



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE EDINA PLANNING COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2005  
EDINA CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
4801 WEST 50<sup>TH</sup> STREET**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

**Michael Schroeder, Michael Fischer, John Lonsbury, Floyd Grabel and Basima Tewfik**

**STAFF PRESENT:**

**Craig Larsen Joyce Repya and Jackie Hoogenakker**

**I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:**

The minutes of the September 28, 2005, meeting were filed as submitted.

**II. NEW BUSINESS:**

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**Edina Heritage Landmark Designation for Edina Theater Sign  
3911 West 50<sup>th</sup> Street**

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Ms. Repya informed the Commission tonight, the Edina Heritage Preservation Board is proposing designating the Edina Theater Sign as an Edina Heritage Landmark.

Ms. Repya explained the Edina Theater was not originally planned for the 50<sup>th</sup> and France area. In 1934, the developer had his sites set on the 50<sup>th</sup> and Xerxes neighborhood. However, due to the pressures from neighborhood groups, the new theater moved west to the delight of Edinans both past and present.

Ms. Repya told the Commission Liebenberg and Kaplan, the architectural firm that designed some of the historic Country Club District homes, planned for an Art Deco style motion picture theater that featured a brick faced, ziggurat stepped facade with a tower, metal canopy and lighted sign. Ms. Repya noted the theater opened on August 31, 1934 and has served the community well, providing an anchor for the 50<sup>th</sup> and France commercial district.

Ms. Repya pointed out over time, the theater has undergone extensive renovations to include replacement of the original canopy and marquee, modifications to the entrance, lobby, lounge, box office and retail spaces. The original single screen auditorium was reconstructed in 1984 to accommodate 4 smaller auditoriums.

Ms. Repya reported the vertical “Edina” sign that exists today is a reconstruction of the original 1934 electric lighted sign that was destroyed by a tornado in 1981. The sign is made of steel and covered with sheet metal. “Edina” is spelled out with fluorescent tubing, surrounded by flashing incandescent light bulbs that are illuminated in sequence to simulate movement. Variances for sign height, sign area, and light motion were approved to continue the non-conforming status of the reconstructed sign.

Since the 1981 reconstruction, the sign had fallen into a state of considerable disrepair both structurally and electrically. The theater owner, Gene Haugland and Landmark Theaters worked together to research the original details of the 1934 sign and restore it to its former glory. In recognition of their preservation efforts, the Edina Theater Sign was awarded the 2004 Edina Heritage Award.

Ms. Repya concluded although the Edina Theater is one of the last remaining prewar movie houses in the Twin Cities, the building has lost much of its historic significance as a result of alterations which have removed or obscured many of its Art Deco details. More than seventy years after it was first illuminated, the sign continues to produce a dramatic transformation of the nighttime streetscape along West 50<sup>th</sup> Street.

Ms. Repya told the Commission Mr. Gene Haugland, theater owner is present this evening and will respond to questions if the Commission has any.

Commissioner Fischer asked Ms. Repya if it is “normal procedure” to come before the Planning Commission instead of going directly to the City Council for this type of designation.

Ms. Repya explained designating a landmark is treated the same as a rezoning. Code requires that both the Commission and City Council review the request and act.

A brief discussion ensued with Commission Members in agreement on the importance of preserving the Edina Theater Sign.

Commissioner Lonsbury moved to recommend that the Edina Theater Sign be designated as a Heritage Landmark. Commissioner McClelland seconded the motion. All voted aye; motion carried.

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**P-06-1**  
**C-06-1**                      **Final Development Plan**  
**Conditional Use Permit and**  
**Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance**  
**Gabbert & Beck/Ryan Companies**  
**3510 Galleria, Edina, MN**

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Mr. Larsen informed the Commission the development team is present this evening to present an informational overview of a proposal to construct a 225 unit hotel building with 79 condo units above in the northeast corner of the Galleria Shopping Center tract.

Mr. Larsen introduced to the Planning Commission Mr. Warren Beck, Galleria property owner.

Chair Byron asked Mr. Larsen if this request triggers an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Larsen responded this request does not trigger an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan; however, it would trigger an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to allow a reduction in building setback due to building height and increase in Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

Mr. Warren Beck, Greenwood, Minnesota introduced the development team to include Mark Swenson, Tracey Jacques, of esg Architects, Mike Farmer, of Ryan Companies, and Vern Swing, of RLK.

Mr. Beck addressed the Commission informing them the Galleria opened in 1959 and since that time the Galleria has undergone a number of redevelopment scenarios, in 1973, 1980, 1991 and the present. Mr. Beck said the focus of the Galleria continues to be on family and community, and it is their hope this project will meet the needs of a certain group and be of benefit to the entire community. Mr. Gabbert said in his opinion a full service hotel would be a plus for the City of Edina.

With graphics Mr. Beck pointed out the proposal is for 225 upscale hotel rooms (to include 6 luxury suites) and 79 condominium units. Condo units will range in size from 1,040 – 3,200 square feet. Mr. Beck explained the hotel public functions (restaurant, meeting space, recreation area to include pool, spa and workout area) are at street level with hotel rooms on floors 2-7. The condominiums will be located on floors 8-18. A new four-level ramp will be constructed with 751 parking stalls, in addition to 74 surface stalls. The ramp will also have the potential in the future to accommodate a 5<sup>th</sup> level for an additional count of 197 spaces. Mr. Beck said he believes the hotel/residential concept of this proposal would generate less traffic than a straight retail or office use. Mr.

Beck acknowledged building height may pose an issue, adding tall buildings are not new to the greater Southdale area. He pointed out Point of France is 17 stories, Edina Park Plaza is 18 stories, Durham Apartments, 13 stories, and 7500 York Avenue is 14 stories. Mr. Beck introduced Mr. Tracey Jacques, architect.

Mr. Jacques told the Commission he is very excited to be working on this project, with graphics and video animation he presented to the Commission the hotel/condominium building project in visual form. Mr. Jacques told the Commission the expression of this project is "Modern Classic". The base of the hotel is dark brown brick to blend with the exterior materials of the existing Galleria building located directly east. On the hotel portion (floors 2-7) exterior materials will be polished pre-cast panels with glass and metal window sill extensions. The condo element of the building is proposed to be curtain wall and metal. Mr. Jacques said the proposed building façade is faceted to break up building mass, with the Westin hotel sign located at the top of the building tower. Concluding his presentation Mr. Jacques informed the Commission an underground link is also proposed between the hotel and existing Galleria shopping center.

Mr. Mayo, 6041 Kellogg Avenue addressed the Commission and explained he represents faith based groups that are interested in maintaining and providing affordable housing for Edina's work force (teachers, nurses, police, fire fighters, etc.). Mr. Mayo said he believes the City and faith based groups should become partners to provide more affordable housing and to ensure that affordable housing units remain available in Edina. Chair Byron thanked Mr. Mayo for his attendance, adding he believes this is an appropriate time for the faith based groups to introduce themselves to the City. Chair Byron concluded this is a good opportunity to open up discussions between the City

Mr. Steven Helgeson, 3609 55<sup>th</sup> St. W., told the Commission he believes this is a good opportunity to create a more urban center type of environment in Edina. He added in his opinion this proposal presents an exiting opportunity and asked the developers and City to not forget the potential of the streetscape. Mr. Helgeson said he believes the greater Southdale area will continue to go through a "conversion" process, adding he wants the City to keep in mind the pedestrian experience and streetscape.

Commissioner Grabiell, commented that while the height of the proposed building, at least in his opinion, seems more appropriate in this location (vs. the one at the old theatre site), he wonders if a market still exists in Edina for more condominiums. He pointed out over the past year the City has approved a number of new residential condominium developments to include 22 units at the corner of 50<sup>th</sup>/ France, 88 units at Gallagher Drive/France Avenue and 123 senior units 70<sup>th</sup>/ Metro. Mr. Beck responded he believes the market study indicates support for the proposed project. He said in Edina there continues to be a need

for alternative housing styles for residents who sell their single family homes and want to stay in the community.

Commissioner Fischer pointed out the public realm works very well south of this site; however, it becomes difficult to navigate once it approaches the Galleria site. Commissioner Fischer stated he has no problem with the proposed building height and believes it is appropriate in this location, adding this site also appears to be a good location for a hotel. Continuing, Commissioner Fischer pointed out, at least in his opinion, the proposal seems to internalize amenities. The outdoor plaza area is clearly for the use of the condo residents and hotel folks, but what the public appears to get is a ramped parking lot. Commissioner Fischer said at least in his opinion the Southdale area is more about the public realm, and improving the public realm, pointing out the proposed this evening includes permanent housing. He added steps should be taken to improve the public realm, and incorporate the proposal into that realm for the condominium residents and Edina residents in general. Mr. Beck acknowledged the focus of the development team centered on the eastern portion of the site, acknowledging the team didn't really consider the long term aspect of the residents of the condominium. Continuing, Mr. Beck said the linear roadway easement running through the greater Southdale area was planned in 1972, before the reconfiguration of the Galleria. He pointed out the last expansion of the Galleria occurred at the time Centennial Lakes was developed, with more attention given to vehicle transportation (tram) to "join" the sites. Mr. Beck stated if he understands correctly Commissioner Fischer's comments appear to be more about pedestrian traffic, acknowledging that is an important aspect that the team will need to take another look at. Mr. Beck added he believes that interaction can be enhanced. Concluding, Mr. Beck said their goal is to be sensitive to the long term residents who will reside on this site.

Commissioner Schroeder said his biggest problem with the proposal is it appears the "best" part of the building addresses the parking lot, not the street. Commissioner Schroeder suggested "dressing up" the building as it addresses the street. Commissioner Schroeder asked what is there really for the pedestrian and vehicle traffic to view if the best part of the building is hidden from public view. Commissioner Schroeder acknowledged the ramp aspect of the proposal as it reaches out to West 70<sup>th</sup> Street is difficult; however, in his opinion, reaching out to the street would be a real advantage in revitalizing public activity in the public realm of Southdale. Mr. Beck explained their position is difficult because in a sense this is going from suburban to urban, adding the City ordinances relate to suburban developments, not urban. Concluding, Mr. Beck said the team would entertain that idea.

Commissioner Lonsbury noted he has some comments on traffic but would save those for the formal presentation.

Chair Byron said this is the Commissions first read on the project, adding he would like to see a more detailed description of how they are pulling together the proposed new building with the existing Galleria shopping center, especially as it relates to the ramp and pedestrian connection. Continuing, Chair Byron said he has a number of issues he would like addressed at the formal presentation to include; internal traffic flow, mid-block uncontrolled intersection may not be appropriate if this proposal proceeds, impact of proposal on existing infrastructure, will parking be adequate, hotel tax district, and the importance of the transit spine and greenway. Chair Byron questioned the hotel tax and what the tax would be used for. Chair Byron said it would be a benefit if the hotel tax could be used for the transit spine and greenway area. Continuing, Chair Byron noted to the best of his knowledge Target is also on the verge of remodeling. He pointed out there appears to be a lot going on in the greater Southdale area and the challenge is how do we (City and merchants) come together and figure out the answer to the shuttle and the greening. Chair Byron said he hates to see these forward looking proposals while “we” the City is failing to deal with the greenway and transit spine. Chair Byron stated there should be a long term solution formulated by the City for the future condo owners wishing to go to Southdale. Chair Byron suggested that the areas business leaders also help the City. Mr. Beck acknowledged the Southdale study is an important first step to change or solve the issues; however, an important step is identifying the issues. Chair Byron pointed out the Corridor study puts forward the issues that face the City, adding this project has a role to play. Mr. Beck said he appreciates all the comments, and the City should continue an ongoing dialogue with all property owners in the area.

Commissioner Grabiell said this is the chicken egg question. Gabbert & Beck is the position to possibly help redevelop this area. Commissioner Grabiell suggested that all area merchants get together and “jump on the bandwagon.” He added this project is in a unique position to influence the direction of area redevelopment. Concluding, Commissioner Grabiell said this is a great opportunity for Gabbert & Beck to help themselves, the City and community, adding at first glance he likes the project and thinks it is appropriate.

Commissioner Fischer commented in his opinion this line of discussion is exactly right-on. He said at this time the City has a unique opportunity, pointing out many communities develop long range plans for their cities and wait for those plans to materlize. Edina, however, has the luxury that at this time there are three or four major redevelopment proposals in the process and/or near future coming to us. Continuing, Commissioner Fischer noted individually the proposals are great, but looking at them in a complete way would be better. Commissioner Fischer said it would be great if the developers would get together to brainstorm with regard to the bigger picture; however, how can the City make that happen. Concluding, Commissioner Fischer stated Edina has a unique opportunity to consider these projects.

Mr. Beck acknowledged the process is difficult and in an ideal world area merchants could get together to formulate a united redevelopment scenario, but in the real world it is hard to do.

Chair Byron thanked Mr. Beck for his presentation, adding the Commission looks forward to their formal presentation.

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**LD-05-8**                      **Gassedelen and McLenighan**  
**5509 and 5513 Highland Road**  
**Lot Division**

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Mr. Larsen informed the Commission the proposed lot division would transfer a triangular piece of property from 5513 Highland Road to 5509 Highland Road. The division is requested to make an existing hedge part of the 5509 Highland Road property. It appears the property owner at 5509 Highland Road planted and has maintained the hedge.

Mr. Larsen concluded staff recommends approval of the lot division. Both lots continue to conform following the division.

Commissioner Lonsbury moved to recommend lot division approval. Commissioner Schroeder seconded the motion. All voted aye; motion carried.

**III. ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM

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Jackie Hoogenakker