

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST  
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
June 18, 2020**

A meeting of the Village of River Forest Development Review Board was held at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 18, 2020 in the Community Room of the River Forest Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, Illinois.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Members Fishman, Dombrowski, Kilbride, O'Brien, Crosby, and Chairman Martin

Absent: Member Schubkegel

Also Present: Assistant Village Administrator Lisa Scheiner, Village Attorney Michael Mars

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 7, 2019 DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD MEETING**

A MOTION was made by Member Fishman and SECONDED by Member Crosby to approve the November 7, 2019 minutes of the Development Review Board meeting.

Member O'Brien briefly left the meeting.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Ayes: Members Fishman, Dombrowski, Kilbride, Crosby, and Chairman Martin

Nays: None

Motion Passed.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MARCH 5, 2020 DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD MEETING**

A MOTION was made by Member Fishman and SECONDED by Member Crosby to approve the March 5, 2020 minutes of the Development Review Board meeting.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Ayes: Members Fishman, Dombrowski, Kilbride, Crosby, and Chairman Martin

Nays: None

Motion Passed.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MAY 7, 2020 DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD MEETING**

A MOTION was made by Member Crosby and SECONDED by Member Fishman to approve the May 7, 2020 minutes of the Development Review Board meeting.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Ayes: Members Fishman, Dombrowski, Kilbride, Crosby, and Chairman Martin

Nays: None

Motion Passed.

Member O'Brien returned to the meeting.

**V. PUBLIC HEARING - APPLICATION #20-01: APPLICATION FOR A PLANNED DEVELOPMENT TO CONSTRUCT A TOWNHOME DEVELOPMENT AT 1101-1111 BONNIE BRAE PLACE**

Chairman Martin opened the continued public hearing for the proposed planned development at 1101-1111 Bonnie Brae Place.

Assistant Village Administrator Scheiner swore in all parties wishing to speak.

Chairman Martin explained the procedure that would be followed for the public hearing.

John Schiess, JCSA Chicago, presented the application for the proposed planned development at 1101-1111 Bonnie Brae Place. He stated that the development team consists of Art Gurevich, Bonnie Brae Construction, LLC, and himself as the Architect and Development Consultant.

Mr. Schiess presented a zoning map surrounding the proposed development site, which is located at the northeast corner of Bonnie Brae and Thomas, and across the street from Concordia University. He also presented photographs of the site demonstrating the approximate boundary lines of the development. He stated that the existing uses consist of a parking lot and a six-unit apartment building.

Mr. Schiess presented an aerial view of the proposed development site to provide further context for the development. He noted that it is bounded on three sides by public rights-of-way, including an alley.

Mr. Schiess displayed copy of the property survey and noted that the proposed development site consists of three separate parcels. He said one parcel contains the apartment building and the existing parking lot covers the other two parcels.

Mr. Schiess presented the proposed revised site plan, which consists of six separate buildings in three columns that run parallel to Bonnie Brae Place, each containing three townhomes, for a total of 18 townhomes. He stated that the site plan has been revised on feedback the applicant has received.

Mr. Schiess stated that each townhome is three stories tall and contains of two garage parking spaces in each unit. He displayed a typical three-bedroom floorplan for each unit. The plans show that the main floor consists of a third bedroom, bathroom and utility spaces, the second floor consists of a great room, dining room, kitchen and bathroom, the third floor consists of two bedrooms and two bathrooms, including a master suite, and a deck located on the roof of each unit. He stated that each townhome building contains two end-units and one middle unit, which provides additional light.

Mr. Schiess continued his presentation with a depiction of the west elevation of the proposed development. He stated the buildings will each consist of limestone and two colors of brick. He stated that the limestone is used to frame the brick. He said some of the units have bays to help with building articulation and limit flat facades. He also explained how green space was incorporated between every third unit to mimic the rhythm of Bonnie Brae Place.

Mr. Schiess displayed depictions of the north and south elevations of the proposed development along Thomas Street. He stated that this depicts the end units and how they have positioned windows to provide more light in the units. He also pointed out the cantilevered balconies off the kitchens on the second floor of each unit.

Mr. Schiess displayed a depiction of the east elevation of the proposed development, which is visible from the alley accessible from Thomas Street. He noted the two car garage on the first floor of each unit.

Mr. Schiess displayed the artist's rendering of the proposed development looking eastbound down Thomas and northbound Bonnie Brae. He pointed out the different brick colors and the use of greenspace between the buildings. He also displayed an artist's rendering looking southbound Bonnie Brae and noted the location of the walkway that facilitates east-west pedestrian movement on the site.

Mr. Schiess continued his presentation and displayed a shadow study to depict the impact of light and shadow on surrounding properties on June 22 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., which is when the sun is at the highest angle and is the best case scenario, as well as December 22 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. which is the worst case scenario for sun shadows because it is when the longest shadows are cast.

Mr. Schiess then displayed a depiction of the wood fence that is proposed along the northern property line and the waste and recycling corral, which completely contains the trash bins, that is proposed at the northeast corner of the site.

Mr. Schiess presented the landscape plan, noting the greenspace between units and buildings.

Mr. Schiess then displayed a chart describing the zoning requirements regarding bulk and what is proposed for this development. There was a brief discussion regarding the accuracy of the chart and Mr. Schiess acknowledged that some of the information may be incorrect, such as the rear yard area information. He stated he would prefer to eliminate the chart as

an exhibit. Mr. Schiess testified that the site plan was an accurate depiction of the proposed development in relation to the Village's zoning standards and the site development allowances (SDAs) being requested.

Mr. Schiess reviewed information related to the plan including the parcel size (27,681 square feet), 18 townhomes in six buildings, two parking spaces per townhome plus four guest spaces for a total of 40 on-site parking spaces.

Mr. Schiess stated that the compensating benefits of the proposed development include that the project is sustainable development, it is smart growth meaning that they are placing the development in a location that needs this type of growth, but tries to get as much density on the site, and that this is a supportive housing type. He noted that there are not that many townhome developments in River Forest, and that this is a development type that will support property values.

Mr. Schiess addressed the marketability of the townhomes. He stated that he represented the applicant of the townhomes on Madison Street and that that development had the option to rent or buy the townhomes. It effected the architecture, finishes and interior planning of those units. Mr. Schiess said the plan for the proposed development at Bonnie Brae and Thomas is to market these units for sale and that the amenities needed to sell the units will be provided.

Mr. Schiess said the economics of a for-sale product is different than the economics of a for-rent unit. Mr. Schiess said that their consultant, Mario Mollo, is unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Mollo has worked on various projects in surrounding communities but has provided input to the applicant about what product is attractive to buyers. Mr. Schiess noted that this is a privately owned and funded development, the applicant has to make money and get a bank to fund the project that they believe will be successful. He said that, within that framework, it starts to address the question of the marketability of these units. He noted that Mr. Gurevich is taking a calculated financial risk.

Mr. Schiess said that, as the project architect, he reviewed the Village's planning consultant's comments regarding the project. Mr. Schiess stated that Mr. Houseal's comments appear to be that the density of the development is not the fundamental issue, but how it relates to the site. In order to address the concerns that were raised regarding setbacks, they have drafted an alternative site plan that has been provided to the Development Review Board today. Mr. Schiess stated that they have eliminated two of the on-site guest parking spaces, decreased the distance between units 3 and 4, 9 and 10, and 15 and 16, and transferred that to increase the setback along the south property line along Thomas Street. He stated that they reduced the courtyards to bring the front yard setback into compliance with the 20-foot required setback. Mr. Schiess stated that they also increased the east setback along the alley to eight feet. He apologized for providing it at late hour and noted that the Village's staff and consultants have not had an opportunity to review and comment on the alternative site plan.

Art Gurevich, the developer and applicant, stated that his firm has had a lot of experience building this type of project. He stated they built a similar type of unit in Oak Park and other

areas and that the developments were successful. He said this is an urban-type townhome that is not huge, but has everything a buyer will want in a townhouse. He stated that he is proposing high quality materials inside and out and that buyers have been happy with his product.

In response to a question from Chairman Martin, Mr. Gurevich replied that the previously approved condominium projects totaled 18 between the new building and existing building.

In response to a question from Chairman Martin, Mr. Schiess stated that there were no other witnesses present to testify for the applicant.

Kurt Bohlmann, Fire Chief, confirmed that he had previously been sworn in to testify. He stated that the Fire Department would seek to have the units numbered south to north to remain consistent with the rest of the Village. They would like to see a detail of the utility layout coming into each unit to avoid having the utility lines bunched together in a small area of each building. He said that they received the new site plan a few hours ago and have not had an opportunity to review the proximity of the balconies to the overhead power lines that run along the alley on the east side of the site. They want to confirm that the power lines are not within reach of anyone on the balcony. Fire Marshal Kevin Wiley confirmed that he had no further comments.

John Anderson, Public Works Director, confirmed that he had been previously sworn in to testify. Mr. Anderson stated that his report raised concerns regarding site constraints, including the loading and unloading of material. He asked that anticipated use of the public right-of-way be noted and that a plan be provided by the developer. Mr. Anderson stated that a snow removal plan should also be provided since there are few areas on site where snow can be stored. Mr. Anderson also stated that the primary issues are the locations of utilities on the site. He stated that the IEPA will require that the water main be looped on the site from Bonnie Brae through the site and back out to Bonnie Brae. He said that the current plans do not show that. Mr. Anderson said that the water main infrastructure on the north side of the site is located in an area with a five-foot setback. Any breaks later on will be difficult to repair. The Public Works Department recommends a 10-foot width in order to facilitate repairs to this line. Mr. Anderson concurred with the Fire Department's request to see an approximate layout of on-site utilities.

Ms. Fishman asked how the Public Works Department determines how much snow should be removed from the site. Mr. Anderson replied that after a few inches of snow a few vacant or sectioned-off spaces are typically utilized for snow storage. However, the site plan does not provide for that storage area and all snow on the driveways would need to be removed from the site to preserve parking.

Assistant Village Administrator Scheiner, presented the Police Department's report, which indicated that they have no public safety concerns regarding the proposed development.

John Houseal, Houseal Lavigne Associates, confirmed that he had been previously sworn in to testify. In response to a question from Mr. Houseal, Chairman Martin asked that his

comments be focused on the application that is before them and not the alternative site plan that had been submitted earlier in the day.

Mr. Houseal summarized the comments in his review memo. He noted that the proposed development site is currently zoned R4 and is surrounded by properties that are in the R3, R4 and PRI zoning district. He stated that the proposed development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, which calls for multi-family use of the site, that it provides high-quality residential housing options, and increases the diversity and range of housing options in the Village. Mr. Houseal said the Comprehensive Plan also calls for the protection and enhancement of historic and architecturally valued structures. The three-story building that would be removed is not historically or architecturally designated, but it is an older, attractive building that adds character to the neighborhood. He continued that the Comprehensive Plan also calls for the improvement and preservation of existing affordable housing. Mr. Houseal stated that he is not sure whether the existing six apartments at 1111 Bonnie Brae Place are considered affordable but wanted to raise the issue.

Mr. Houseal reviewed the seven SDAs requested and noted that that Mr. Schiess summarized his concerns appropriately. Mr. Houseal said that, while the type of development is appropriate (townhomes), and the unit count should not alarm anyone, his concern is how the SDAs reflect how the six buildings are accommodated on the site. Mr. Houseal explained that minimum land area speaks to density and is the amount of land (ground) area that is required for each dwelling unit. In River Forest, 2,800 square feet of ground area is required for each unit, but the proposed development requires a SDA of 1,200 square feet of land area per unit. If the applicant abided by the strict letter of the underlying zoning regulations, nine units would be permitted. He continued that the applicant is requesting a SDA for lot coverage, which is the amount of lot surface that is covered by the footprint building. Maximum lot coverage in the Zoning Ordinance is 70% and they are requesting 76%.

Mr. Houseal stated that the setbacks require SDAs, which is indicative of how the proposed site plan and buildings begin to push out toward the edges of the site. The required front setback along Bonnie Brae is 20 feet and the applicant is proposing 15 feet, so a five-foot SDA is required. The corner front setback off Thomas Street is required to be 25' and they are proposing five feet, so they would require a 20' SDA. The rear setback is another tight configuration along the alley on the east. They are required to be 27.67 feet and they are proposing five feet, requiring a 22.67' SDA. The development is also required to have a certain rear yard area of 4,152 square feet (15%) and they are proposing 839 square feet (3%), requiring a SDA of 3,322 square feet (12%). This is function of the easternmost buildings being pushed toward the alley.

Mr. Houseal stated that the code requires two and a half enclosed garage parking spaces per unit three-bedroom unit, which may be a little antiquated, for a total of 45 on site resident parking spaces. He said they are proposing two spaces per unit for a total of 36 on site spaces, which requires a SDA of nine parking spaces. He stated that this is appropriate for this type of development. Mr. Houseal noted that no SDAs are required for lot area, lot width, floor area ratio, building height and side yard (north) setback and, as proposed, guest parking. He

said circulation, parking, and access to and from the site from Thomas Street and the alley is direct, easy and convenient.

Mr. Houseal stated that the building materials in the rendering appear to be high quality but he has not yet viewed material samples. He also stated that the architectural style is appropriate and the development and landscaping appear attractive, but mostly when viewed head-on from Bonnie Brae. The view of the southern elevation when driving northbound on Bonnie Brae and east on Thomas Street has too large a view of the auto courts which gives the impression of row after row of driveways. He noted that the landscaping is deficient along the southern elevation and the lack of setback along the south makes it difficult to screen the views of the auto courts and garages. Mr. Houseal stated that the southern elevation needs more detail and architectural enhancement. He added that it is a prominent view and should not be treated like the side of a building. He also commented that there should be greater utilization of vertically oriented landscape materials and that the number of yews along the foundation should be sufficient to create a hedge row along the foundation.

Mr. Houseal stated that, based on the fixtures and locations in the renderings, he anticipates that the lighting plan will comply with the Village's regulations, but asked to see a photometric plan.

Mr. Houseal said that, while the land use is appropriate and the site can accommodate 18 units, it is the way they are configured on the site that is an issue. He said the biggest issues he has are the lack of setback of Thomas, resulting lack of landscaping, the need for a bigger setback along Bonnie Brae and the alley, and the need for improvements to open space and pedestrian mobility on site.

Mr. Houseal said he briefly reviewed the alternative site plan that was provided and noted that it is an improvement over the current proposal in that it increases setbacks along the east (Bonnie Brae), west (the alley), and south (Thomas Street). He noted that by increasing the west setback the driveway pads will be eight feet deep, which will allow a vehicle to park on the pad on private property parallel to the alley. Although this is not a designated parking space, in practical application it can be used as such, which results in six guest parking spaces along the alley for the westernmost townhome units. Mr. Houseal continued that, while the buildings are tighter, it is a better pedestrian site as it provides a continuous pathway from east to west across the site. Mr. Houseal concluded that there is merit to pausing to consider the alternate site plan.

In response to a question from Member Kilbride, Mr. Houseal confirmed that he is not as concerned about density with the new site plan. He reiterated that 18 units is not inappropriate for the site, but it's the fact that it's 18 units distributed over six buildings pushed to the edge of the site. Increasing the setbacks for the development makes it more attractive to the neighborhood and better for the residents of the development.

In response to a question from Member Kilbride, Mr. Gurevich stated that the proposed units are 2,400 square feet each.

In response to a question from Member Crosby, Mr. Houseal replied that the existing buildings along Bonnie Brae maintain setbacks in the range of 40 to 50 feet. The required setback on the development site is 20 feet and the alternate site plan satisfies that requirement. Member Kilbride noted other, shorter setbacks in the neighborhood.

In response to a question from Member Fishman, Mr. Houseal stated that he does not believe that affordable housing can be worked into this development. He stated that that he doesn't know whether the apartments at 1111 Bonnie Brae are currently considered affordable housing units. Mr. Houseal stated that the Affordable Housing plan was adopted after the application was filed, however, the Comprehensive Plan does call for the preservation and improvement of existing affordable housing units.

Hearing no further questions for Mr. Houseal or staff, Chairman Martin stated that they would typically request public testimony at this time. However, they asked the applicant whether or not they would like to amend the application. Mr. Schiess complimented the review and feedback Mr. Houseal provided. He confirmed that the applicant would like to request that the hearing be continued so the application could be amended to address the outstanding concerns raised by Village staff and Mr. Houseal.

There was a brief discussion regarding submission deadlines for the amended application and continued public hearing. The applicant agreed to a July 2, 2020 deadline at Noon.

A MOTION was made by Chairman Martin and SECONDED by Member Kilbride to continue the public hearing to July 16, 2020.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Ayes: Members Fishman, Dombrowski, Kilbride, O'Brien, Crosby, and Chairman Martin

Nays: None

Motion Passed.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

A MOTION was made by Member Fishman and SECONDED by Member Kilbride to adjourn the meeting of the Development Review Board at 8:58 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Ayes: Members Fishman, Dombrowski, Kilbride, O'Brien, Crosby, and Chairman Martin

Nays: None

Motion Passed.

Respectfully Submitted:

  
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Lisa Scheiner, Secretary



Frank R. Martin  
Frank R. Martin  
Chairman, Development Review Board

8/31/2020  
Date