

May 5, 2005

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

Subject: PC 05-14; 211 W. St. Charles 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 April 18, 2005 Plan Commission meeting.

The petitioner, the Lombard Park District, requests the following actions be taken on the subject property, located within the B5 Central Business District:

1. Approval of a conditional use for a public recreational facility; and
2. Approval of a Major Plat of Resubdivision.

Mike Fugiel, Executive Director of the Lombard Park District, presented the petition. They are seeking a conditional use for the eastern 60 feet of the Fifth Third Bank parking lot. This is a new type of facility that reflects a recent trend of sprinkler parks as outside, stand-alone features. This site was selected because it is more than 5 or 6 blocks walking distance to the nearest playground-type facility.

Mr. Fugiel stated that the front of the site will be consistent with the downtown streetscape features as well as the Great Western Trail and Illinois Prairie Path. The entry gate will have ornate curved features with an automatic gate closure. The park is expected to attract families with children from toddler age up to 7 or 8 years old. It will be open from roughly 10 a.m. to 6 or 7 p.m. The water features will remain dormant until someone activates the bollards. Water will flow for 5 to 10 minutes and will then stop until it is reactivated.

Similar sprinkler parks are located in Elmhurst and in Oakbrook Terrace. Elmhurst has had no problems with their park and teenagers are embarrassed to use such a little kids' facility. The closure of the park precludes its use as a hangout.

Mr. Fugiel stated that the bathrooms would be a big amenity for downtown events such as the craft fair and Cruise Nights. The UV protection shade and tables will be removed at the end of the season. At 22 feet, the park is a comfortable distance off

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the street. The visibility of this type of feature is desirable as it will enhance the business district by breaking up the brick and masonry appearance of the downtown and providing a visual interest along with its recreational amenities. The park will be used from May until September.

Chairperson Ryan then opened the meeting for public comment.

Greg Henderson, 843 S. School Street, stated that Behrens Park in Elmhurst is not a great comparison because the Elmhurst sprinkler park is part of a much larger park. This will be on a busy street with no privacy. It is a great idea, but it might be best located in an existing park. Moran Water Park is only one-half mile away and it is unlikely that people will bypass Moran for the sprinkler park.

Mr. Henderson asked what will happen during the rest of the year when the park is not open, and how much revenue will be generated. He suggested that we wait for a stronger solution that will do more than bring people on nice days, and noted that other businesses might find the land desirable.

Paula Dillon, 123 W. St. Charles Road, stated that she is in support of good, structured downtown development. She sees struggling businesses and wonders if this park is the best fit to revitalize the area. She expressed concerns about traffic and parking and asked if there would be a stoplight or crosswalk installed. She asked what the potential revenue numbers were and noted that there were 3 units in her building with young children or grandchildren. She noted that Lincoln Place had its parking variation request denied. She stated that she wants the right kind of development.

Jackie Wicklander, 212 W. St. Charles Road, complained of problems with teenagers on skateboards. She stated that there would be an accident and asked if anyone would want this in their front yard.

Olive Langlois, 212 W. St. Charles Road, stated that she thought this would be a nice amenity with little kids playing, but she is concerned about the traffic. Traffic on St. Charles Road has increased and little kids will have a tough time crossing the street alone. She thinks it's a bad idea.

Laverne Stahl, 212 W. St. Charles Road, stated that she drives to Fifth Third Bank from her condominium across the street. From 3:30 p.m. on, traffic on St. Charles is very heavy. She stated that downtown is not the place for children.

Mr. Fugiel stated that there would be a maximum of 10 to 15 kids in the park at the same time. There will only be one parking space lost due to the installation of an ADA-accessible parking space. He believes a sprinkler park is preferable to a skate park. The Park District is not currently looking to staff the park, but they could send someone to supervise during peak times.

Chairperson Ryan asked if the park would be free. Mr. Fugiel confirmed that, unlike at Moran Water Park, there would be no charge to use the sprinkler park.

Commissioner Sweester stated that she couldn't imagine this as a destination park. Mr. Fugiel stated that it would be a neighborhood park, although someone from another part of town might be inclined to drive there due to its visibility.

Chairperson Ryan asked what will happen at the park during the winter. Mr. Fugiel answered that the canopies and tables will be pulled down and the sprinkler area locked. There will still be benches and seating along St. Charles Road.

Commissioner Olbrysh asked if he was aware of any injuries at this type of park. Mr. Fugiel stated that he was not aware of any injuries either at other sprinkler parks or involving children getting hit crossing St. Charles Road to visit Moran Water Park.

Commissioner Zorn stated that the park seemed to be directed more toward toddlers. Mr. Fugiel stated that that was the intention, although you may see kids up to age 8 or so.

Chairperson Ryan then requested the staff report. Jennifer Backensto, Planner I, noted that the subject property is surrounded by condominiums to the north and east, with the Union Pacific Railroad to the south and a retail strip center to the west. The petitioner, the Lombard Park District, intends to construct and operate a sprinkler park at the southwest corner of St. Charles Road and Lincoln Avenue in downtown Lombard. The land for this park will be donated by Fifth Third Bank, which owns and operates a drive-through bank facility to the west of the park site. The park will include a 1,600 square foot sprinklered play area with both open and shaded seating, restrooms, and 18 dedicated parking spaces. A 6-foot high welded steel fence will surround the play area. The park will be operable from May through September, from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Backensto stated that the Comprehensive Plan recommends that this property be developed as part of the Central Business District – Mixed-Use Area. Staff believes that the proposed sprinkler park adds to the mix of mutually reinforcing land uses within the downtown, as per the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. The seat walls, park benches, planters, and trash receptacles on the north end of the park will be consistent with streetscape features throughout the rest of the downtown. The storage building will be similar in style to the proposed garage at the Hammerschmidt Commuter Parking Lot. There are no other recreational facilities within the downtown with the exception of Lilacia Park, so the proposed sprinkler park would provide a play area for young children in the neighborhood.

Staff finds that the petition meets the Standards for Conditional Uses. The park will be a daytime operation during the summer months and it will be secured during closed hours. It will be beneficial to surrounding properties by providing an amenity for downtown residents and their children and grandchildren. The park should also serve to attract additional visitors to the downtown that may financially benefit surrounding businesses.

Ms. Backensto stated that the vehicle entrance to the site would be the existing Fifth Third Bank driveway entrance at the rear of the site. A cross access easement will allow Fifth Third Bank customers and employees to continue to access the bank from Lincoln Avenue. The proposed

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sprinkler park will not affect the business operations or vehicle maneuvering on the bank property. No variations from the Zoning Ordinance are being requested.

In conclusion, Ms. Backensto stated that staff recommends approval of the petition.

Chairperson Ryan then asked if there was anyone in the audience who had any questions regarding the staff report. Hearing none, he opened the meeting for discussion among the Plan Commission members.

Commissioner Sweetser stated that she wished to applaud the Park District for creative thinking, noting that something novel can be attractive without necessarily having a high cost, especially when in an unexpected place.

Commissioner Sweetser moved to approve the petition. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Zorn.

After due consideration of the petition and the testimony presented, the Plan Commission found that the proposed request complies with the standards of the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, the Plan Commission, by a roll call vote of 5 to 0, recommended to the Corporate Authorities **approval** of PC 05-14.

Respectfully,

VILLAGE OF LOMBARD

Donald Ryan
Chairperson
Lombard Plan Commission

DR:JB

attachments

c. Petitioner
Lombard Plan Commission