

January 6, 2005

Mr. William J. Mueller,
Village President, and
Board of Trustees
Village of Lombard

Subject: PC 04-37: 1000 N. Rohlwing Road

Dear President and Trustees:

Your Plan Commission transmits for your consideration its recommendation regarding the above-referenced petition. This petition was heard at the December 20, 2004 Plan Commission meeting. The petitioner requests that the Village approve a conditional use for a religious institution located within the B3 Community Shopping District.

Joe Basile, 5538 Celebrity C. West, Hanover Park, stated that he is the Senior Pastor of the Church in Lombard. They have been holding their services at Madison Elementary School and they are proposing to relocate their worship services to the proposed theatre site at Northgate Shopping Center. In his presentation, he reviewed the standards for conditional uses and noted that the church would not have an adverse impact on surrounding properties.

Chairperson Ryan then opened the meeting for public comment. There was no one present to speak for or against the petition.

Chairperson Ryan then requested the staff report. William Heniff, Senior Planner, stated that the petitioner, The Church in Lombard, is seeking a conditional use to have religious services within one of the former theatre spaces within the former Northgate Theatre property. This property in general, and the location of the proposed church specifically, is currently operating under a conditional use for an indoor amusement establishment that was approved as PC 02-31.

The congregation, which has approximately 250 members, is proposing to occupy one of the existing theatre spaces that was not converted as part of the Kool Zone teen club. The Church anticipates that it will primarily operate on Sunday mornings.

Mr. Heniff summarized the IDRC comments and stated that the proposed religious institution has been holding services at Madison Elementary School. They are proposing to relocate into the theatre space in the Northgate Shopping Center as it is already set-up to accommodate a larger assemblage of people.

The Comprehensive Plan recommends Corridor Commercial uses for the subject property. Religious institutions can have much in common with many uses commonly found in corridor commercial areas, as both attract visitors from wide area. Therefore, the proposed use is compatible with the Comprehensive Plan when such uses are located within the B3 Community Shopping District.

With the approval of PC 04-22 earlier this year, religious institutions are classified as conditional uses within the B3 zoning district. The subject property already has a conditional use for an indoor amusement establishment, which is another assembly-type land use.

The petitioner proposes to use the existing area within the building largely as it currently exists. They propose to modify the front of the seating area to accommodate a stage to facilitate their worship services. The theatre seating area will remain as it currently exists.

From staff's perspective, we find the proposed religious institution use, as proposed, to be quite similar to the past theatre use, which is a permitted use in the B3 District. Outside of worship services, they are not proposing any other ancillary activities (e.g., day-care, pre-school, Sunday school, etc.) that can frequently accompany religious institutional uses. Therefore, as the use will be operated similar to other permitted uses within the B3 District, staff is supportive of the request.

Mr. Heniff stated that the theatre space was originally included as part of the indoor amusement establishment conditional use. At the time of the original approval, the operator of the teen club proposed to show second-run movies in the theatre area. However, those plans never came to fruition.

Given that the teen club already accommodates large numbers of visitors, staff believes that the proposed use would not be detrimental to neighboring land uses and would have a minimal impact on the area. The Church in Lombard anticipates that it will offer services on Sunday mornings, which is a low-activity time for the rest of Northgate Plaza. The shopping center provides adequate parking and circulation, and any noise or traffic that could possibly be generated by the proposed use would not negatively impact the surrounding commercial properties.

Mr. Heniff stated that it is important to recognize the inter-relationship between the teen club and the religious institution. The Church will use the same main entrance and restroom facilities as the teen club. However, the actual operation of the respective conditional uses will be located within different areas, as shown on the submitted plan. Staff does not inherently see a conflict between these two district uses. However, staff recommends that a condition be added to the recommendation of approval that the area proposed to be used by the Church in Lombard is to be used exclusively for religious institution purposes and shall not be used by the teen club as part of their business operations.

Chairperson Ryan then opened the meeting for discussion among the Plan Commission members.

Commissioner Sweetser noted that in the letter from School District 44, it made a reference to the child care associated with the church, while the staff report noted that there will be no child day care operations associated within the church. Mr. Basile stated that the child care is only offered during worship services and they will not be having any daycare or pre-school activities.

Commissioner Burke asked about the hours of operation for church and wondered if they did have a service at a time other than Sunday mornings, would that cause a problem. Mr. Heniff stated that while most of their services will occur on Sunday morning, there will be times that services may occur on other days (i.e., on Christmas). Additionally, as the site was originally designed and developed as a theatre, the site improvements already provide for large gatherings of people – even during periods when other business uses on the property would be open.

Commissioner Burke then asked about condition 3 within the staff report that would restrict the use of theatre area by the church and not for the teen club. Does the Village have the ability to enforce this regulation? Mr. Heniff noted that the Village has rights to inspect the operations at the teen club as part of their licensing requirements. Mr. Basile said that they would not want the teen club to use the theatre area and they would keep the theatre area locked.

Commissioner Olbrysh made a motion to approve the petition, subject to the conditions in the staff report and those suggested at the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sweetser.

After due consideration of the petition and the testimony presented, the Plan Commission found that the proposed requests complied with the standards of the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, the Plan Commission, by a roll call vote of 6 to 0, recommended to the Corporate Authorities **approval** of PC 04-37, subject to the following conditions:

1. The petitioner's building and site improvements shall be designed and constructed consistent with Village Code and all also address the comments included within the IDRC report.
2. The petitioner shall apply for and receive a building permit for any improvements associated with the conditional use.
3. That the theatre space proposed to be used by the petitioner as part of this request shall only be used for religious institution purposes and shall not be occupied or used as part of the adjacent indoor amusement (i.e., teen club) establishment.

Respectfully,

VILLAGE OF LOMBARD

Donald Ryan
Chairperson
Lombard Plan Commission

attachments

c. Petitioner
Lombard Plan Commission