Transportation Plans

One of the first issues raised during this process was the belief that North Avenue was slated for major renovation by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). Based on discussions with IDOT personnel, it was determined that IDOT's five year plan and budget has no specific projects planned for the segment of North Avenue from Harlem Avenue to Austin Avenue. The current five year plan covers 1996 through and including the year 2000. Minor repairs and maintenance are scheduled annually for North Avenue. The IDOT plan, however, is a rolling plan which adds one year after a year is completed. New projects are added annually based on availability of budget monies.

IDOT has identified North Avenue as a candidate for part of a region wide "green light plan" of alternative routes to relieve congestion on the I-290 Expressway. To date no specific funding has been identified for detailed engineering and advanced planning.

B. Functionally Obsolete Buildings

Many buildings along North Avenue are functionally obsolete. Typically built in the 1950's or earlier, such buildings are not suited for modern retail or commercial uses. Many of these buildings lack elevators or are otherwise not in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition, it is possible, although the Commission is not certain, that some buildings contain asbestos siding or insulation. The cost of rehabbing such buildings in order to bring them into compliance with existing law, to remove hazardous substances, and to redesign them to suit contemporary retail and commercial strategies is often prohibitive. Such buildings tend to be relegated to marginal uses. Meanwhile, owners defer maintenance,

November 21, 1996

sales receipts decline and property values follow suit.

C. Small Lot Sizes

Lot sizes along North Avenue are frequently narrow and are universally shallow. Lot depth is 125 feet. The dimension of such lots pose two fundamental problems for property owners. First, such lots cannot easily accommodate modern retail and commercial requirements for usable space. Second, such lots are not large enough to accommodate sufficient (if any) on-site customer and employee parking. As a consequence, parking must be accommodated both along North Avenue and residential side streets. Not surprisingly, residential property owners object to on-street parking in front of their homes. Metered parking is currently the mechanism of choice for regulating on-street parking, but metered parking is convenient to neither customers nor employees and, on residential side streets, is a burden to residential property owners and their guests.

Metered parking would not appear to be a long-term solution: everything else being equal, customers would rather conduct their business where parking is abundant and free. Finally, where a developer tries to assemble several adjacent lots in order to have an overall parcel of sufficient size for a particular use, a holdout among the selling property owners may raise the cost of a project significantly or may jeopardize its feasibility altogether. Although the Commissioner's evidence on this point is anecdotal, it would appear, based on the testimony of developers, that the fear of holdout problems may itself be a deterrent to parcel assemblage.

D. Restrictive Zoning

Most lots along North Avenue are zoned B-1. This limits permitted uses. The most successful project along North Avenue, the strip mall at the southeast corner of Harlem and North Avenues, is zoned B-2. Although both B-1 and B-2 are general business designations, more uses are permitted under B-2. As discussed below, it may be appropriate to re-zone the entire North Avenue corridor to B-2.

November 21, 1996

E. Neighborhood Concerns

Property owners in residential areas immediately south of North Avenue have expressed dissatisfaction with the automobile traffic, littering, and noise pollution that, in their view, have already attended some of the successful redevelopment projects along North Avenue. They are equally concerned, if not more so, about increased automobile traffic, littering, noise and air pollution, perceived security issues, and other negative impacts that could attend increased retail and commercial activity along North Avenue.

F. Insufficient Recognition of North Avenue's Redevelopment Potential

It appears to the Commission that the North Avenue corridor is underutilized and that its advantages are underappreciated. The Commission believes that the Village and interested organizations need to do a better job of "getting the word out" about business opportunities along North Avenue. In this regard, developers who testified before the Commission appear to feel that the Village is not receptive to proposals for redevelopment of properties along North Avenue and that the Village is not prepared or equipped to help developers, who have acceptable proposals, to cut through red tape. It will do little good to market North Avenue to prospective developers and business people if the Village is not geared to facilitate desirable redevelopment and uses.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Underlying the Commission's approach to the problem of the North Avenue business corridor is the conviction that private investment is the best solution and should be encouraged. The Commission does not believe that significant public funding for improvements is either available or will necessarily produce a favorable result. The Commission believes that private developers can upgrade the corridor if they are given the proper incentives and if barriers to development are removed. The use of taxpayer assistance should be carefully scrutinized and should be subject to appropriate cost benefit analysis.

To some extent, development has proceeded successfully without any governmental intervention. Examples of successful developments exist at

November 21, 1996

the Harlem-North and Ridgeland-North intersections. On the other hand, as the medical profession has changed, the demand for medical offices on North Avenue has declined and the number of office vacancies has increased. The market place has yet to identify a solution or alternative use for the properties suffering from high vacancy rates because of changed conditions. The Commission's recommendations are designed to encourage the market place to find solutions and alternatives more quickly and easily than it has to date.

To address the recommendations identified in this report, the Plan Commission believes that specific actions are best implemented by Village staff and other Commissions, including the Plan Commission, on an issue-by-issue basis. The Plan Commission recommends that it should also review both the status of the underlying ideas and implementation of these recommendations in 12 months.

A. Community Expectations

When the Plan Commission was asked to review the North Avenue corridor, a number of issues were identified which are significant to the overall redevelopment expectations for the street. As the Village and its Trustees respond to the need to enhance North Avenue, it is imperative that the changes recommended and implemented must follow a coordinated plan which will support the redevelopment efforts.

This redevelopment process, as well as any other redevelopment project undertaken within the Village, must recognize the needs and expectations for the entire Village, not just one portion of the corridor.

Any redevelopment of North Avenue could produce some negative impact to adjacent residential neighborhoods. As a result, there may be some heightened concerns from residents, if certain issues are not addressed. At the June 20, 1996 Plan Commission meeting, area residents raised concerns about existing and future traffic issues along adjacent streets and alleys. A second major issue is existing and future levels of parking on residential streets generated from North Avenue businesses. Other concerns include litter and crime.

At subsequent Plan Commission workshops on the North Avenue redevelopment, concerns regarding noise, litter, light and odors from

November 21, 1996

new businesses were also raised.

In order to assure coordinated planning and manage community expectations for this corridor, the Plan Commission recommends that the Village Board of Trustees establish a North Avenue Task Force to address redevelopment issues and determine how to best encourage redevelopment opportunities along North Avenue. The Task Force should include:

- * representatives from the Plan and Parking Commissions
- * a representative from the Village Board of Trustees
- * community members
- * developers
- * local North Avenue business leaders
- * the Executive Director of the North Avenue Business Association
- * representatives from the economic development community
- * staff liaison from the Village of Oak Park

Among the redevelopment issues which the North Avenue Task Force should consider are:

- a. methods to encourage redevelopment along the corridor;
- b. streamlining the approval process for development projects along North Avenue;
- c. appropriate buffers to separate the business uses north of the alley from the residences to the south (such as fencing or landscaping);
- d. speed limits and stop signs for adjacent streets;
- e. recommendations to the Village Parking and Traffic Commission;
- f. enforcement of ordinances prohibiting littering and use of alleys for cut-through traffic;
- g. business and performance guidelines which North Avenue businesses must adhere to, such as:
 - * performance standards for hours of operations for businesses, deliveries and garbage pick up
 - * adequate on-site parking

November 21, 1996

- * buffering from adjoining residential areas
 - * appropriate signage
 - * limitations on noise and light
 - * uses which encourage further development;
- h. identification of long term development opportunities and actively marketing them to the development community.
 - i. educating the public regarding the current and proposed uses on North Avenue.

B. Zoning

The Oak Park Board of Trustees directed the Plan Commission to investigate the possibility of re-zoning all or part of the North Avenue corridor to facilitate economic development. Currently, the entire corridor is zoned B-1 with the exception of the strip mall at Harlem at North Avenue which is zoned B-2. The B-1 zoning classification significantly limits the potential for future development or redevelopment along the corridor. In addition, it precludes uses necessary to meet contemporary and future consumer demands as outlined in the Gruen report.

In light of these facts, the Plan Commission recommends that the Village Board:

1. Re-zone the entire North Avenue corridor to B-2 to demonstrate Oak Park's commitment to economic development along the corridor and its flexibility in the consideration of proposals for such development.
2. Amend the special use provisions of the zoning ordinance with regard to the North Avenue corridor to include all uses currently allowed under any other zoning classification with the provision that the proposed use meet both the special use guidelines as well as the performance criteria established specifically for the North Avenue Business District and outlined below in #3.
3. Establish a clear set of zoning performance criteria for proposed development in the North Avenue Business district which will minimize residential impact, reduce adverse impacts of increased traffic and parking demands and enhance the locational image of

November 21, 1996

the corridor in order to attract business and their customers. These criteria would include standards for acceptable:

- * noise levels
- * signage
- * lighting
- * odoriferous emissions
- * parking availability
- * building height variations (but only in accordance with the special use provisions of the zoning ordinance)
- * buffers between the proposed use and adjacent residential areas.

4. Consider the impact that multi-family residential development may have on the corridor.

C. Parking

Parking is identified as a critical issue to both business interests and local residents. Addressing on-street and off-street parking concerns that satisfy both residents and business interests will be challenging.

Business interests wish to see parking capacity increase along the North Avenue corridor. Accommodating development or redevelopment of additional off-street parking is important to "increasing" business traffic. Adding on-street parking capacity along North Avenue and local perpendicular streets was identified as an additional source of capacity. A lack of parking, in conjunction with building obsolescence, is seen by the business community as one of the primary reasons for North Avenue's economic decline. Providing free parking is also considered very important for redevelopment projects.

Local residents wish to see on-street parking limitations on local residential streets. This obvious conflict will have to be resolved in a manner that best serves both residential and business interests. Local residents voiced concerns that additional off-street capacity at "high volume" traffic type enterprises would negatively impact the neighborhood. Security and safety issues associated with parking and additional local traffic were raised as

November 21, 1996

noted in the Community Expectations section. The Plan Commission recommends:

1. Increase commercial-related parking through parcel assemblage or street vacation.
2. Require parking as a part of or adjoining new development.
3. Protect residential areas from parking problems such as traffic, noise and littering by implementing cul-de-sacs, buffering, one way streets and placing limitations on street parking.

D. Parcel Assembly

The Oak Park Board of Trustees directed the Plan Commission to consider parcel assembly of private land as a possible redevelopment option. In December of 1994, the market and economic study of North Avenue, prepared by Gruen, Gruen & Associates (Gruen) was completed. This report outlined parking and assemblage problems business and developers face along North Avenue due to lots that are too small. In 1996, the Plan Commission heard testimony from business owners and private developers who echoed the issues raised in the Gruen report.

The 1994 Gruen report, along with an April 1995 Action Planning Progress report, discuss Village sponsored, developer funded, condemnation as a parcel assemblage strategy. At Plan Commission meetings, Aaron Gruen suggested that successful parcel assembly might be achieved by using the Village's condemnation powers to acquire property from hold-out owners who are stalling a redevelopment project. At Plan Commission meetings, private developers testified that they too, favor the use of the Village's condemnation powers to assemble parcels which can be used for private land development or parking. The Plan Commission does not favor condemnation of property south of the alley, at this time.

Based on the Gruen reports, public testimony, and workshop sessions, the Plan Commission agrees that parcel assemblage is necessary for the successful redevelopment of North Avenue. In order to achieve successful parcel assembly, the Plan Commission feels that specific

November 21, 1996

guidelines must be established. For example, the Village should not use its condemnation powers until 75 to 80 percent of the proposed parcel is already under the control of a developer. Before using condemnation powers, an agreement must be entered into with developers regarding cost.

In order to encourage a developer to incur the cost (time, money, etc.) to gain control of all or most of a proposed redevelopment parcel, the Village's assemblage guidelines must be specific and enforceable. The Village also needs to provide other incentives and identify appropriate criteria to support this process (selective re-zoning, accelerated parcel approvals process, street vacation for parking, etc.). The Plan Commission recommends that the Village:

1. Establish specific assemblage guidelines.
2. Encourage developers and owners to combine parcels for larger lot sizes.
3. Use parcel assemblage to support private commercial or residential development.
4. Use municipal condemnation powers where 75-80% of proposed parcels has been assembled.

E. Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs)

In accordance with the January 9, 1996 directive of the Board of Trustees, the Plan Commission was instructed to consider and provide policy recommendations regarding the selective utilization and formation of a Tax Increment Financing District (TIF).

The Village of Oak Park currently has three TIFs; one in downtown Oak Park, one on Madison Avenue and one at Garfield and Harlem. Of these three, only one (at the downtown location) is fully operating as a TIF. Given the lack of information available regarding the successes of TIFs in Oak Park, the Plan Commission was reluctant to make any definite recommendations regarding the creation TIFs for the North Avenue corridor.

November 21, 1996

The Plan Commission found this issue, as it relates to North Avenue, to be particularly challenging. A majority of the members expressed their discomfort with making policy recommendations regarding the viability of TIF. This was due, in large part, to a limited knowledge and understanding of the potential benefits and/or drawbacks that establishing a TIF would provide to the Village of Oak Park.

In an effort to evaluate the benefits of tax increment financing, the Commission developed a "white paper" which provides the following information:

- * What is a TIF
- * How a TIF works
- * Who is eligible for TIF funding
- * Where the money comes from for a TIF
- * What benefits a TIF offers Oak Park
- * What disadvantages there are for TIFs in Oak Park

In addition, the Commission identified additional factors to be considered. A copy of this information is located in the appendix of this document.

While it was necessary for the Commission to gather this information to determine if tax increment financing is a viable funding opportunity, it was clear that the impact of TIFs in Oak Park has not been evaluated sufficiently to support the recommendation to create TIFs on the North Avenue corridor. The Plan Commission felt strongly that the decision to create TIFs for North Avenue requires additional evaluation by the Commission or another Village entity.

In an effort to address funding issues for the redevelopment of North Avenue, the Plan Commission offers the following recommendation to the Board of Trustees:

1. Continue to study and evaluate the impact of TIFs on the Village as a whole and on North Avenue, in particular. The Commission recommends that the ultimate decision regarding TIFs should be made by the Board of Trustees with consideration of the impact on the entire Village, not just North Avenue.

November 21, 1996

F. Cooperation and Partnership

The Oak Park Board of Trustees directed the Plan Commission to work with the City of Chicago to create a uniform development concept which consolidates the goals of both communities. To respond to this request Commissioner Hodge-West and former Oak Park Planning Manager Franklin Dancy met with representatives from the City of Chicago Community Planning and Development Department to establish communications. Representatives from the City were also invited to an Oak Park Plan Commission meeting.

The Assistant to the City of Chicago Commissioner of Planning and Development along with two staff members attended the April 18th meeting of the Oak Park Plan Commission. The Chicago planning staff members reported that the Chicago side of North Avenue suffers from the same problems which face the Oak Park side: obsolete buildings, lack of parking, low demand for professional space. The planning staff from Chicago stated that they would be willing to support Oak Park in its revitalization efforts although they were focusing their redevelopment efforts elsewhere in the City and did not anticipate providing any staff or resources to support the North Avenue corridor.

While the City of Chicago operates under its own guidelines, it was clear that the relationship required to support the Oak Park development and revitalization of North Avenue required more local input. The North Avenue Business Association (NABA), under the direction of Executive Director Jim Dumas, has been working diligently with businesses in the community to enhance the North Avenue corridor. NABA's 1995-1996 Strategic Plan called for the following:

- * Improvement of the physical appearance of North Avenue
- * Increase in local shopping
- * Facilitated development and re-development
- * Development of relationships between Chicago and Oak Park

Based on these goals, the Commission felt that NABA is the entity which enhances and supports cooperation and partnership as its members are found in both communities. Based on community input at the public hearing held on June 20, 1996, the Commission recommended better coordination between NABA and the community-

November 21, 1996

at-large in an effort to involve community residents in the development and re-development issues. In addition to NABA, the Oak Park Development Corporation, through input from Sara Rickert and Art Replogle, has worked cooperatively with the Plan Commission to support the development of the following recommendations:

1. Encourage cooperation between NABA, the business community, the community-at-large and the two municipalities.
2. Encourage NABA and community residents to become active participants in Village sponsored planning activities for the North Avenue corridor.
3. Educate the public regarding the potential opportunities and benefits for North Avenue re-development.

November 21, 1996

VILLAGE OF OAK PARK
PLAN COMMISSION

NORTH AVENUE STUDY

IV. APPENDIX

A. Exhibits

1. North Avenue Study Recommendations
2. North Avenue Land Use by Percent 1996
3. Land Use Along North Avenue by Block
4. North Avenue Assessed Valuation Change
5. North Avenue Change in Land Use by
Square Foot Area 1993-1996
6. North Avenue Change in Land Use by
Buildings
7. Comparison of B-1 and B-2 Business Zones

B. Background Information on Tax Increment
Financing

C. Minutes from Plan Commission Meetings
Regarding North Avenue

NORTH AVENUE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

Community Expectations

1. Establish North Avenue Task Force
2. Streamline development approval process
3. Create business and performance guidelines
4. Identify long-term development initiatives
5. Educate the public regarding current and proposed uses

Zoning

6. Rezone entire corridor to B-2
7. Amend special use provisions
8. Establish performance criteria for development
9. Consider impact of multi-family residential development

Parking

10. Increase commercial-related parking through parcel assemblage
11. Require parking with new development
12. Protect residential areas from parking problems

Parcel Assembly

13. Establish specific assembling guidelines
14. Encourage developers to combine parcels
15. Use special parcel assemblage to support private development
16. Use eminent domain when 75-80% has been assembled

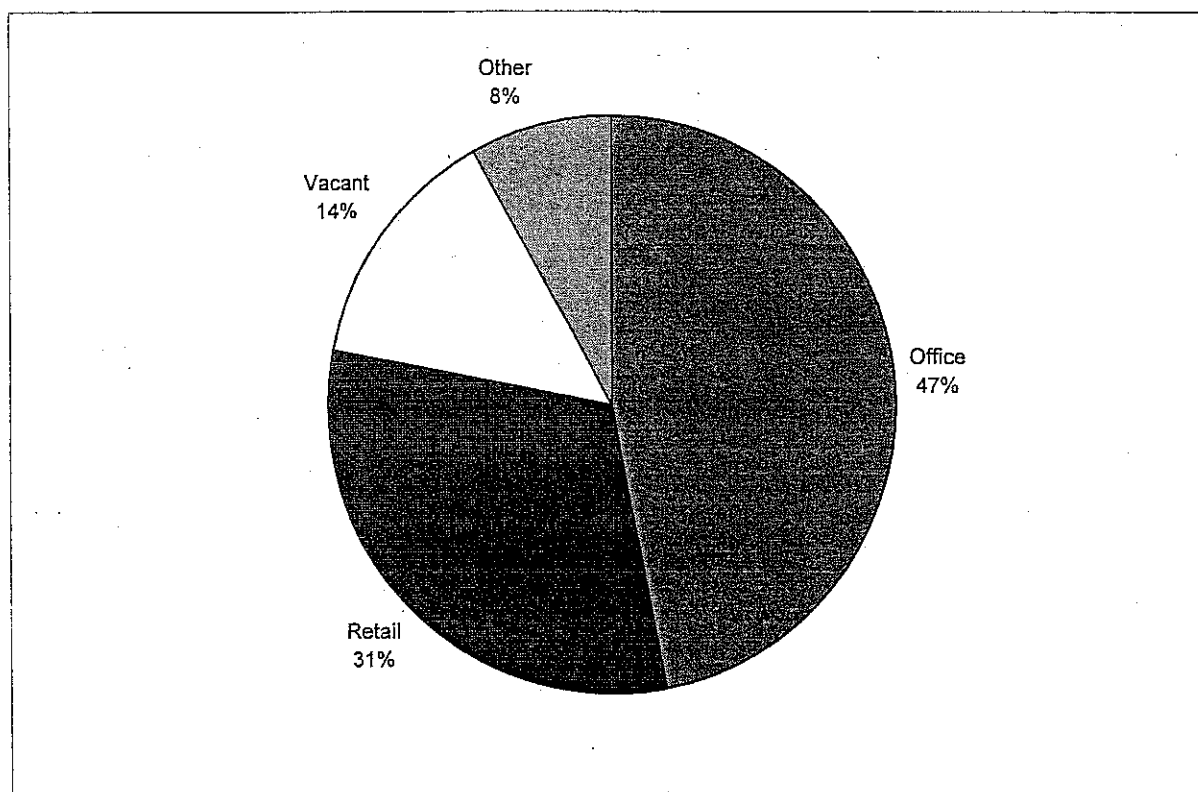
TIF

17. Continue to study and evaluate TIF impact

Cooperation & Partnership

18. Encourage cooperation between NABA, the business community, and the two municipalities
19. Encourage NABA to participate in planning activities
20. Educate the public regarding opportunities for North Avenue development

North Avenue Land Use by Percent 1996



Total 477,708 sq ft*

* Other includes church, funeral home, and convalescent home.

Source: Field Survey and land use record analysis conducted by CED staff, December 1996.

Land Use Along North Avenue By Block

	Block #	Square Footage				Gas Station
		Office	Retail	Vacant	Total	
Austin	1	5,500	2,250	15,822	23,572	
	2	6,250	3,500	10,320	20,070	
	3	15,000	5,700		20,700	1
	4	952	9,500	1,500	11,952	1
	5		16,600		16,600	
Ridgeland	6	16,000 *	13,000		29,000	
	7		22,100	8,000	30,100	
	8	39,587			39,587	
	9	25,650	2,856		28,506	
	10	12,175	3,500		15,675	
	11	20,787			20,787	
	12	25,450 +			25,450	
	13	6,800			6,800	
Oak Park	14	1,350	1,575	2,000	4,925	
	15	2,250	9,195	12,000	23,445	1
	16	5,590	9,673		15,263	
	17	26,466 0			26,466	
	18	25,850	4,725	6,450	37,025	1
	19	13,485	7,200	1,300	21,985	
Harlem	20	16,100	11,150	7,250	34,500	
	21	-	25,300	-	25,300	
TOTAL		265,242	147,824	64,642	477,708	

* Church

+ Funeral Home 12,000 sq ft

⁰ Convalescent Home 11,275 sq ft

Source: Square footages were observed in 1990 and data compiled for Gruen + Gruen Assoc.

Vacant land not included

**North Avenue
Assessed Valuation
Change 1993 - 1996**

**Village of Oak Park
Assessed Valuation
Total Change 1993 - 1996**

<u>Block #</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>% Change</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>% Change</u>
1	240,248	241,235	-4.10	351,830,490	325,009,642	+8.25
2	243,851	272,591	-10.54			
3	358,162	294,191	+21.75			
4	276,652	269,648	+2.53			
5	337,938	322,999	+4.63			
6	75,599	74,175	+1.92			
7	704,522	503,367	+39.96			
8	439,632	337,979	+30.08			
9	298,238	607,125	-50.87			
10	517,021	421,542	+22.65			
11	414,744	308,656	+34.37			
12	431,003	432,707	-0.39			
13	271,086	286,934	-5.52			
14	302,194	270,689	+11.64			
15	432,251	437,856	-1.28			
16	551,490	333,218	+65.52			
17	541,334	565,180	-4.22			
18	387,779	446,004	-13.06			
19	566,052	518,780	+9.11			
20	644,628	579,190	+11.30			
21	540,909	497,836	+8.65			
	8,575,333	8,021,902	+6.45			

Cumulative Change in CPI 1993-1996 +10.9%

North Avenue **Change in Land Use by Square Foot Area** **1993-1996**

Block #	Square Footage			
	Office	Retail	Vacant	Total
Austin	1	(12,850)	12,850	-
	2	(4,020)	(5,500)	9,520
	3			-
	4	(1,500)	1,500	-
	*5	(5,684)		(5,684)
Ridgeland	6			-
	+7	(675)	3,000	7,100
	8			9,425
	9			-
	10			-
	11			-
	12			-
	13			-
	14			-
Oak Park	15	(12,000)	12,000	-
	16	(2,500)	2,500	-
	17			-
	18	(2,450)	3,080	(630)
	19	(1,300)	1,300	-
Harlem	20	9,100	(13,850)	4,750
	21	-	800	(800)
		(13,845)	(30,004)	47,590
				3,741

* New Osco

+ North Ridge Shopping Center - Phase II

Key Trend: There has been an increase of 47,590 sq ft in vacant space on North Avenue from 1993- 1996.

Source: Field survey and land use record analysis conducted by CED staff, December 1996.

North Avenue Change in Land Use by Buildings

	<u>1993</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>Net Change</u>
Austin - Ridgeland			
Properties	17	17	
Businesses	26	22	Loss of 4 businesses
Vacancies	3	7	
Church	1	1	
Ridgeland - Oak Park			
Properties	37	37	
Businesses	14	16	Gain of 2 businesses
Offices	17	17	
Vacancies	6	4	
Residential	1	1	
Shopping strips	1	1	
Under construction	0	1	
Oak Park - Harlem			
Properties	36	36	
Businesses	27	28	Gain of 2 businesses
Offices	16	17	
Vacancies	5	4	
Under construction	1	0	
Shopping strip	1	1	

Source: Field survey conducted by CED staff, December 1996.

Exhibit 7.

COMPARISON OF B-1 AND B-2 BUSINESS ZONES

USES PERMITTED IN B-2 BUT NOT IN B-1:

Bus passenger stations
Catering services
Dry cleaning establishments
Greenhouses
Hand-assembly and hand-packaging operations, and handicraft shops
Hospitals and clinics for animals with no open kennels
Hotels
Ice, milk and similar coin-operated automatic dispensing machines
Laundromats
Light distributing operations
Pet shop with no open kennels
Recording studios
Rental shops for household equipment
Repair shops for electrical and electronic equipment
Repair shops for electrical and electronic equipment
Theaters, except no drive-in theaters
Upholstery shops

REGULATIONS THAT ARE THE SAME FOR B-1 AND B-2 ZONES

Minimum Lot Size and Intensity of Use
Building Height
Required Yards
Lot Coverage
Standards

FIVE AREAS ZONED B-1 IN OAK PARK:

1. North Avenue corridor, except Marion St. to Harlem Ave.
2. North side of Lake St. from the east side of Euclid Ave. to Oak Park Ave.
3. South side of Madison St. from Lombard Ave. to Austin Blvd.
4. 800 block of South Oak Park Ave.
5. Roosevelt Rd. from Wesley Ave. to Euclid Ave. and from Grove Ave. to the west end of the Jewel store.

Source: Phillip Ritchey, Zoning Officer, Village of Oak Park
Zoning Ordinance of the Village of Oak Park

OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION NORTH AVENUE STUDY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON TAX INCREMENT FINANCING

WHAT IS A TIF?

Enacted into law by the Illinois General Assembly in January of 1977, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a municipal financing technique that can be used to renovate declining areas or redevelop blighted areas while improving the tax base of such areas. The program allows a municipality, such as the Village of Oak Park, to selectively acquire and prepare property for private investment.

Tax increment financing allows a community to capture the increase in state and local taxes that result from a redevelopment project to pay for the cost involved in the project. The difference between the tax revenues before redevelopment and the tax revenues gained after the redevelopment is called the "tax increment."

HOW DOES A TIF WORK?

Under tax increment financing, the county clerk must calculate the equalized assessed valuation of real estate at the time the area is designated by the Village as a TIF area. The tax revenues provided by this property tax base continues to go to the taxing bodies serving the TIF area such as the county, school district, township, etc. This system does not lower the tax revenues collected by the various taxing districts; nor does it impose special assessments on the project area. However, the growth in property tax revenues generated in the TIF redevelopment area, above the base amount, goes to a special "tax allocation fund." These funds are then used by the municipality to pay for the authorized expenditures exclusively in the TIF area. These property tax increment diversions continue until all costs related to the redevelopment of the area are paid or for a period of 23 years, whichever comes first.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A TIF?

The designation of a TIF is governed by legislation that specifies the terms and conditions by which a TIF may be utilized. Before a TIF is used, a municipality must first determine whether the intended redevelopment area qualifies for designation as a blighted area, conservation area (or a combination, thereof), or an industrial park conservation area. Definitions and criteria have been established to

assist in the determination of eligibility for these categories.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY FOR A TIF COME FROM?

Usually, general obligation bonds are issued to pay for public improvement costs. However, TIF can be used in conjunction with a wide range of other business development tools such as: Community Development Block Grant revenues, TIF revenue bonds, special service area financing, business loans and guarantees by state and federal agencies, etc.

WHAT BENEFIT WOULD A TIF BE TO THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK?

The designation and a utilization of a TIF would allow redevelopment in areas, on North Avenue, which suffer high vacancy rates due to:

- * inadequate parking
- * physical and/or functional obsolescence
- * insufficient lot sizes

A TIF would also allow the Village to design structures which:

- * appeal to retailers
- * provide adequate parking
- * generate increased sales taxes
- * generate increased real estate taxes
- * create jobs

WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES OF A TIF TO THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK?

There are several potential disadvantages of TIFs for Oak Park:

- * no guarantee that TIF designation will actually generate new private development
- * revitalization efforts may have no significant revenue impact for the Village
- * selective TIF designation could create ill will among neighboring property owners both residential and commercial
- * creation of a TIF may foster a distorted community perception of an inequitable tax burden
- * the Village bears the responsibility for retiring debt
- * redevelopment may cause an increase in traffic flow and neighborhood safety concerns.

ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

- * Will the utilization of parcel assemblage and rezoning stimulate redevelopment on the part of private developers without the use of a TIF?
- * Given the specifications for TIF designation, will the current vacancies along North Avenue qualify for a TIF?
- * What is the current tax base and how much of an increase in the real estate tax base can be expected from redevelopment utilizing selective TIF?
- * What is the prospect for attracting new retailers on North Avenue given the current redevelopment efforts in Downtown Oak Park?
- * Is there demand for retail and/or office space along North Avenue?
- * What impact will TIF redevelopment have on neighboring properties and on the Chicago side of North Avenue?
- * What funding sources (other than TIF) are available for revitalization of North Avenue?
- * Assuming that the Village were to designate a selective TIF along North Avenue, how would the public improvements be financed; and what time frames would be established for retiring the debt?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Plan Commission recommends that the Board of Trustees take the following into account:

- * the possible negative financial impact of establishing a TIF
- * the manner in which the debt is to be repaid
- * the residential and community impact
- * the longevity of the redevelopment.

Prepared by Commissioner Carolyn Hodge-West

OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION

MINUTES

11/95 - 11/96

November 16, 1995

Present: Commissioners Steven A. Berggren, Don Glickman, Jennifer Goodsmith, David Lehman, Catherine Pidek, Clarence Ward, J. Michael Williams and Chairperson Pro Tem Mary Pat Bone; Economic Development and Planning Manager Franklin Dancy.

Absent: Commissioners Roy Newman and Carolyn Hodge West.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Pro Tem Bone called the meeting to order at 7:50 p.m. and declared that a quorum was present. Ms. Bone noted that there were four new commissioners and asked that everyone present introduce themselves and give a brief background.

1. Presentation on the Market Economic Analysis and Policy Implications for the North Avenue Commercial Corridor by Gruen Gruen & Associates

Mr. Aaron N. Gruen of Gruen Gruen & Associates introduced himself and his wife, Debra Jeans, stating that they were primarily responsible for the report provided to the Commission on the North Avenue Commercial Corridor, a commercial area which had been stagnant in recent years. He noted that they had been asked to do an independent assessment of this area, identify opportunities for improvements and provide an information base for a successful implementation program. After analyzing the real estate economics and reviewing the feasibility of market opportunities, a policy for consideration had been developed.

Ms. Jeans stated that, like many older commercial areas, North Avenue had a number of diverse uses. There had been visual signs of steady deterioration of property and increased turnover at some locations over the periods of 1984-89 and 1990-94. The area had evolved into several sub-markets and property values improved as one moved west from Austin to Harlem in Oak Park. A key finding was that some properties were obsolete, could not compete in the current market demand, and were plagued with high vacancy rates and low rent. However, she pointed out there were examples of successful reinvestment and redevelopment such as Oak Park Eye Center, Sears, Roebuck and St. Paul Bank (major anchors), Boston Market, North Ridge Shopping Center at Ridgeland, Osco Drugs and a planned redevelopment at Oak Park Avenue for new commercial uses. However, there were still a number of properties for sale on North Avenue.

Ms. Jeans continued: There were three generalizations that could be determined from this analysis--inadequate parking, fear of crime and obsolete buildings. Further, the proposed street widening by the Illinois Dept. of Transportation (IDOT) had caused merchants some concern and uncertainty. This area was not strong enough to withstand any negative impacts. It was recommended that the Village should facilitate redevelopment to strengthen the area and work with IDOT regarding the proposed street widening.

Ms. Jeans gave an overview of the demographics in that area as well as the commercial use potential. The research concluded that the area could tap into an upscale market which had not been met and she gave examples of other successful commercial areas in adjacent municipalities, such as the River Forest Town Center and Melrose Park strip shopping districts. She recommended the development of consumer uses geared to families, such as indoor game centers, sporting goods stores, specialty stores, home & hearth centers, bakeries and children's stores which, she felt would also establish a demand for new restaurants. She noted that J. C. Licht Hardware store and Gottskind Children Shoe Store had been very successful in that area due to their high quality products and service.

Ms. Jeans concluded that there was an oversupply of office space in that area resulting in a very high vacancy rate, approximately 25%. Further, it was estimated that this area would not significantly improve employment opportunities for the rest of this century. However, there was one advantage, the use of office space for medical uses in an area adjacent to residences.

Mr. Gruen and Ms. Jeans fielded questions from the Commission: It was doubtful that the street widening proposal would come to fruition. The plan had been on paper for a number of years and the funding had not been available. Mr. Gruen suggested that the property owners could negotiate with IDOT to sell off large parcels of land, rather than frontage properties, at lucrative prices, to be used for redevelopment projects and/or parking, thereby turning a negative into an opportunity.

Mr. Gruen responded further: According to market findings, Oak Park and Chicago would have to coordinate efforts to increase parking availability on North Avenue as well as marketing strategies that would revitalize the commercial area.

In response to Chairperson Pro Tem Bone, Mr. Dancy stated that the Plan Commission role in this study of the North Avenue commercial corridor would be to review the report and make recommendations to the Board as to what would be the best approach for revitalization of the area. He added that Village staff had been conducting interviews of business owners who presented their concerns to them. In particular, the owners felt that the perception of crime in that area discouraged business activity. Furthermore, the lack of parking facilities discouraged quality restaurants to locate on that street. On the other hand, Sears had increased its sales by approximately 10% in the last two years. They have managed to become competitive with other large chain stores and have reaped a stable and steady sales market.

Regarding the IDOT plan, Mr. Dancy stated that the staff had not been able to get a copy of that plan as yet, but would continue to try to acquire one. Mr. Gruen stated that the IDOT plan included widening of the street further west, through River Forest and Melrose Park. He stated that River Forest had been analyzing the aesthetic effects of the plan rather than the economic factors and that further review of the area would determine whether it would lend itself to redevelopment.

In response to Commission questions, Mr. Dancy stated that the rationale for widening North Avenue was to alleviate the overload of traffic on expressways.

In further response, Mr. Gruen stated that the high turnover in the office buildings was because the available office space was outdated and not competitive. The trend for medical offices was to locate them in or adjacent to hospitals, particularly further west of Oak Park. He advised that the planning process for redevelopment of office space was very

important and that the Village would need to work with the building owners to offer them direction on how to successfully revitalize their properties.

In conclusion, Mr. Gruen made the following comments in response to Plan Commission concerns: Dealing with the possibility of the IDOT plan being implemented caused frustration in the process; however, the revitalizing of the North Avenue corridor could be accomplished by working with the owners, supporting them in their programs for enlarging their market, and responding to the diversity of the area. He re-emphasized the importance of expanding the parking availability. Regarding the matter of enforcing building and zoning codes, Oak Park had been doing that, he said. More cooperation was needed with Chicago in that area and in the improvement of parking problems.

Chairperson Pro Tem called a recess at 9:00 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 9:10 p.m.

2. Setting of Tentative 1996 Calendar to Consider Pending Applications for Accessory Tour Homes

Mr. Dancy gave an overview of the activities of the Plan Commission during 1995 and pointed out that it had taken four years to complete the processing of the Dugals' application for a special-use permit to operate an accessory tour home at 333 Forest. Part of the process, he said, included the passage of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance permitting this use and he referred to the problems caused by the 500 foot requirement for space between accessory tour homes included in that amendment.

Mr. Dancy explained that the Ruoff and DeCaro families had submitted applications for accessory tour home special-use permits; however, the necessary information had not been provided to him on either of these applications. He advised that he had sent a letter to these applicants indicating that they would need to re-apply as their applications reflected a lack of compliance with the rules and regulations of the recently passed ordinance. He had not heard anything to date. A lively discussion ensued regarding the accessory tour home applications and the Plan Commission's role in that process.

Commissioner Bone provided the following orientation information to the new commissioners: The Commission did not necessarily have to meet each and every month; it depended on whether the Board had referred an application for special-use permits, zoning matters, or other types of reviews to the Commission. On the other hand, it could be possible that the Plan Commission might have to continue a public hearing and meet twice in one month. She explained that the third Thursday of the month should be set aside as a usual meeting night and noted that a set of guidelines would be sent out to the commissioners for their information. The next meeting would be scheduled for the third Thursday in January, 1996, the 18th.

The Commissioners also discussed the next step regarding the North Avenue corridor plan. Sara Richert, Vice-President of the Oak Park Development Corporation (OPDC) and Board member of the North Avenue Business Association, stated she would be willing to work with the Plan Commission to develop a recommendation to the Village Board. Mr. Dancy agreed to contact the Village Board to receive direction as to how the Plan Commission was expected to proceed regarding the North Avenue Commercial Corridor study.

3. Approval of Minutes: October 12, 1995

The Commission consensus was to defer approval of the above minutes as two out of the three people in attendance were not present.

4. Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Goodsmith, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was unanimously adopted and the meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edith J. Reposh, Recorder.

Minutes of a meeting of the
PLAN COMMISSION of the
Village of Oak Park-7:30 p.m.
Virginia R. Cassin Room,
Council Chambers - Village Hall

PLAN COMMISSION

February 22, 1996

Present: Commissioners Steven A. Berggren, Jennifer Goodsmith, David Lehman, Roy Newman, Catherine Pidek, Clarence Ward, Carolyn Hodge West, J. Michael Williams and Chairperson Don Glickman; and Economic Development & Planning Manager Franklin Dancy.

Absent: None.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Glickman called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. and declared that a quorum was present.

1. RESOLUTIONS COMMENDING THE SERVICE OF FORMER PLAN COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Dancy stated that staff had prepared Resolutions in recognition of the service of former Commissioners Mary Pat Bone, Robin Heiss and Joseph Walsh, as well as for former Chairperson Roderick Palmore; said Resolutions were signed and endorsed by Chairperson Glickman.

Chairperson Glickman read the above described Resolutions and presented them to former Chairperson Palmore and former Commissioner Walsh who were present at the meeting.

2. CONTINUED DISCUSSION : MARKET AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NORTH AVENUE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Chairperson Glickman stated that the Commission would hear testimony from property owners, business developers along the North Avenue commercial corridor, representatives of the North Avenue Business Association, Sara Rickert, Vice-President of the Oak Park Development Corporation and interested citizens. Mr. Aaron Gruen of Gruen + Gruen Associates, authors of the study, was also present to respond to questions. He stated further that Commissioner Williams had met with the business developers and property owners to discuss the Plan Commission's role in developing recommendations to the Village Board regarding North Avenue and asked that Commissioner Williams give his report.

Commissioner Williams reported that he and the business developers and property owners had reflected on the task to be undertaken and discussed what the North Avenue Business corridor might look like after it had been redeveloped. He referred particularly to Richard Blaurock, President of the North Avenue Business Association (NABA), Realtor Terry Yaeger and Gruen + Gruen Associates who provided input. He then introduced Mr. Blaurock who would testify before the Commission.

Mr. Blaurock stated that he was a third generation Oak Park resident who decided to return to Oak Park in 1988, at which time, he began development of a shopping strip at North Avenue and Ridgeland. He noted that his main expertise was as a realtor and that he owned three other shopping centers. He stated that he was on the Board of Trustees of the Oak Park YMCA and provided consultant services for three Chicago area hospitals. Mr. Blaurock provided the following facts:

1. The surrounding community consisted of middle-income families, averaging \$35,000 per household and could support a well-developed shopping area on North Avenue;
2. The North Avenue corridor traffic consisted of approximately 45,000 automobiles per day; and
3. The current buildings were functionally obsolete and the parking accommodations were inadequate.

Mr. Blaurock felt that the North Avenue business corridor had great potential. He made recommendations which included tearing down old buildings and rebuilding more functional ones that would provide adjacent parking areas. He described the types of businesses which would be viable in that area and recommended that the Village of Oak Park reduce the barriers for certain types of businesses in order to create a business-friendly atmosphere. He further recommended improving the tax base and felt that the perception of this area as being unsafe could be mitigated if building owners would work with the police department to beef up security.

Sara Rickert, Vice-President of OPDC, explained that the role of her corporation was: 1) to administer the long-standing commercial loan program and the new micro-loan program; 2) maintain an inventory of commercial properties and assist in marketing those available properties; 3) provide architectural and design assistance through the Facade Grant Program; 4) define and improve the gateways of Oak Park including coordination with neighboring communities; and 5) serve as liaison to the business associations of Oak Park, such as the North Avenue Business Association, in order to strengthen them. She explained that OPDC had two full time staff persons (President and Vice-President) and two part-time staffers (Office Manager and Administrative Assistant) who carried out the programs described above.

In response to Commissioner Berggren, Mr. Blaurock stated that there was a great disparity in taxing of business properties between Oak Park and other thriving business communities. He gave the example of 35 cents per square foot in Du Page County and 25 cents per square foot in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, as compared to \$6.25 per square foot in Oak Park. He added that developers would take a greater interest in Oak Park if there were tax incentives and less restrictions, providing a more friendly business environment.

Commissioner Williams asked Mr. Blaurock whether it would be better to provide parking in a side yard or at the rear of the business, provided all other things were equal. Mr. Blaurock replied that it would depend on the size of the property and the economics of the purchase of adjacent real estate. Commissioner Williams asked further what could be done to attract more business owners. Mr. Blaurock felt that an amended Comprehensive Plan should be developed to provide recommendations for business expansion and renovation in the various retail shopping areas in Oak Park, including the North Avenue corridor.

Commissioner Goodsmith commented that the Village repeatedly encountered resistance to adjacent commercial areas by residential property owners. Mr. Blaurock recommended that buffer zones be established between business and residential areas in order to mitigate any adverse effects. Further, he said that the neighboring residents could be convinced of the benefits of nearby shopping mixed with professional offices on North Avenue. He noted the existence of other small shopping strips located further west on North Avenue in River Forest/Elmwood Park and Melrose Park that had been very successful.

A discussion ensued regarding the merits of amending the Comprehensive Plan to provide guidelines for updated shopping areas on North Avenue. Mr. Dancy agreed that this would be a positive step in revitalizing that area and that the Plan Commission should include amending the Comprehensive Plan in its recommendations to the Village Board. He added that the new guidelines would have to encompass amending the Zoning Ordinance for higher density rezoning in the North Avenue commercial corridor.

In response to Commissioner Goodsmith, Mr. Blaurock felt that the timeframe in which to accomplish the recommended changes successfully depended on one's point of view; when commercial owners perceived their buildings as being no longer economically viable, they would sell them to developers who could replace them with updated business properties and/or parking areas. This would result in an increase in the tax base, increased commercial revenue and a rise in property values.

In response to Chairperson Glickman, Ms. Rickert stated that OPDC had been made a concerted effort to market commercial properties in the North Avenue corridor, but it had not achieved a great deal of success. She noted that the problem of inadequate parking was a major barrier in attracting successful business enterprises, such as Amoco and McDonald's to this area. Mr. Blaurock added that the current zoning restrictions were another major factor; he recommended further that the permitted uses be broadened as some of the restricted uses could be very successful in that area.

Mr. Gruen stated that he wouldn't recommend certain uses at certain locations since those buildings might not be able to respond to drastic market changes. Mr. Blaurock noted that developers of certain businesses such as Buona Beef, Oil Express and Osco Drugs had to be submitted to public hearings for zoning variations in order to be located in this commercial corridor; furthermore, he felt that businesses containing coin-operated machines should be included in the permitted uses to meet the needs of the changing nature of retail demand.

Commissioner Newman felt that the most important issue was to consolidate parcels large enough for business developments and he was not sure whether changing the nature of North Avenue retailers was the path to follow. He felt that the Plan Commission should set priorities on what steps should be taken to revitalize that area. Regarding the permitted uses in shopping strips in Southern California referred to by Mr. Blaurock, he was not sure that would apply to midwestern retail demand.

The discussion continued and Mr. Blaurock agreed that certain basic problems had to be solved in all the commercial areas in Oak Park before an expanding retail market could be developed. He recommended that business properties built before 1920 which were no longer functional should be purchased for demolition purposes in order to provide additional parking lots and that parking areas be constructed adjacent to culs-de-sac.

Commissioner Newman pointed out that the Plan Commission would be grappling with these problems in the next month or two in order to make its recommendations to the Board. After further discussion regarding the matter, Chairperson Glickman stated that this portion of the discussion would be concluded and he called a five-minute recess at 9:30 p.m.

Chairperson Glickman reconvened the meeting at 9:40 p.m. and asked Commissioners Newman and West to report on their contacts with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the City of Chicago regarding the future of North Avenue.

Commissioner Hodge West stated that she had a meeting with Ms. Ellen O'Connor, Deputy Commissioner of the Planning Department of the City of Chicago. Commissioner Hodge West was told that the Planning Department was being re-organized and management was currently in the process of identifying the appropriate staff liaison to work with the Oak Park Plan Commission. Once this individual was identified, Ms. O'Connor would forward that information to Commissioner Hodge West who, in turn, would notify Mr. Dancy.

Commissioner Newman stated he had contacted IDOT which advised him that no funding had been allocated for the North Avenue widening project as yet; however, preliminary traffic and engineering studies had been initiated and were part of a five-year plan. His conclusion was that, at the present time, nothing substantial was "in the pipeline." He would be receiving the official IDOT document regarding this project and he would provide it to Mr. Dancy and the Plan Commission.

The Commission reviewed the diagram of the Zoning Districts for the City of Chicago side of North Avenue study area. There had been a problem in contacting certain business owners as they were either difficult to reach or were from other countries. However, these properties had been managed completely by the tenants and the original owners in some cases could be irrelevant. It was noted that there had not been enough information on most of the properties to make a sound judgment. The Commission discussed property values and projected tax revenues for the existing businesses, but no conclusions were reached.

Chairperson Glickman asked for a consensus from the Commission regarding the next phase of discussion on the North Avenue commercial corridor to be addressed at the next meeting. The consensus was to invite Realtor David King, owner of several office buildings in that area to provide his input and to follow up on the outstanding issues discussed at the present meeting. Staff was directed to research properties on that street and provide updated information. Commissioner Goodsmith stated that she and other commissioners needed to study the meanings of certain zoning districts, such as the B-1 Zone District.

3. OTHER BUSINESS - ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN PRO TEM

Mr. Dancy stated that since Mary Pat Bone resigned, it would be necessary to elect another Chairman Pro Tem. Carolyn Hodge West volunteered to fill that capacity and she was elected unanimously by acclamation for the office of Chairman Pro Tem.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - JANUARY 18, 1996

It was moved by Commissioner Goodsmith, seconded by Commissioner Berggren, to approve the minutes of January 18, 1996 with two amendments. The motion was unanimously adopted.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED

The next meeting of the Plan Commission was scheduled for Thursday, March 21, 1996. Mr. Dancy advised that he had sent updated letters to applicants for tour home accessory use permits, but had received no response to date.

Respectfully submitted,

Edith J. Reposh, Recorder.

April 18, 1996

Present: Commissioners Steven A. Berggren (7:40), Jennifer Goodsmith (8:30), David Lehman, Roy Newman, Catherine Pidek (7:40), Carolyn Hodge West, Chairperson Don Glickman; Economic Development & Planning Manager Franklin Dancy, Consultants Aaron Gruen and Debra Jeans.

Absent: Commissioners Clarence Ward and J. Michael Williams.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Glickman called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. and declared that a quorum was present.

1. CONTINUED WORKSHOP: DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN COMMISSION POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NORTH AVENUE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Chairperson Glickman stated that the workshop would continue until 9:00 p.m., after which the Commission will receive comments from citizens and other interested parties. The Commission would then attempt to develop the policy recommendations for the Village Board.

Aaron Gruen of Gruen & Gruen Associates, referred to his draft policy recommendations sent to Mr. Dancy for the Plan Commission review. He stated that he would lead a discussion and answer questions regarding the development of a final draft of the report to the Board.

The following issues were raised regarding the revitalization plan for North Avenue's commercial corridor

1. Obsolete, deteriorating and non-functional buildings; physical constraints that could not be remedied.
2. David King, stated he was president of a small real estate firm, and provided the Commission with written information regarding his 7-story office building located at 6525 West North Avenue, as well as a diagram identifying and providing background on all commercial properties from Austin to Harlem on North Avenue. He explained that his primary business was the sale, lease and management of office buildings in west Cook County and was currently marketing four properties on North Avenue.

Mr. King continued: Of the two types of commercial properties, office and retail, office buildings occupied 10% of the commercial properties on North Avenue. He provided his assessment of the status of the commercial properties in this corridor and referred to other buildings being turned over in the North Avenue commercial corridor. He felt that the high density of traffic on North Avenue would be conducive to a wide

range of retail businesses; however, professional offices had not been very successful on that street, partially due to insufficient parking.

On the other hand, Mr. King pointed out, there was a high demand for office buildings on Lake Street, whereas retail businesses were not flourishing on that street. Mr. King noted that there had been a consistent 33% vacancy in office buildings on North Avenue due to the parking problem, and except for the building at 1515 North Harlem, which had adequate parking, that was the pattern. The reason for this success was that the Village had purchased properties in that area, demolished them and provided parking lots. In conclusion, he said the key to successful commercial property had to be adequate parking.

Mr. King fielded questions from the Commission: Regarding the reason for the attraction of professional offices on Lake Street compared to North Avenue, he felt that access to public transportation, such as buses, Metra and the reopening of the Green Line, had been a major factor; a number of major restaurants on Lake Street had also contributed to the success of office buildings. Commissioner Pidek noted that there could be other issues such as real estate taxes which contributed to the high vacancy rate on North Avenue. In response to Commissioner Goodsmith, Mr. King noted that rents on North Avenue property were 25% higher than other areas. The real estate taxes were \$8 to \$12 per square foot for office space and \$10 to \$24 per square foot for retail space on North Avenue. On Lake Street, he said, the higher rents were for office space, and he pointed out that the rents in the new River Forest Town Center were approximately \$35 per square foot. He expected to see a high turnover in that Center.

Commissioner Newman commented that the downturn of medical office space was due to the decrease in doctors' private practices; in fact, most medical offices were located in hospitals or large complexes for combined Health Maintenance Organizations. Mr. King explained that medical complexes had been consistently relocating to areas where adequate adjacent parking was available. Chairperson Glickman wondered if there wasn't a demand for offices for attorneys, insurance agents and sales. Mr. King explained that office buildings such as the one at 6525 North Avenue would be sold for retail businesses; however, he warned that the present zoning regulations prohibiting certain types of uses such as automotive shops, would pose a problem in filling the retail vacancies.

Further discussion ensued during which Chairperson Glickman pointed out that some office buildings had become functionally obsolete due to lack of elevators and failure to comply with the American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Commissioner Newman felt that the volume of traffic did not impact the retail market as much as the need to improve the infrastructure. Chairperson Glickman wondered if there were any other businesses, besides automotive shops, currently prohibited by the Zoning Ordinance that would be attracted to this area, such as fast food restaurants. Mr. King pointed out that fast food chains, particularly national franchises, demanded large plots of land with huge parking lots.

Jeff Cermak, C. B. Commercial, Chicago provided his view on the problems of attracting commercial uses to North Avenue. His view was that the real estate taxes were out of line, regardless of whether rentals were \$15, \$20 or more per square foot. Chairperson Glickman commented that some retail uses further east on North Avenue such as Osco had done fairly well. Further discussion focused on obsolete real estate which needed to be demolished and converted to parking areas.

Staff members from the City of Chicago Planning and Development Department provided input to the Commission based on their perspective of the North Avenue commercial corridor. Mr. Kunze, who was assigned to the Chicago Retail Program, stated that Chicago had been grappling with similar issues as Oak Park, such as obsolete buildings, lack of parking, low demand for professional office space. Ms. Clarissa Petway, who worked on the North Avenue Planning Team, said that the North Avenue Business Associations, East and West, had been working toward expansion of economic development on that street. Mr. Greg Longhini, Assistant to the Commissioner of Planning and Development, stated that the City of Chicago was in the process of exploring its options; however, the recent reorganization of his department had delayed efforts to address this issue.

In response to Commissioner Newman, Mr. Kunze stated that the Chicago Planning & Development Department would be willing to work with the Oak Park Plan Commission in a collaborative effort to make recommendations for revitalizing the North Avenue commercial corridor. In response to a Commission question, Ms. Petway explained that NABA West consisted of the area from Austin to Harlem on the Chicago side; NABA East consisted of the area east of Austin.

The Commission discussed the possibility of recommending the creation of a Tax Increment Finance District in order to fund revitalization efforts. Further discussion included establishing a list of priorities in developing a plan. Mr. Blaurock agreed that it was an excellent idea to coordinate with the City of Chicago in a revitalization plan.

Sara Rickert, Vice President of OPDC, stated that designating either a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District or a Special Service Area (SSA) District had been an effective tool in funding the redevelopment of commercial areas. She felt that Oak Park could enter into an intergovernmental agreement with an adjacent municipality, such as Chicago, for the designation of either a TIF or an SSA. Mr. Dancy noted that a recent Supreme Court ruling against TIFs might make this option very difficult.

In response to Commissioner Goodsmith, Mr. Blaurock replied that, even though it would mean higher taxes for property owners on North Avenue if an SSA were established, they would stand to gain appreciably. Furthermore, he said, there still existed a wide range in the square foot rentals for office buildings, some as low as \$8 or less and some much higher. However, he said, if the taxes were raised, the owners would probably find it worthwhile because of the increased occupancies to be gained. Mr. Blaurock felt that Oak Park could compete in this market even with higher taxes.

The Commission discussed incentives for retailers and what attracted them, including the demands of national franchises such as Home Depot and Super K-Marts. It was noted that huge blocks of land had to be vacated to accommodate these types of retailers. Mr. Blaurock stated he would not suggest vacating large parcels of land. Commissioner Lehman felt that in most commercial corridors, groupings of certain types of retailers existed which developed a theme. He recommended that the Commission attempt to attract upscale commercial groupings.

Chairperson Glickman called a recess at 9:10 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 9:25. Discussion resumed with a focus on how to draw up a plan which would attract viable retail uses and eliminate obsolete office buildings, replacing them with much-needed parking. Commissioner Hodge West felt

that the Commission needed to review the Zoning Ordinance restrictions in order to be knowledgeable on what options existed for implementation in a redevelopment plan. Commissioner Goodsmith agreed and noted further that it might be necessary to recommend acquisition of some residential properties as part of this plan. Commissioner Hodge West wondered why Lake Street was more attractive for office space, rather than retail uses, and on North Avenue, the opposite was true.

Commissioner Berggren responded that there were EPA and ADA problems for office buildings on North Avenue, as well as a lack of parking and a perception of a safety issue. Lake Street provided a better environment for office buildings.

Commissioner Glickman asked the Commission whether it needed additional input from realtors or other experts, or whether it was ready to develop a recommendation to the Board. This triggered further discussion, during which the Commissioners weighed the pros and cons of how much more input and study would be necessary. Commissioner Williams felt more input was necessary; Commissioner Hodge West suggested a field trip with the Chicago Planning & Development Department to observe successful business districts. Commissioner Newman felt that the Commission was ready to at least begin the process of drafting a recommendation to the Board. This would be based on the last few months of hearing testimony and gathering information. Commissioner Goodsmith agreed, stating that the Commission could study this for another year and still have the same questions; she felt that, although planning was good, doing was better. However, she felt that zoning issues should be studied.

Commissioner Williams suggested contacting River Forest to get their input regarding their recent commercial redevelopment. Commissioner Berggren recommended getting ideas from successful business owners. Commissioner Newman felt that a field trip would be most helpful and it would be valuable to view commercial areas as a group and discuss a variety of observations.

Commissioner Pidek asked Mr. Dancy where the Plan Commission could receive advice on precedent and/or ideas for this type of plan. Mr. Dancy stated he would contact the American Planning Association (APA) and the Planning Advisory Service.

The consensus of the Commission was that Commissioner Hodge West and Mr. Dancy meet with the Chicago Planning & Development Department to discuss the redevelopment plan. All Plan Commissioners were invited to join them. Further consensus was to direct Mr. Dancy to organize a field trip.

Mr. Dancy recommended further study of the Comprehensive Plan by the commissioners, particularly regarding economic development objectives. However, Commissioner Pidek did not believe the Comprehensive Plan was relevant to the Commission's task at hand. She felt studying Special Service Areas would be more beneficial.

Commissioner Goodsmith recommended the review of the final report of the North Avenue Parking Task Force and Mr. Dancy noted that the findings of this Task Force were adopted by the Village Board and were being implemented. He felt that a workshop should be set up for this purpose. After further discussion, the Commission directed Mr. Dancy to set up a workshop, and at the suggestion of Mr. Dancy, Aaron Gruen would act as the facilitator. It was agreed that this would be beneficial in beginning the task of developing a report to the Board. Mr. Dancy suggested that the

Commission would be in charge of the direction taken in the workshop and Mr. Gruen would follow. It was also agreed to follow the outline of the report submitted by Commissioner Goodsmith in the workshop. Mr. Dancy was directed to set up the workshop for the next regular meeting on Thursday, May 16, 1996.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 22, 1996

Commissioner Glickman recommended that the approval of the 2/22/96 minutes be deferred to the next meeting because they had been revised and resubmitted.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Commissioner Lehman, seconded by Commissioner Goodsmith, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was unanimously adopted and the meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edith J. Reposh, Recorder

May 16, 1996

Present: Commissioners Steven A. Berggren, Roy Newman, Catherine Pidek, Clarence Ward (7:50), Carolyn Hodge West, J. Michael Williams (7:45) and Chairperson Don Glickman.

Absent: Commissioners Jennifer Goodsmith and David Lehman.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Glickman called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. and declared that a quorum was present. He noted that Franklin Dancy would not be present at this meeting.

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES: FEBRUARY 22 AND APRIL 18, 1996**

It was moved by Commissioner Hodge West, seconded by Commissioner Pidek, to approve the minutes of February 22, 1996 as submitted. The motion was adopted.

It was moved by Commissioner Hodge West, seconded by Commissioner Newman, to approve the minutes of April 18, 1996, as submitted. The motion was adopted.

2. **WORKSHOP: DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN COMMISSION POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NORTH AVENUE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR**

Chairperson Glickman recognized Aaron and Debbie Gruen of Gruen, Gruen + Associates who would conduct the workshop. However, he asked that, prior to the actual workshop, the Commission discuss and consider the recommendation of Commissioner Williams that citizens and citizen groups in the area of the North Avenue commercial corridor be contacted in order that they might provide input in reaction to the first draft of the Plan Commission's policy recommendation. This would involve publicizing the meeting similar to when public hearings were conducted.

The commissioners discussed the method of publicizing the meeting and the consensus was to publish in the next publication of the Oak Park Newsletter and to place a notice in the local newspapers. During discussion, Commissioner Newman commented that homeowners and non-business residents had the right to be included in a forum regarding this issue; however, he felt they should have been included at the same time that the business owners and developers were invited. He felt the Commission would run the risk of slowing down the process since these citizens had not provided input from the beginning.

In response to Commissioner Hodge West, Mr. Gruen stated that the Survey published by his firm had not formally included residents of the area.

Commissioner Williams felt that not including those citizens would be a terrible mistake and that the Commission owed them a right to provide input. Commissioner Berggren agreed; Chairperson Glickman saw no problem with this recommendation. Several commissioners speculated whether any citizens groups existed in that area and Commissioner Williams suggested contacting Hatch Elementary School to obtain information regarding the existence of such citizen groups. Another resource recommended was contacting the Neighborhood Watch Program.

Commissioner Hodge West felt strongly that it was the responsibility of the Plan Commission to contact all citizens and citizen groups to request their input. Commissioner Pidek noted that it would be counter productive to draft a policy statement to the Village Board and not consider possible options recommended by citizens.

It was the consensus of the Commission to invite citizens and citizen groups in that area to provide input regarding the policy recommendation to the Board. Chairperson Glickman stated that he would contact staff regarding placing an announcement in the Village newsletter and local newspapers as soon as possible.

Aaron Gruen introduced his wife, Debbie, and stated that she would assist in drafting the recommendation. He asked that the first phase of this Herculean task begin with generating a list of goals and objectives for the revitalization of the North Avenue commercial corridor. These goals and objectives would be written down by Debbie on the large sheets attached to an easel for clear view to everyone. Based on this list, a policy recommendation would be drafted for Plan Commission review and consideration at the next meeting. The second phase would be to consider how to make that vision happen through actions, and noting the advantages and disadvantages of following certain options. Mr. Gruen suggested that the Commission encourage development projects and improve the expansion of business in order to increase tax revenues.

Commissioner Newman stated that the first goal should be to look for ways to stop the decline of economic development on North Avenue and stabilize the area.

Chairperson Glickman stated that methods should be studied to revitalize the area according to the demands of today's market. The commissioners wrestled with the specifics of goal setting and made recommendations which included review of priorities; economic stabilization, methods to improve sales; solutions to parking problems; encouragement of public transportation; aesthetic improvements; using the Comprehensive Plan criteria; programs and actions which would promote an improved fiscal environment; collaboration with the City of Chicago; attracting medical complexes which respond to the 90's approach to medical offices; and reviewing zoning uses that would encourage a wider range of businesses.

Commissioner Hodge West developed a list of five major goals with their sub-categories which she felt addressed all of the recommendations expressed by commissioners in a streamlined form as follows:

1. Enhance local businesses through a) improving parking (coordination with Illinois Dept. of Transportation IDOT); b) using a mixed use of parking; and c) strengthening the existing businesses.

2. Encourage private development with the following menu of options: a) Tax Increment Financing (TIF); b) determine what is available/what is missing; c) expanding zoning options; d) offering micro loans; and e) using CDBG funding.
3. Maintain aesthetic appeal/safety and security through: a) Comprehensive Plan criteria; b) brighter signage lighting; and c) enhancement of assemblage of parcels.
4. Increase tax base for Oak Park through: a) job creation; b) sales taxes; and c) property taxes.
5. Establish a collaborative process among local businesses both on the Oak Park and Chicago sides of the street.

Chairperson Glickman called a recess at 9:05 p.m. and the meeting reconvened at 9:18 p.m.

In response to Commission concerns, Mr. Gruen noted that in the options listed for the recommendation to encourage private development, it would not be necessary to be specific on the issue of a TIF District. He noted further that other options might include the purchase of properties by the Village in order to attract and facilitate a major business development.

The Commission discussed the following addition to the above list: 6. Criteria To Measure Impacts.

During discussion of the above, Mr. Gruen felt that the Village should encourage as much private development as possible in order to achieve economic development, instead of public subsidies, except for the improvement of the infrastructure.

In response to concerns about the widening proposal for North Avenue by the Illinois Department of Transportation, Commissioner Newman, who had been in constant contact with IDOT, assured the Commission that this project was not in the five-year plan; therefore, it would be at least 15 years before any major changes could possibly take place.

It was the consensus of the Commission that IDOT should be notified of the revitalization plans, and further, to ask them to work with Oak Park on the project. Ms. Rickert reminded the Commission that anytime changes to landscaping and the like were anticipated along a state right-of-way such as North Avenue, IDOT would have to be contacted.

After some discussion, Recommendation no. 1 was revised to read: 1. Strengthen Conditions to Enhance Local Businesses through: a) parking improvements; b) notifying IDOT by letter of Oak Park's revitalization plan; using Parking Authority funds as part of a package of incentives for redevelopment; d) considering expansion of parking permits; creating diagonal parking at culs-de-sac and parkways; and, e) considering meter changes for expanded retail uses.

The Commission discussed options that the Board could consider such as expanding the allowed mixed uses of property such as, perhaps, for certain types of entertainment facilities, and revising medical uses to accommodate today's health care

market. In addition, the possibility of expanding the allowed zoning uses as well as relaxing certain zoning restrictions was considered for inclusion in the future recommendations. Commissioner Williams suggested that guidelines were needed for developing the Commission's report to the Board in an expeditious manner.

Sara Rickert, Vice-President of Oak Park Development Corporation, commented that she had expected the Plan Commission approach to entail a block by block review of businesses and office buildings, with a plan on how these businesses would be updated and revitalized, as well where new businesses, such as possibly a hotel complex, could be persuaded to locate.

Aaron and Debbie Gruen stated that they had not envisioned a comprehensive and specific block-by-block revitalization plan to be developed at this time, particularly in the first phase. They advised the Commission that the first draft of the policy recommendation would be given to Mr. Dancy for staff comments and then brought to the Plan Commission for its review. The Gruens stated further that, perhaps, the second phase could be more specific. The Commissioners agreed and it was noted that much progress had been made in this process.

Chairman Glickman noted that Commissioner Ward had agreed to organize a field trip for the entire Plan Commission, wherein certain successful business developments would be visited. Ms. Rickert agreed to assist in this effort.

Next Meeting Scheduled

Chairman Glickman suggested that at the next meeting, the Commission discuss expansion of zoning uses and asked commissioners to be prepared to submit a list of uses for consideration. Mr. Gruen stated that he would attach an addendum to the policy recommendation which would contain the list of considered uses discussed at this meeting.

Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Pidek, seconded by Commissioner Newman, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was adopted and the meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edith J. Reposh, Recorder

Minutes of a meeting of the
PLAN COMMISSION of the
Village of Oak Park
June 20, 1996 – 7:30
Council Chambers

Present: Commissioners Steve Berggren, Jennifer GoodSmith, David Lehman (7:58pm) and J. Michael Williams; and chairperson Don Glickman; and Planning & Economic Development Manager Franklin A. Dancy

Guests: Aaron Gruen and Debra Jeans

Call to Order

Chair Glickman called the meeting to order at 7:49pm. A roll call was taken, and it was determined that a quorum wasn't present to that time. A quorum was achieved at 7:58pm with the arrival of Commissioner Lehman.

North Avenue Study

As way of background Chair Glickman and Mr. Dancy stated:

- The Plan Commission (PC) has been charged by the Village Board to do a study of North Avenue and to make a report to the Board regarding the revitalization of the area. The report will be a series of recommendations.
- A consultant was hired to provide information and direction.
- The entire length of North Avenue in Oak Park is being studied, Harlem to Austin.
- Village of Oak Park staff is working with staff from the City of Chicago to try to coordinate projects along North Avenue.
- The PC has met with various developers and business owners along North Avenue over the last couple of months.
- At this evening's meeting, the PC would take input from residents of the area.
- The PC is in search of a wide variety of points of view on this subject.
- The PC has developed preliminary goals, which were summarized in Mr. Dancy's June 12, 1996 memo to the PC.
- The PC has discussed extending the type of uses allowed in the area or relaxing the zoning in specific areas.
- The PC has not yet made any decisions or drafted any recommendations.
- The businesses were contacted first because it could easily be done through the North Avenue Business Association (NABA).
- Residents were notified using the Village's list of water bill payers in the 1200 blocks along the north border of Oak Park.

Mr. Gruen stated:

- In making its recommendations to the PC, the consultants looked at density of use, marketability of the area, and the real estate economics of the area.

- Recommendations included:
 - Oak Park and Chicago working together to maximize the effect on the area.
 - Plan for market shift from retail uses.
 - Augment parking in the area.
 - Assist developers in acquiring land areas big enough to make a significant impact.
 - Look at rezoning area to be less restrictive.
 - Target specific areas for development.

Chair Glickman asked those wishing to testify to rise for the oath. Mr. Dancy administered the oath to those standing.

Burton Adlerblum, 1231 N. Grove:

- He has a problem with the issues in the area versus the goals for economic development.
- He is concerned about where compromises will be made.
- That there will be coordination with the City of Chicago is delightful.
- Resident-only on-street parking stickers have worked in Chicago. They can work in Oak Park.
- The Village is creating two classes of property owners. Those on the 1100 blocks and those on the 1200 blocks.
- He hopes cul-de-sacs and one-way streets are in the future for this area.
- Cul-de-sacs would create more parking while protecting the residents.
- He was involved with the "Power of the Village" as part of the Downtown Oak Park redevelopment; i.e. eminent domain. He urges the Village not to pull the same in this area.
- Something has to be done about residents not being able to park in front of their homes.
- If the wrong decisions are made regarding this area, the Village will be destroying the property value of the 1200 blocks.

Rita Lee Russo, 1227 Rossell:

- She feels bad that North Avenue is going down hill.
- Being located near North Avenue is a minus when trying to sell a home.
- Years ago the residents were informed if a sign was being changed down the street. Now, residents don't know about plans for a major demolition until they see it starting for themselves; i.e. Capers.
- She wants to be part of finding a solution for North Avenue. Residents should have input into what types of businesses the Village is bringing to the area. The president of NABA should inform residents of plans.
- Subsidize homeowners rather than businesses. Her valuation just went up \$4,000.
- No metermaids are ever in the area ticketing.
- Parking is a big issue.
- The mall at Ridgeland will increase the congestion of traffic on Rosselle.
- Do not jeopardize the residents of the 1200 blocks.

Obermeier, 1230 N. Ridgeland:

- Cars and pedestrians go down the alleys.
- Trash is always in the yard.
- More business on North Avenue will create more traffic in the area, making parking and safety worse.
- Cars coming out of Osco's are suppose to go north to North Avenue. Instead, they go south down the alley.
- The Village has to do something.

Jerry Clark, 1233 N. Humphrey:

- She came to the Village last year about the traffic on Humphrey.
- There is a sign in front of the house stating a diverter is going to be in, but nothing has happened. When she asked the Village Engineer, she was told the funds had been moved to another project, which was considered a priority.
- There is a line of cars on front of the house night and day. She can't get out of her garage.
- She will not sit still and allow a business to go in on North Avenue that will increase the traffic and parking problems.
- Cars pay no attention to the sign prohibiting traffic down the alley.
- She has to pick up trash everyday.
- Noise is another problem.
- The Village would have a great revenue source if it ticketed all the cars that are illegally parked in the 1200 blocks.
- The Village has to be careful what kind of businesses go in on North Avenue.

Barb Manetti, 1234 N. East Avenue:

- She is both a resident of the area and a business owner in the area. Her business on North Avenue is located right across the alley from her residence.
- She is in a unique position to see both sides of the issue.
- She appeared before the Parking & Traffic Commission about the cul-de-sac at Fair Oaks. The Commission had its mind made up before the business ever had a chance to have input. The residents wanted it, so they got it. All it does is divert traffic down the alley.
- The speed of traffic is increasing but the few speeding tickets that are dispensed are thrown out of court.
- There is nowhere for her clients to park. Two-hour parking is not enough. She ends up feeding the meter for her clients. Her employees park in her driveway.
- Ticket prices have jumped from \$5 to \$20.
- With parking already a problem, what will happen if IDOT removes parking from North Avenue completely?

Patricia McDonald, 1201 N. Grove:

- She sympathizes with the business, but it is not fair for cars to parked in front of the houses all day long.
- Her taxes have gone up in 12 years from \$3,000 to \$10,000.

- Customers/clients in Downtown Oak Park walk from parking lots/garages. She is in favor of parking lots being built on North Avenue to handle all the cars in the area.
- She hopes the new businesses that would go in on North Avenue will be of quality.
- Five years ago, businesses wanted 2-hour on-street parking for employees, and they got it. Now it is out of control.
- There is no coordination of communication. Why are residents not kept up to date?
- Attract businesses that won't erode the neighborhood with more people and noise. Suggestions: clothing store, high end business, restaurant, beverage place, eatery, bakery, health food store, linen shop, bookstore.
- Don't bring in non-desirable people.

Henry Karpinski, 1206 N. Marion:

- He is a 16-year resident.
- Businesses bring in traffic and speeding.
- Residents should organize and petition the Village for cul-de-sacs to preserve the peacefulness of their streets.
- Businesses should make sure they have enough parking for their employees and customers before they move in.
- It's residents versus developers, who are only in it to make a buck without any concern for the neighborhoods.

Steve Zebovitz, 1216 Edmer:

- A Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) should be considered. Control the businesses that are coming in.
- If a TIF is established, the Village will be able to control what businesses go in.
- Trac Auto has tried to be a good neighbor. The fence has protected the neighbors.

In closing, Mr. Gruen noted that the North Avenue Study suggested that the zoning in the area be reexamined and the permitted uses be reviewed.

Other Business

The Commission discussed the format of its next meeting. It was decided that the Commission would continue with its work session until 9:15p.m. at which time it would take a break. When the meeting is then resumed, comments will be taken from the audience.

Commissioners GoodSmith and Williams noted that they could not attend the Plan Commission's July 18, 1996 meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner GoodSmith moved to approve the Minutes of the Plan Commission's May 16, 1996 meeting. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion and the Minutes were approved unanimously.

Adjournment

There being no other business, Commissioner GoodSmith moved to adjourn. Commissioner Berggren seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:07p.m..

Respectfully Submitted,
Mary Liming, Recorder

July 18, 1996

Present: Commissioners Steven A. Berggren (7:40), Jennifer Goodsmith (8:30), David Lehman, Roy Newman, Catherine Pidek (7:40), Carolyn Hodge West, Chairperson Don Glickman; Economic Development & Planning Manager Franklin Dancy, Consultants Aaron Gruen and Debra Jeans.

Absent: Commissioners Clarence Ward and J. Michael Williams.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Glickman called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. and declared that a quorum was present.

1. CONTINUED WORKSHOP: DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN COMMISSION POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NORTH AVENUE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Chairperson Glickman stated that the workshop would continue until 9:00 p.m., after which the Commission would receive comments from citizens and other interested parties. The Commission would then attempt to develop the policy recommendations for the Village Board.

Aaron Gruen of Gruen & Gruen Associates, referred to his draft of the policy recommendations recently sent to Mr. Dancy. He stated that he expected the Commissioners to review this document and make whatever changes they might deem necessary. Mr. Gruen then stated that he and Debra Jeans would highlight the major points of the report for discussion.

1. Functional Obsolescence: Buildings which had physical constraints that could not be remedied to meet the needs of today's market, such as lack of parking, etc.; and Economic Obsolescence: Properties which were physically possible to adapt to solve functional problems, but the cost would be prohibitive.

Mr. Gruen asked if the Commissioners wished to comment regarding a definition of obsolescence. Commissioner Lehman suggested that there were three forms of depreciation or obsolescence: physical, functional and external. Mr. Gruen recommended that the standard Planning language be used to determine obsolescence: any property containing underlying conditions preventing it from achieving its highest and best use. Responding to the Commission consensus, Mr. Gruen stated that the above language on obsolescence would be plugged into the report.

2. Options for Enhancing Parking: On the bottom of page 4, he suggested a revision of the draft eliminating item 2, which addressed the selective use of permit parking out of a laundry list of ideas. In response to public comments, he felt the focus should be on the other options for parking enhancement. Mr. Gruen asked for guidance from the Commission on this issue.

Chairperson Glickman felt that item 2 should remain on the list for discussion even though it might later be rejected for an alternative option; he added that he would like to see included in the document a recommendation that permit parking in front of homeowner's properties be prohibited. Mr. Gruen asked for Commission consensus regarding this issue.

The Commission discussed the issue of residential permit parking to which many homeowners had adamantly voiced their opposition. Mr. Dancy noted that the Parking & Traffic Commission had also been dealing with all the issues affecting North Avenue and he recommended that, perhaps, a part of the Plan Commission's policy report could include the possibility of a parking study to be conducted by the Parking & Traffic Commission.

Mr. Gruen led a discussion on the methods recommended with respect to either rehabilitating or rebuilding North Avenue businesses. He referred to redevelopment plans and condemnation proceedings to replace an entire block of business properties, and noted that while, most property owners readily agreed to sell, often there would be one "hold-out" owner, usually the last one on the block, who would try to negotiate a more lucrative deal. This could render the project to be unfeasible. However, there was a possibility of an entity coming in to purchase an entire block of property and bring with it a developer to construct the project.

Mr. Gruen recommended another approach which would involve an ownership group joining together to develop a project and, should it become stymied by a hold-out owner, the municipality could use its condemnation powers to acquire that last parcel at fair market price, thus moving the development ahead. This approach might include doing a market study of the area done by Community & Economic Development staff before acquiring the land and the use of competent legal counsel to move the project along. In addition, he explained that the use of Tax Increment Finance District (TIF) funds could be advantageous in a redevelopment process.

In response to Commissioner Lehman, Mr. Gruen stated that state laws would determine what constituted a blighted area, and therefore, determine what properties would be subject to condemnation. In response to Commissioner Newman, Mr. Gruen felt that it would be wise to understand the concepts of condemnation first and then to simply recommend a condemnation policy without providing detailed information on the subject. He suggested that the details such as the steps to be followed could be obtained largely through consulting with the Planning Division and, perhaps a developer. He pointed out that the Plan Commission could recommend the use of appropriate incentives to facilitate the acquisition of property for redevelopment purposes.

In response to Commissioner Hodge West, Mr. Gruen felt that the Village's participation in the development process should begin after approximately 75% of the property owners had agreed to cooperate in a redevelopment process. He referred to the economics of a redevelopment project to determine how important, and at what point, the Village should step in to administer a condemnation process. In summary, Mr. Gruen felt that major participation by the private sector would be the better approach to any redevelopment.

Mr. Gruen continued: He felt that the Village's willingness to make zoning changes would facilitate owners in utilizing properties in the most profitable manner. In

response to Commissioner Pidek regarding whether residential properties would be affected, Mr. Gruen stated that this amounted to a policy decision and noted that the expansion of parking options could well be a determinant factor in acquiring residential properties.

Mr. Dancy advised that the Board of Trustees had not limited the Commission to making recommendations for properties fronting on North Avenue, but expected it to include properties within that residential block immediately south of North Avenue because it would be heavily impacted by any redevelopment. The Village Board then can either accept that expansion or reject it.

Commissioner Lehman felt that the Commission ought to propose a policy statement recommending the least amount of Village intervention at the outset, leading into a step-by-step process of increasing that participation, based on the level of progress in the redevelopment.

After further discussion regarding the language in the policy recommendation regarding the encouragement of private development with a minimum amount of Village participation, Mr. Gruen asked for Commission consensus. Commissioner Hodge West cautioned that the language should be structured so that it would be clear that concessions would not be made.

Chairperson Glickman reviewed the advantages of establishing a TIF District on North Avenue which would raise taxes that eventually reverted back to the business community in that area. He wondered if there could be a mechanism to either freeze or lower the taxes on a temporary basis in order to get the businesses started. Commissioner Lehman pointed out that when business owners receive a greater return, they usually do not complain about taxes being too high.

The Commissioners discussed at length the variables affecting tax revenues and how to benefit economic development without adversely affecting the Village's financial well-being.

Mr. Richard Blaurock, developer and President of North Avenue Business Association, provided his observations regarding the tax base in Cook County as compared to the surrounding counties and the need for Oak Park to provide tax incentives to attract a viable business atmosphere on North Avenue. In response to Commissioner Lehman, who asked why there was considerable development west of Harlem on North Avenue regardless of higher taxes, Mr. Gruen stated that many businesses did fail in these areas. Furthermore, business tenants in those areas factor in their costs in the price of their products. He noted that there was still a great demand for certain types of retail businesses and the market was very competitive; Oak Park also had a tremendous purchasing potential if the right kind of businesses were attracted to this area. Debra Jeans pointed out that Oak Park had a great many transportation advantages which would promote business.

Mr. Blaurock continued: North Avenue businesses were stymied due to lack of parking and high taxes. He asked the Plan Commission to recommend to the Village Board in its report that an atmosphere be created to attract viable retail businesses. By this he meant, that adequate parking be created as well as tax incentives.

The Commission discussed tax incentives and the possibility of creating a TIF District to fund economic development. Mr. Gruen recommended that the Plan Commission ask the Board to investigate an innovative approach to limited public bonds as well as expansion of zoning uses. The focus of the discussion was on how detailed the report would be regarding these issues. Commissioner Hodge West felt that the Plan Commission ought to establish criteria for the Board to follow such as were addressed in the draft report from Gruen Gruen & Associates. Mr. Gruen pointed out the types of businesses which had been successful at strip shopping districts such as Harlem and North and suggested retail stores which he believed could be successful in other areas of North Avenue. In addition, he referred to the zoning districts and their permitted uses which he felt could be expanded to attract more updated types of retailers. Finally, he noted that the possibility of attracting a hotel on North Avenue should be studied.

After further discussion of expanded zoning uses and the need to take into consideration the effect of businesses on the adjacent residential community, the Commission ended its workshop.

Chairperson Glickman stated that public testimony would be heard at this time.

Rita A. Russo, 1227 Rossell, stated that as a long-term resident in the area adjacent to the North Avenue commercial corridor, her suggestion would be to create an aesthetically pleasing North Avenue which would attract people driving down that street into stopping and patronizing these businesses. She felt that obsolete buildings and businesses should be razed and replaced with attractive, modern buildings with adequate parking; moreover, the businesses should coordinate into a theme development and appropriate landscaping in order to attract the general public.

Chairperson Glickman called a recess at 9:15.

DELIBERATIONS

The meeting reconvened at 9:30 p.m. and Chairperson Glickman stated that Dudley Onderdonk, recently appointed Community and Economic Development Director, wished to address the Commission.

Dudley Onderdonk offered his and his staff's assistance in the development of a policy report to the Village Board. He stated that the Village Board was anxiously awaiting this report. He suggested that the following guidelines be followed in the development of this document: 1) that it be relatively brief and summarize the issues; 2) that it provide a framework and set the stage for actions; 3) that it contain visual aids of North Avenue businesses, both in map form and aerial photographs; and 4) that it communicate a great deal of information in a structured format, such as an outline of talking points.

Mr. Onderdonk commended the Plan Commission on the outstanding job it was doing in its research and development of this document. He offered his advice in his capacity as a planner and his time in helping to facilitate the Plan Commission's effort. He recommended that the Commission meet with the Chamber of Commerce and the executive staff of the Downtown Oak Park Association to receive their input. Finally, he offered staff assistance in making recommendations for possible zoning amendments to allow expansion of permitted uses.

The Commission began its deliberations on the content and scope of the policy recommendations to the Village Board; the Commissioners took into consideration Mr. Onderdonk's advice. The length of the report, how to develop successful visual aids, how to develop a document that would tightly focus on the issues while still being effective and relatively brief, and how to take advantage of the resources of the Community and Economic Development Department were discussed at length. Mr. Onderdonk recommended that he and his staff could provide techniques regarding the use of buffer zones between the business and residential communities; identify problems, propose solutions, and gather velocity and energy toward the proposals. Commissioner Goodsmith suggested that the document focus on strategic rather than economic issues.

Chairperson Glickman offered the following outline for the policy recommendations report in three sections and recommended a visual presentation as opposed to a slide show.

Section 1. The identification of these problems: declining economic values on North Avenue; obsolete buildings, both economic and functional; lack of parking; the existence of small, uneconomical lots and the infringement of business parking on residential areas.

Section 2. Solutions: create larger lots and assemblages; provide more parking on North Avenue; eliminate infringement of economic activity on the adjacent residential area.

Section 3. Methods: create a set of guidelines as to how to accomplish these goals such as 1) promote consumer-friendly economic activity; 2) create larger lots and assemblages; 3) use condemnation powers selectively and determine the percentage of use; 4) provide an accelerated process for the developers to revitalize the area, such as expanding zoning uses; and 5) create a Commission to consider the development of buffer zones.

Mr. Gruen stated that Chairperson Glickman's report was substantively similar to his report, except for the format, and he recommended that the Commission review, revise and develop a report from both his draft document and Chairperson Glickman's outline.

Chairperson Glickman asked that his outline be used to develop a draft document of policy recommendations for Commission review. He felt that commissioners might want to elaborate on some points. Commissioner Goodsmith felt that a great deal of time was spent on identifying problems, but that they should be more global. She added that, in her opinion, the only issue to which the Village Board would respond would be economic development.

SCHEDULED NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, August 15, 1996 at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Gruen stated he would not be available at that time since he would be on vacation. However, he asked the Commission to feel free to contact him for consultation before that date or earlier during that day.

In addition, the following commissioners agreed to write narratives for three other sections of the report:

Problem Identification: Commissioner Williams
Safety and Security: Commissioner Lehman
Parking: Commissioner Newman

Commissioner Goodsmith asked for assistance in developing a paragraph on Barriers to expanded zoning and expected that the same format would be needed regarding the TIF District.

Scheduled Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, September 19, 1996, 7:30 p.m., at which time the draft report would be reviewed and a summary would be developed. Mr. Dancy was asked to provide an updated roster of the Plan Commission.

Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Newman, seconded by Commissioner Hodge-West, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was adopted and the meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edith J. Reposh
Recorder

Minutes of a meeting of the
PLAN COMMISSION of the
Village of Oak Park--7:30 p.m. .
Council Chambers - Village Hall

PLAN COMMISSION

September 19, 1996

Present: Commissioners Jennifer Goodsmith; David Lehman, Roy Newman; Carolyn Hodge West; Chairperson Don Glickman; Trustee Liaison William Fillmore and Dudley Onderdonk, Economic & Community Development Director.

Absent: Commissioners Steven Berggren; Catherine Pidek; Clarence Ward and J. Michael Williams.

Also Present: Sara J. Rickert, Vice-President of Oak Park Development Corporation (OPDC).

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Glickman called the meeting to order at 7:45 p.m. and declared that a quorum was present.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 15, 1996

It was moved by Commissioner Hodge-West, seconded by Commissioner Lehman, that the minutes of August 15, 1996 be approved as submitted. The motion was adopted.

2. FUTURE PLAN COMMISSION AGENDAS

Chairperson Glickman asked Mr. Onderdonk to apprise the Commission of future issues which would be coming to the Plan Commission for its review and recommendations.

Mr. Onderdonk provided the following information:

- A) There was a proposal from the Historic Preservation Commission to amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow conversion of coach houses to single-family dwelling units or accessory dwelling units; this could have an impact on the future issues to be addressed by the Plan Commission.
- B) The newly appointed Parking Director offered a proposal with respect to a fee structure for providing parking in Downtown Oak Park. The zoning segment of this issue would have to be addressed by the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- C) The Economic and Community Development Department had been engaged in the process of developing an Atlas of Oak Park for the past two years. This Atlas would include a

The Commission entered into a lively discussion regarding the political implications which might impact on the Board's recommendations for the North Avenue commercial corridor. Trustee Fillmore cited the importance of including research regarding the impact on both the residential and business areas in the report. He noted further that the Board expected the Commission to spend time on this research as the Board did not have that luxury.

Chairperson Glickman felt that the public should be invited to be present when the policy recommendations were presented to the Board. Therefore, he recommended, with the consensus of the Commission, that a public hearing should be scheduled in Village Hall and publicized in the press as well as through letters to business and homeowners in the immediate area. Mr. Onderdonk agreed to direct his staff to prepare the necessary legal notice and press release for the local newspapers and to place copies of the Executive Summary in Village Hall. In addition, flyers consisting of the Executive Summary would be sent out to the North Avenue businesses and adjacent residents. The meeting was scheduled for Thursday, October 17th, 1996 in the Council Chambers at 7:30 p.m.

Commissioner Newman left the meeting at 9:00 p.m., at which time, a quorum no longer existed. The Plan Commission then went into a discussion group, rather than a formal meeting.

Discussion on the Issues of the North Avenue Study

The commissioners discussed the importance of inviting representatives of the Oak Park Development Corporation, the Economic Development Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, the North Avenue Business Association and other representatives of developers and business owners. Chairman Glickman felt it was important to review the guidelines of the Comprehensive Plan and follow them in the development of the policy recommendations. The issues of any negative impact and the importance of addressing parking and traffic issues would have to be considered.

Mr. Onderdonk pointed out that it was the responsibility of the Commission to include in the policy recommendations any negative impact this revitalization might have on the entire Village as well as North Avenue. There was a great deal of discussion on to what extent the recommendations should focus on possible negative impact, such as crime and increased parking shortages.

Commissioner Lehman felt that consideration of the possible traffic problems created on North Avenue should be researched and included in the report to the Board; he pointed out further that it was most likely that there would be citizens opposing this plan and there needed to be a set of suggestions on how to mitigate the negative impact.

After a lively discussion on what the message to the citizens should be from the Plan Commission, Chairperson Glickman summarized the issue by stating that the Commission would be soliciting comments and information from the citizens, businesses and developers on this issue as well as asking for their support.

Mr. Onderdonk provided his planning expertise to the Commission on the issues of special-use permits, the expansion of zoning uses and TIF Districts. He recommended that the Zoning Administrator, Phil Ritchey, be contacted for his input on both expanded zoning uses and special-use permits. Mr. Onderdonk also advised that the biggest problems in residential communities involved the residents' fear of the unknown. Therefore, it was important to be open, and provide a great deal of information including both the positive and negative aspects of the plan. If citizens were included and asked for input such as the issue of what zoning use expansion would be acceptable, they would be more likely to support it.

Discussion ensued regarding whether the Village could offer incentives to developers in order to encourage upscale economic development on North Avenue. This would involve recommending expanding the uses allowed in that District under the Zoning Ordinance, and Commissioners felt that this might encourage potential developers to apply for special-use permits in order to construct a business development. The consensus of the Commission was to attempt to create opportunities for more kinds of businesses to locate on North Avenue than what were presently allowed in the B-2 Zone and include that in the policy recommendations.

The Commissioners discussed what circumstances would warrant the Village's use of its condemnation powers in order to achieve economic development. Mr. Onderdonk provided his knowledge on the history of using the condemnation process. He stated that there had been some interest in this issue expressed by certain developers who had contacted him; however, he advised them that they would have to bring this matter before the Board of Trustees, which seemed to discourage them.

In response to Commissioner Hodge-West's question regarding the viability of TIF along North Avenue in light of the Village's current use of TIF Districts, Mr. Onderdonk stated that it was a difficult policy question and that there were many political ramifications. He noted that school districts were becoming very vocal in their opposition to TIFs since this siphoned off money away from their needs. Furthermore, it would have to be determined whether a TIF District should include the entire North Avenue corridor or only a portion of it. He noted that there were three TIFs in the Village, two of which were not active, that being the one in Downtown Oak Park.

its limitations; the traffic impact on the neighboring residential community, the parking problems, the obsolete buildings with their small lots, and the issue of redevelopment and revitalization. She discussed the possibility of rezoning the entire North Avenue commercial corridor to a "B-2" Business District.

Public Testimony

Chairman Glickman asked that the citizens confine their testimony to a three-minute time limit in order that all citizens could be heard before 10:30 p.m. He also asked that citizens place their names and addresses on the sign-up list for the record.

Loretta Daly, Executive Director of the Oak Park-River Forest Chamber of Commerce, stated that on behalf of herself and the Board of Directors, she wished to thank the Village of Oak Park and the Plan Commission for addressing this critical issue. Further, she stated that the Chamber fully supported the recommendations and encouraged the Commission to submit them to the Board as soon as possible. She stated further that the Chamber strongly advocated open communication between the area residents and the business community as well with the neighboring community of River Forest. Finally, she stated that the Chamber strongly felt the ideas expressed in the study were sound and supported the appointment of a North Avenue Task Force which would provide a proactive approach to the implementation of these recommendations.

In response to Chairperson Glickman, Ms. Daly explained that the Chamber had not actively put together any kind of Task Force to study this issue. It expected that the Plan Commission and the Village Board would take the necessary action.

Richard Blaurock, 1210 North Elmwood, stated that he was President of the NABA (North Avenue Business Association), the developer of the Ridgeland/North shopping strip, a real estate agent and a business owner. He commended the Plan Commission members for producing a fine document and for soliciting public testimony on the issue as a part of the process. His only concern was the establishment of a buffer zone between the residential and business communities to mitigate the potential problems which might be caused by a revitalization of North Avenue. He noted that he had done that in conjunction with the development of the Ridgeland/North Avenue shopping strip and the neighbors had been pleased. Mr. Blaurock gave a detailed explanation on how this was accomplished, focusing particularly, on the adequate parking provided for shoppers and the landscaped buffer zone; he pointed out that the property values in that area had not been compromised.

In response to Commissioners, Mr. Blaurock replied: The special-use process as recommended in the Comprehensive Plan was an excellent way to redevelop property; he had been able to provide adequate on-site parking for shoppers by affording all employee parking to an off-site location at a church nearby; he cited examples of where retail businesses could not survive without adjacent parking; and finally, he believed that all of the steps cited in the North Avenue Study would have a cumulative effect in the attempt to revitalize the business community.

William Gee, 1209 North Grove, explained that he owned a lumber yard north of the North Avenue commercial corridor and provided details on how he increased the property value of his property as well as the surrounding buildings. Mr. Gee felt that the key to successful businesses and rising property values was through a Village or City government who strived to maintain a sensible balance between the interests of both the business and residential communities.

Jack D. Lyons, 1231 North Ridgeland, commended Mr. Blaurock on the success of his shopping center and the fact that it did not cause any adverse effect on the adjacent residences, one of which he occupied. There were some minor problems such as employees parking in front of his home, but he felt that could be worked out. His recommendation was to provide adequate parking along North Avenue by not building on every vacant lot, thereby not causing a burden for adjacent residents. He agreed with Mr. Blaurock that the special-use process ought to be utilized as a tool for business development.

In response to Commissioner Pidek, Mr. Lyons felt that the recommendation to purchase a home south of the alley on North Avenue for parking purposes would seriously damage property values and he reiterated his support for providing all parking on North Avenue.

Burton S. Neverblum, 1231 North Grove, complimented Mr. Blaurock on his successful retail shopping strip, but pointed out that there were problems even with that business venture. He believed that the appointed Task Force would have to address this problem which was a tough one, particularly, in striking a balance between the residential and business interests on North Avenue. In conclusion, Mr. Neverblum suggested that the Plan Commission do further study and investigation including review of the Mall Commission minutes which would bring to light the history of the struggle to revitalize Downtown Oak Park.

Beth Lee Russo, 1227 Rossell, felt that the Village officials should be given advance notice on what types of businesses might be placed in these shopping strips in order for it to deny retailers that could be detrimental to the area. She

expressed her concerns regarding serious problems which, in her opinion, would be experienced by adjacent residents when new businesses were developed in the adjacent North Avenue commercial corridor, such as potential traffic problems. Although she wanted a buffer zone for the residential area, she did not want to be effectively "blockaded" with culs-de-sacs and/or other traffic diverters designed to cut off traffic.

Chairperson Glickman stated that he was very impressed by the attractive cul-de-sac which was constructed on Edmer Street and believed others similar to that could be developed.

Ms. Russo maintained that too many shopping strips on North Avenue would adversely affect the residential area and she felt more vacant lots should be used for parking on North Avenue rather than in the residential area south of that street.

Harold E. Rife, 1226 North Oak Park, asked if the Village Board had any control over what types of businesses could be placed in the shopping strips.

Chairperson Glickman that there were many restrictions in place which controlled the types of retail uses allowed including zoning regulations, performance guidelines, signage ordinances, and height limits; however, the Village could not control the placement of an allowed use, such as, perhaps, certain franchise operations owned by large corporations.

Gary Meyers, 159 North Elmwood, stated that he was a former owner of a business on North Avenue, but was currently located on Madison Street. He felt that residents south of North Avenue should be aware of certain compromises they might have to make in order to live adjacent to a commercial area, such as possible deterioration of their neighborhood, increased crime and traffic congestion. He felt that they also should be aware of the major tax burden placed on businesses. Mr. Meyers suggested that the Village look for developers with imagination and ample financial backing; therefore, these developers would be selective in choosing their retail tenants. He commended the Plan Commission for doing a good job and felt the revitalization plan would be beneficial to Oak Park. Finally, he felt that Oak Park should be more responsive to business owners and parking should be a major priority in promoting economic development.

In response to Commissioner Newman, Mr. Meyers explained the exact location of his former business building on North Avenue and how much he paid in property taxes.

Jane McFetridge, 1204 North East, complained that she could not allow her two small children to play in front of her home due to the dangers of the heavy traffic. She worried about other

children getting hurt on this street also and pointed out that this was supposed to be a residential community where front yards would be safe. She felt that if a parking lot were constructed south of the alley on her street, it would exacerbate the problem. She asked that the parking lots be placed on North Avenue and that there be less buildings.

Cho-Yau Yeung, 1231 North Linden, testified that, in his view, the major problems in that area were lack of parking and traffic speed. He believed that the adjacent residential community should not have to bear the brunt of solving the parking problems for the commercial area. Therefore, he recommended that space be reserved for parking on North Avenue. Regarding the speed of traffic, he suggested installing speed bumps on the side streets to slow it down and he felt that not only should Oak Park be receptive to businesses, it should be sensitive to the residential areas.

Trustee Bernard Abraham expressed his concern that the North Avenue Study would only be the beginning of the revitalization process. Trustee Abraham made the following points: The important thing would be to develop an atmosphere that would be attractive to businesses. The issues of heavy traffic, speed bumps and lack of parking which concerned the residential community had been discussed at the Board table recently and would be addressed further. It would be a difficult task to enhance economic development while continuing to maintain a stable residential community. Trustee Abraham pointed out that the Plan Commission's job would not be completed until it could provide some specifics on how to implement the recommendations in the study to reach the ultimate goal.

Chairman Glickman commented that it was important to open up the free market and, despite a short supply of tax dollars, efforts must be made to become more hospitable to industry and business. He felt that barriers now in place had to be removed such as restricted zoning and lack of parking.

Trustee Abraham further recommended providing more incentives to business and he felt the report was not clear on how that could be done.

Sara Rickert, Vice-President of Oak Park Development Corporation (OPDC), commended the Plan Commission on its fine job. She stated that she had attended most of the meetings on the North Avenue issue and felt that appointing the North Avenue Task Force would be a step in the right direction. Ms. Rickert recommended that the Plan Commission would do well to encourage businesses to apply for special-use permits, rather than converting the zoning to a blanket "B-2 District," which she felt might reflect an inordinate attempt to be "business friendly."

Furthermore, she felt the Village would have more control in the special-use process. Finally, she asked the Plan Commission to provide OPDC with parameters within which to work towards attracting businesses, and she promised that OPDC would also take a proactive approach in preserving the integrity of the residential community.

In response to Commissioner Pidek, Ms. Rickert stated that there were many types of businesses that could be allowed under special-use permits.

Larry Lipps, 1221 North Harvey, objected to the possibility of providing parking for businesses in the adjacent residential community. He stressed the problems that homeowners would endure such as increased crime, hazards of heavy traffic and disruption to quiet residential areas. He asked that parking lots be confined to North Avenue only.

Nick Creda, 7185 North Grand, Chicago, stated he was a business owner in the area and he remembered the Gruen, Gruen & Associates report on North Avenue. He asked if the Village would be looking for means to finance the revitalization of business on North Avenue and offered his expertise in what steps could be taken to attract businesses.

Mr. Creda continued: Up until Mr. Blaurock developed his shopping strip at Ridgeland, no one was doing anything towards revitalizing the business district on North Avenue. He praised Mr. Blaurock for developing this shopping area and keeping it well maintained. The Fair Oaks building had gone into foreclosure over a year ago and explained that there were two reasons: 1) bad management; and 2) the expense of maintaining the building. He complained about the prohibitive real estate taxes for businesses which he felt led to more partnership ownership. He agreed that area residents should not have to endure parking in front of their homes, but he stressed that shoppers tended to avoid retail stores where the parking was not conveniently located. Mr. Creda alluded to the many problems on North Avenue, the wisdom of demolishing some of the buildings, the expansion of zoning, the use of TIF Districts, and the importance of adjacent parking. Finally, he felt it was important that homeowners did not feel the business community was their enemy.

Trustee William Fillmore, 1129 Rossell, commented that he agreed with his colleague, Trustee Abraham, that the work of the Plan Commission had only just begun. His main concern was that the Commission submit its recommendations to the Board before his term had expired in 1997 as he was vitally interested in enhancing economic development on North Avenue and throughout the Village. He felt that it was also important to be sensitive to the concerns of the neighboring residents. Trustee Fillmore

recommended that the North Avenue Task Force might be the forum to discuss achieving this balance.

Chairman Glickman stated that the Village should not be perceived as either anti-business or anti-residents. He discussed the fact that the condemnation process was an expensive option and reviewed the various recommendations to enhance parking needs, such as the placement of two-hour parking meters in the residential area. Finally, Chairman Glickman asked for further recommendations and recommended that the Plan Commission submit its report on the North Avenue Study to the Board as soon as possible after the next meeting.

Chairman Glickman asked Mr. Onderdonk to comment on the document and offer his advice.

Ms. Rickert of OPDC commented that she didn't want to go on record that the Village should not be "business friendly" and reiterated that she intended to work with the Plan Commission within its established parameters.

Dudley Onderdonk, Community and Economic Development Director, recommended that a study session be scheduled for the next meeting. The Commission could address all of the concerns voiced at this meeting and incorporate them into the report.

Commissioner Hodge-West felt that the Plan Commission should recommend the implementation of cost-saving methods wherever possible.

Commissioner Goodsmith stated that she expected to give full consideration to the concerns expressed during the public testimony, such as the placement of parking. She noted that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to please everyone, but that the Commission would strive to address all of the concerns of the citizens who testified at this meeting.

Chairman Glickman urged the Commission to complete its report as soon as possible and bring the process to a conclusion. The commissioners agreed and the consensus was to re-work the document at the November meeting, responding to the issues addressed during the public testimony, and develop a final document for submission to the Village Board in the near future.

Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Berggren, seconded by Commissioner Williams, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was adopted and the meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edith J. Reposh, Recorder

Minutes of a meeting of the
PLAN COMMISSION of the
Village of Oak Park-7:30 p.m.
Council Chambers - Village Hall

PLAN COMMISSION

November 21, 1996

Present: Commissioners Steven A. Berggren, Jennifer Goodsmith, Roy Newman, David Lehman Catherine Pidek, Clarence Ward, Carolyn Hodge West, J. Michael Williams and Chairperson Don Glickman; Community & Economic Development Director Dudley Onderdonk.

Absent: Commissioners Carolyn Hodge-West and Roy Newman.

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Glickman called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. and declared that a quorum was present.

2. DISCUSSION OF NORTH AVENUE RECOMMENDATION DOCUMENT

Chairman Glickman stated that the Commission would discuss making changes to the latest draft of the North Avenue Study dated 11/18/96. He noted that Commissioner Goodsmith had sent a memorandum dated 10/23/96 in which she responded to his request for feedback regarding the public hearing last month.

The following recommended changes were discussed:

- Page 2, the omission of the second sentence of the first paragraph. The issue discussed was whether this statement would promote an overly harsh prediction for the future, i.e., the decline of that section of the community if the recommendations were not implemented.

- Page 6, last paragraph on the page, Commissioners discussed and suggested some rewording and insertions to that paragraph which would specifically recommend that the Plan Commission be actively involved in the oversight of the plan. Several commissioners strongly recommended that a Plan Commissioner be appointed to the North Avenue Task Force.

Community and Economic Development Director Onderdonk offered the following advice: The issue at hand was twofold: 1) the role of the Plan Commission in Oak Park as a political entity (getting back to the basics of the reason for its existence); and 2) the specific current issue of the Plan Commission's role in the implementation of this plan. He pointed out that a great deal of effort had been expended in the development of this document and the importance of the link between knowledge and action. Furthermore, if zoning changes were recommended, the Commission would be charged with holding hearings in that regard. Mr. Onderdonk also referred to the parking problems to be

addressed and the possibility of using Tax Increment District financing in the development process. In fact, he said, these same issues might well be considered in revitalizing other commercial districts in Oak Park and the Commission might also be involved in those actions.

The consensus was to recommend that the Plan Commission be allowed to be an active participant in the implementation of this plan. Chairperson Glickman recommended that the Plan Commission request that the Board appoint a Plan Commissioner to the Oversight Commission in order for it to take on more of an activist role. However, if in the future, that became too much of a burden, the Commission could take steps to limit its activities.

Further discussion took place regarding the last paragraph on page 7 which referred to the number of members on the Task Force. It was agreed not to specify a number, but state that the size be limited; the list of groups listed on that page would remain.

Commissioner Lehman commented regarding page 6, the last sentence in the first paragraph, which referred to taxpayer funds being utilized in the nature of seed money. He felt that perhaps the use of taxpayer funds for development purposes might better be reviewed on an individual basis. This issue was discussed at length. Chairperson Glickman noted the importance of encouraging private development; Commissioner Lehman felt that any commercial project had to be "doable" in order to be successful. Commissioner Williams suggested that the sentence read: "... the use of taxpayer funds should be carefully scrutinized and subject to an appropriate analysis."

Mr. Onderdonk noted that there were a great many agencies with the expertise to assist in promoting and implementing economic development such as the Oak Park Development Corporation (OPDC), the Tourism Center, the Residence Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce, the Civic Arts Center, as well as the staff of the Community & Economic Development Department.

Discussion ensued regarding the top of page 8 which referred to the issues to be discussed by the Task Force (a through d). Commissioner Lehman felt they should be more specific. Chairperson Glickman noted that there were at least 36 commissions who could review redevelopment issues for this plan and that could become very complicated. At the bottom of page 7, the last point on the list referred to representatives from the economic development community and it was suggested that it be revised to read "representatives from the Plan Commission and the Parking & Traffic Commission."

After further discussion on the Task Force direction and relevance, Sara Rickert, Vice-President of OPDC, noted that there might be some duplication of effort since her agency would also be involved in promoting economic development. She assured the Commission that OPDC would work closely with the Task Force.

Mr. Onderdonk referred to the list at the top of page 3 which he felt would mitigate any negative development. He recommended that the list be expanded to include other methods to streamline the development process. Commissioner Glickman felt it should include parking issues. A discussion followed regarding the extent of redevelopment tools to be considered by the Task Force and the possibility that the process might be unduly lengthened by the inclusion of too many agencies.

Richard Blaurock, President of the North Avenue Business Association and a commercial developer, offered his advice regarding the recommendation on page 10 which prohibited conversion of lots south of the alley into parking lots. He felt that this would certainly adversely affect economic development. Commissioner Goodsmith stated that she had included this statement in response to residents' comments to that effect. Mr. Blaurock recommended that the special-use process be implemented to provide parking lots and neighbors in each of those areas would be allowed to testify regarding the granting of a special-use permit south of the alley. Commissioner Pidek agreed that it should be the option of the Village whether to grant a special-use permit for parking in any area. The consensus was to delete number 4 on page 10.

Commissioner Berggren questioned the premise stated in number 4 on page 11 which referred to using municipal condemnation powers where 75-85% of the proposed parcels had been assembled. After some discussion on whether to take out Recommendation No. 4 on page 11 or not, it was determined that if it went to a vote, Commissioner Goodsmith would abstain and the vote would be tied 3-3. Therefore, the sentence remained.

Commissioner Goodsmith agreed to revise the document by incorporating the changes discussed and telephone the other commissioners for their comments and approval.

Mr. Onderdonk recommended that the completed document be sent to the Village Board as soon as possible, and further, that the Commissioners be available at the Village Board meeting when it was presented to answer questions. Furthermore, he believed the Commission was "burned out" on this issue and suggested that it not schedule a meeting in December. He pointed out that the budget process was in full force in December and it was highly unlikely that the Board would consider it during that month. Mr. Onderdonk also suggested that the completed policy

recommendations be finalized by staff who would also provide supplementary graphics illustrating the parcels of land, parcel assemblage, areas to be considered for parking potential, etc. He felt that this would bring to the Board an aesthetically pleasing and fully informational document. Mr. Onderdonk also pointed out that the usual process followed by the Board would be to refer the document to a Committee of the Whole session for review and discussion prior to its consideration at a formal Board meeting.

The consensus was to present the North Avenue Recommendations to the Village Board at either the first or second meeting of January, 1997. In the interim, the Commissioners would need to prepare themselves to answer questions from the Board. Mr. Onderdonk was instructed to include the minutes of the Plan Commission during the last twelve months or so which pertained to the development of the North Avenue Study.

It was moved by Commissioner Williams, seconded by Commissioner Goodsmith, to approve the North Avenue Study as revised during this current meeting including appropriate graphics to be developed by the Planning staff, and to submit the document to the Village Board at its regular meeting in January, 1997.

The roll call on the vote was as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Berggren, Goodsmith, Pidek, Ward, Williams and Chairperson Glickman.

NAYS: None.

ABSTAINED: Commissioner Lehman.

ABSENT: Commissioners Hodge West and Newman.

The motion was adopted.

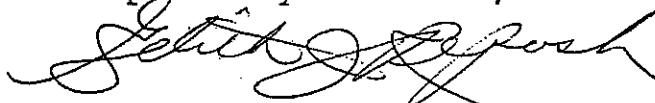
3. Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Commissioner Pidek, seconded by Commissioner Berggren, that the minutes of October 17, 1996 be approved as submitted. The motion was adopted.

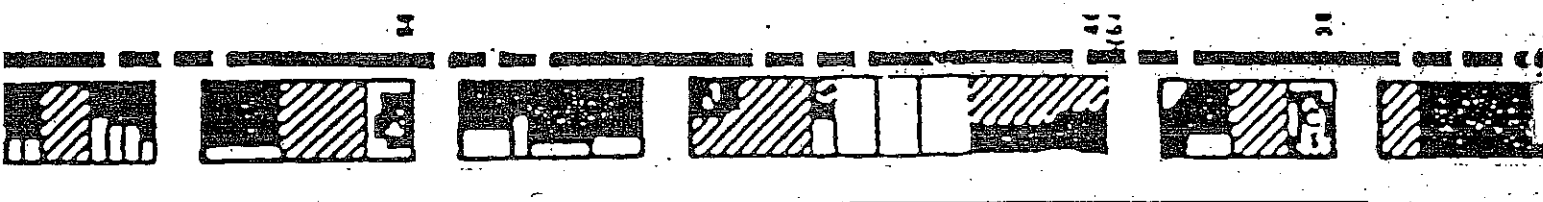
Adjournment

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Williams, seconded by Commissioner Ward, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was adopted and the meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Edith J. Reposh, Recorder



Prepared by:

Commissioner Don Glickman, Chair
Commissioner Steven Berggren
Commissioner Jennifer GoodSmith
Commissioner Carolyn Hodge-West
Commissioner David Lehman
Commissioner Roy Newman
Commissioner Catherine Pidek
Commissioner Clarence Ward
Commissioner J. Michael Williams