Joint Development Authority
Monday, August 15, 2016
Arden Hills City Council Chambers
Minutes
5:00 pm

Present:
JDA Members: Chair Sand, Commissioners Brenda Holden, David Grant, Blake Huffman and Rafael Ortega

City Council: Mayor David Grant; Councilmembers Brenda Holden, Fran Holmes, Dave McClung and Jonathan Wicklund

Also present: Interim City Administrator Sue Iverson; Acting Public Works Director John Anderson; Senior Planner Matthew Bachler; City Attorney Joel Jamnik; JDA Attorney Mike Norton; Deputy Clerk Jolene Trauba; Josh Olson, Ramsey County; Heather Worthington, Ramsey County; Stacie Kvilvang, Ehlers & Associates; Bob Lux, Alatus; Tom Shaver, Inland Development Partners; Kent Carlson, Inland Development Partners; Todd Stutz, Robert Thomas Homes; Tim Whitman, Whitman Associates Architects; Bruce Kimmel, Ehlers & Associates; and Beth Engum, Ramsey County

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, Mayor Grant called to order the City Council Work Session at 5:00 p.m. and Chair Sand called the JDA meeting to order.

Roll call taken.

Approval of agenda
Motion by Chair Sand seconded by Commissioner Holden to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Joint Work Session with Arden Hills City Council
Interim City Administrator/Director of Finance and Administrative Services Iverson stated the Master Developer had a presentation for the City Council and JDA members.

Stacie Kvilvang, Ehlers & Associates, reviewed the format for the meeting along with a future timeline for additional discussions regarding the Master Plan for the development.

Bob Lux, Alatus, thanked the JDA and City Council for their time. He explained his presentation would be broken down into three sections which would cover the commercial, residential and Town Center areas of the development. He looked forward to the JDA and City Council providing feedback after each section of the presentation. He reported the Alatus team has been meeting with City and County staff every Wednesday for the past three months.

Alex Duval, Alatus, stated over the past 90 days a team has been assembled to work on this project. He explained the focus has been on how to integrate the work being completed by the three primary groups, Alatus, Tradition and Inland. He then described the work being done by the design groups under the direction of each of the primary groups. He noted the natural resources corridor was being studied in order to keep this area special. He provided further comment on the highlights on the site noting this was one of the largest redevelopment projects in the metro area.

Mr. Lux understood the importance to stitching this new development into existing Arden Hills.

Tom Shaver, Inland Development Partners, noted Alatus would be requesting a TRC amendment. He reported the regional trails surrounding the property were being reviewed by the Master Developer. He commented on the benefits of creating trail connections from the east to the Natural Resource Corridor. He further discussed the positive amenities on the site. It was noted Bus Rapid Transit would be explored for the project.

Mr. Lux addressed how Alatus was approaching Town Center. He believed Arden Hills should consider moving City Hall into the Town Center area. He indicated a library, theater or museum would also benefit the Town Center area. He anticipated four restaurants would be located in this area along with convenience or entertainment retail. He stated after completing much research, there was a need for senior housing and 60 to 120 condominium units, with the condo building height being eight to ten stories high. It was noted Town Center would have six primary blocks. The underground parking requirements were discussed.

Further discussion ensued regarding the alignment of the spine road and how this would impact the flex space.

Mayor Grant requested clarification on the colors within the map.

Mr. Lux reviewed the colors and the legend with the City Council and JDA.

Mr. Shaver discussed how traffic would flow in and out of the property. He noted it would be difficult for the site at Highway 96 and the entrance to the property to support retail. He described where the park and paths would be located within Town Center and pointed out the connections. The challenges for the site would be to create further connection points from this site to the remainder of Arden Hills. The plans for the Town Center were reviewed in further detail with the Council and JDA.

Mayor Grant questioned if the group had feedback at this point.

Mayor Grant believed further discussion would have to be held regarding "best homes" and "best jobs".

Councilmember Holden asked which buildings would require a height variance.

Mr. Shaver anticipated this would be for the apartment and condominium buildings in Town Center. It was noted the condominium building would be done in concrete. Further discussion ensued regarding the density proposed for Town Center per block.

Councilmember Holden did not believe she would support moving City Hall. She indicated the current location was very centralized for all Arden Hills residents.

Councilmember Holmes agreed. She discussed the underground parking and expense for the proposed bridge.

Mr. Shaver discussed the costs associated with the underground parking and proposed bridge noting these would be long-term solutions for the site. He indicated grants may be available to assist with the expense.

Ms. Kvilvang stated based on conversations held to date, it appears the underground parking and bridge would be done privately.

Councilmember Holmes commented on the proposed rental rates and expressed concern with entrance and exit points for the apartments. She stated she was skeptical about how heavily the public transportation would be used given the fact this was a suburb. In addition, she was not convinced the proposed rental rates would be achieved.

Chair Sand understood senior housing would be located in the Town Center and asked how this would fit into the proposed plans.

Mr. Shaver stated this was a good question as it also addressed traffic and livability of the community. He commented on a senior housing project that he recently completed in Wayzata. It was noted the senior housing would have secure underground parking.

Councilmember McClung indicated overall he liked what he was seeing. He appreciated how the natural resources corridor would be highlighted. He understood Alatus would be seeking height flexibility for the condominium buildings. He anticipated this would be for two buildings. He asked if Alatus had any idea how many buildings would be higher than six stories.
Mr. Shaver reported Alatus was currently thinking of building three buildings over six stories, two condo buildings and a portion of one apartment building.

Councilmember Wicklund asked for more information on Main Street and whether this roadway could be made a strictly walking street.

Mr. Shaver commented he would love to be able to make this strictly a walking street. However, developers favored streets that accommodated vehicular traffic.

Councilmember McClung inquired if the developer had any traffic counts for the theater area.

Mr. Shaver stated this has not been tested yet.

Councilmember Wicklund asked if there were any other connectors, other than bus rapid transit, that would connect the two areas of the City.

Mr. Shaver commented Alatus was trying to create a connector or touchstone for Arden Hills. He understood it was hard to consider moving City Hall, however, this would assist with the major transformation that would be coming to the City.

Councilmember Wicklund supported the relocation of City Hall.

Mayor Grant commented on how the residents may perceive the movement of City Hall. He anticipated the City Council would have to further discuss the Town Center plan and the proposed building heights. He appreciated the proposed concept plan and wanted to hear more about vertical mixed uses.

JDA Chair Sand supported the overall plan. He discussed the importance of interconnectivity of this site to the remainder of Arden Hills. He believed City Hall needed to be connected to the remainder of the City. He questioned how Alatus would be connecting pedestrians from north side of Highway 96 to the south side of Highway 96. He suggested the bandshell be located near the water feature. He provided further comment on the streetscape.

Councilmember Holden requested further information on the condominium building height.

Mr. Lux commented on the anticipated condominium building height and construction specifications. He agreed a connection over Highway 96 would be imperative.

Mayor Grant questioned if the geotechnical would support a building of this height.

Mr. Lux discussed the subsurface information he had on the site.

Mayor Grant went on record stating he wanted there to be a water feature on the property and not just a holding pond.

Mr. Lux discussed the amount of mass grading that would occur for this complex site. He stated the water feature was a high priority for his team.

JDA Chair Sand questioned if two entrances and exits would adequately serve the site.

Mr. Lux indicated this was an excellent question. He further commented on the traffic plan that was completed by Kimley-Horn. He then turned the conversation over to Todd Stutz to address the residential portion of the project.

Mr. Stutz, Robert Thomas Homes, noted he was working on the Hill and the Creek neighborhoods as well as the housing within the Town Center. He described the design principle framework that was laid out within the Master Plan. He explained a wide range of housing would serve a broad spectrum of buyers at all phases in life. This means housing would be considered for millennials through baby boomers. He understood walkable neighborhoods and trail connections were important. He discussed numerous housing products that would be provided, noting he would be responding to the marketplace and proposed to have one-third executive move up housing, one-third first time buyers and one-third empty nesters. He anticipated the housing would have a wide range of prices starting at $350,000. The Creek neighborhood would have 140 homes and the Hill neighborhood would have 267 units. He commented on the plans for the residential area south of the Hill neighborhood.

Mr. Stutz then reviewed the housing plans for Town Center. He described the various housing products that would be offered, along with the architectural styles that would be used. The proposed lot sizes were discussed, along with the location of the natural resources corridor. Further discussion ensued regarding the various housing products.

Councilmember Holden reviewed the City's home count versus Alatus' home count. She asked if the numbers included space for infrastructure.

Mr. Stutz reported the number of proposed homes did include infrastructure. He noted the numbers may adjust slightly after the site begins to be graded.

Councilmember Holden questioned in Alatus had a location for the water tower picked out.

Mr. Lux stated this has not been looked at extensively. He anticipated it would be located in the public park in the middle of the site.

Councilmember Holden inquired how much the park space had been reduced by Alatus.

Mr. Stutz explained the parks were smaller and noted there was a certain level of flexibility written into the TRC regarding the park space.

Councilmember McClung expressed concern with the park deficiency. He stated the original planning called for park programming given the level of density on the site. He feared that too much stress would be put on existing Arden Hills parks if the greenspace within TCAAP was not reconsidered. He commented that this portion of the plan did not meet his standards. Councilmember Wicklund requested further information on where the custom homes would be placed.

Mr. Stutz commented on the home placement within the Creek neighborhood.

Councilmember Holden questioned who would be building the single-family homes. She asked how many different home products would be included in the neighborhoods.

Mr. Stutz estimated 50% of the homes would be built by Traditions and Robert Thomas Homes and the remainder would be built by other builders. He then reviewed the various housing products that would be offered, noting the housing styles would fit the requirements within the TRC.

Mr. Shaver discussed the commercial portion of the project. He anticipated the project would have 200,000 to 250,000 square feet of commercial space with 300,000 to 350,000 square feet of flex space. He then commented on the corporate campus area. It was noted Alatus wanted to maintain some level of flexibility within these uses in order to meet the demands of the market. It was noted a height variance may be requested for the corporate campus. The focus of the retail node was then reviewed. It was his opinion the flex and build to suit areas were perfectly sized, along with the retail area.

Commissioner Huffman questioned why the retail area had more surface parking than the Town Center.

Mr. Shaver explained it was the norm for retail areas to have surface parking. He stated the restaurant area would have surface and underground parking. It was noted that surface parking offers convenience for customers in the retail area.

Councilmember Holden expressed some concern by allowing a large grocer to come in and take up such a large portion of the retail space. She feared how this space would be used in the future if the grocer were to fail.

Councilmember McClung commented on the two dining areas.

Commissioner Huffman questioned how many of the users within the flex space would have heavy truck traffic. He wanted to see trucks kept out of the vehicular and pedestrian areas.

Mr. Shaver anticipated all of the flex space users would have some truck traffic. Discussion shifted to the eight text amendments that Master Developer would be requesting for the project.

Mayor Grant thanked Alatus for their thorough presentation.

JDA Chair Sand believed it was key for the development to have a finished look and feel even though the property would be completed in several phases.

Councilmember Holden expressed concern with the proposed density level of the development. She did not believe the density should be the same as that seen in St. Paul and Minneapolis. She noted that Arden Hills was a suburb.

Councilmember McClung believed the list of proposed text amendments was helpful. He looked forward to discussing these further with the Master Developer at the next meeting.

Mayor Grant commented on the original proposed density for the project. He indicated this matter would have to be further discussed by the City Council, along with the design concepts. He appreciated the high level of detail that was provided by the developer and looked forward to reviewing this information in further detail at future meetings. He was hopeful there was time built into the development plant to allow for further conversations between the City and the developer.

Mr. Lux stated this was the case. He thanked the City for all of their hard work on the TRC and Master Plan. He anticipated the developer would need additional flexibility for density. He commented on how his plans were challenging him to approach this site with 100 year plans and not just plans for the next 10 to 20 years.

Mayor Grant asked if the developer had received enough input this evening.

Mr. Shaver thanked the Council and JDA for their input. He looked forward to further refining the plans and discussing this with the City Council again in the near future.

Ms. Kvilvang reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule for the City Council.

Future Meeting Schedule
The next meeting will be Tuesday, September 6, at Arden Hills City Hall.

The JDA meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Approved David B. Sand 9-21-2016
David B. Sand, Chair Date