

**AGENDA**  
**Economic Development Committee**  
**Thursday, November 4, 2021**  
**7:00 p.m. – Darien City Hall**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Public Comment**
- 3. Approval of Minutes – October 7, 2021**
- 4. New Business**
  - a) Economic Development Workshop – Recap & Action Items  
(Summary of Workshop Attached)**
  - b) New Topic Discussion**
- 5. Old Business**
  - a) Previous Follow Up/Hanging Matters**
    - i. EDC Member Updates**
    - ii. Staff Updates**
- 6. Next Scheduled Meeting – December 2, 2021**
- 7. Adjournment**

**City of Darien**  
**Minutes Economic Development Committee**  
**Thursday, October 7, 2021**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chairman Bryan Gay. Other Committee Members present were: Matthew Weberling, Nick Pitzer, Brian Liedtke, Thomas Papais, and Robert Hahn. Also present was Mayor Joe Marchese and City Clerk JoAnne Ragona, who swore in Committee Member Robert Hahn.

**2. Public Comment**

Roger Blomgren (Baird & Warner Real Estate), Fred Davis and Jean Freeman (Property Owners), were present and provided a detailed multi-page handout describing a potential request to rezone two (2) parcels at 1220/1225 Plainfield Road. The owners hope to develop housing and offices to attract buyers for both parcels. After significant discussion related to well water conversion costs, adjacent single-family parcels and HOA concerns, and the estimated combined value of the parcels, the presenter and owners thanked the Committee and departed.

Committee action item for Chairperson Bryan Gay to discuss with Jordan Yanke, City Staff. At the meeting it was suggested that if a zoning option is considered it could involve OR&I Zoning. Both parcels need development, as this location has lacked a meaningful plan for years.

**3. Approval of Minutes – July 8, 2021**

Minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

**4. New Business**

**a) Economic Development Workshop Planning & Discussion**

Committee discussion regarding Economic Development Workshop slated for October 23, 2021. Mayor Joe Marchese revealed the history related to economic planning efforts dating back to 2008, and indicated a clear strategy for Darien's growth needs to be addressed. The workshop/training session package was provided to the Committee for the five (5) hour program. It was stated that there are 18 confirmed attendees for the workshop, with a probability of as many as 23 attendees.

**b) New Topic Discussion**

None.

## **5. Old Business**

### **a) Previous Follow Up/Hanging Matters**

None.

## **6. Next Scheduled Meeting**

Next scheduled meeting is Thursday, November 4, 2021.

## **7. Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

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**APPROVED:**

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**BRYAN GAY, CHAIRPERSON**

## **EDC WORKSHOP SUMMARY – CITY OF DARIEN OCTOBER 23, 2021**

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THE CITY OF DARIEN CONDUCTED AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP/PLANNING SESSION ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2021. AMONG THE ATTENDEES WERE MEMBERS FROM THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION, CITY COUNCIL, AND THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. CITY STAFF MEMBERS WERE PRESENT AS WELL.

THE WORKSHOP/PLANNING SESSION FOCUSED ON A PROGRAM TITLED, ***THE ROLE OF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT***, WHICH WAS DEVELOPED BY THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES. LEADING THE PRESENTATION WAS BRYAN GAY, CHAIRMAN OF THE CITY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF "INVEST AURORA".

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP WAS TO OBTAIN INPUT FROM PEOPLE WITH A VESTED INTEREST IN THE FUTURE GROWTH OF DARIEN. THE WORKSHOP BROUGHT TOGETHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN EFFORT TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN FOCUSED ON SETTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR THE CITY. THAT BEING SAID, THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY REGARDING INPUT OBTAINED FROM THE WORKSHOP AND COMMON TAKEAWAYS.

### **COMMON TAKEAWAYS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

- RETAIN SMALL BUSINESSES AND TARGET VACANT COMMERCIAL SPACE FOR NEW BUSINESSES
  - TARGET EXISTING COMMERCIAL CENTERS FOR REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
    - MIXED-USE COMPONENT FOR ZONING CODE
    - CREATE DESTINATION DINING/SHOPPING AREAS
    - FEASIBILITY REPORTS
    - PROVIDE INCENTIVES
  - STRENGTHEN TIES WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND OTHER TAXING BODIES WHO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
  - FOCUS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS AND MARKETING OF THE CITY
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## **STRENGTHS**

- PROXIMITY TO HIGHWAYS (I.E. TRANSPORTATION)
- LOCAL SHOPPING/DINING
- WATERFALL GLEN ATTRACTION
- DIVERSE LABOR FORCE
- BALANCED CITY BUDGET
- STRONG VOLUNTEER BASE
- LOW VACANCY RATES
- PRIME RESIDENTIAL AREAS AND GOOD SCHOOLS
- LOW CRIME RATE
- LOW TAXES
- FAST PROCESSING TIMES FOR DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CITY
- STRONG MIDDLE CLASS WITH DISPOSABLE INCOME

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- CREATE A COMMUNITY CALENDAR; START AN INFORMATIONAL KIOSK
- GROW SMALL BUSINESSES
- STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SIGNAGE FOR MARKETING CITY
- WORK WITH ARGON AS A DEVELOPMENT PARTNER
- DEVELOP A TRADITIONAL DOWNTOWN SETTING “LIVE/WORK/PLAY”
- CREATE DESTINATION SHOPPING/DINING EXPERIENCES & TARGET REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES/LOCATIONS
- CREATE MORE PUBLIC EVENT OPPORTUNITIES

## **WEAKNESSES**

- LIMITED COMMERCIAL SPACE
- LACK OF TRADITIONAL DOWNTOWN SETTING/NO TRAIN STOP
- LACK OF COORDINATION BETWEEN TAXING BODIES
- LACK OF FINE DINING/RESTAURANT SELECTION
- LIMITED EXPOSURE AND RECOGNITION OF CITY’S GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION
- LACK OF CITY STAFF FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- LIMITED COMMUNITY SIGNAGE/MARKETING/COMMUNICATION FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

## **THREATS**

- COMMUNICATION AND ACCURACY OF INFORMATION – NEED GOOD INFORMATION “GOING OUT THE DOOR”
- WORK-FROM-HOME ELEMENT DUE TO PANDEMIC
- LOSS OF RETAIL/CHANGING TRENDS
- CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS
- FAILURE TO ACT ON OPPORTUNITIES
- NIMBYSM “NOT IN MY BACK YARD” MENTALITY
- LACK OF SUPPORT FROM RESIDENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

## **VISION/GOALS**

- IDENTIFY QUALITY METRICS FOR MEASURING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (I.E. SALES TAX)
- TARGET SPECIFIC AREAS FOR REDEVELOPMENT (I.E. SHOPPING CENTERS), DETERMINE TYPE WANTED, AND KNOW MECHANISMS FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SUCCEED (I.E. FEASIBILITY REPORTS)
- DETERMINE WHERE PUBLIC FUNDING SHOULD GO?
- PROVIDE INCENTIVES TO RETAIN BUSINESSES AND GROW THEM

## **STRATEGIES**

- DEVELOP BUSINESS “GRANTS” PROGRAM
- TARGET CORRIDORS IN CITY TO INFUSE REDEVELOPMENT AND/OR RETENTION
- SSA OR TIF

## **POLICIES**

- CREATE MIXED-USE COMPONENT IN CITY/ZONING CODE FOR DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
- IMPLEMENT RAPID-TRANSIT OR OTHER TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS TO HELP DESTINATION AND PLACEMAKING EFFORTS
- SEEK PARCELS THAT ARE OWNED BY STAKEHOLDERS THAT ARE INTERESTED IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES