



Village of Elm Grove: Downtown Concept Planning
Committee of the Whole 5/7/19

The SEH planning effort has generated more recognition and discussion of downtown redevelopment issues than past efforts. We have heard a broad spectrum of comments. A few of the takeaways from the verbal and written comments I see are:

- Residents want more discussion / listening sessions.
- Residents are interested in seeing the Village pursue expansion of a municipal water system.
- Residents favor setting a maximum elevation for new construction. Three stories are the most often stated maximum height.
- Residents are concerned about the potential amount of future multifamily housing a plan identifies.
- Residents support a more walkable and bike friendly downtown area.
- Residents seem to support more food and retail, but fear traffic increases and parking problems.

The Village of Elm Grove does not own any of the land in the Village downtown. We have lots of power to deny proposals but little definition what we would approve.

Property owners and developers need some level of certainty that if they invest money and effort, they will have a reasonable chance of success. It is the Village Board's job to define that pathway for what development we want. I do not believe it is in the best interests of Village residents or business owners for Village government to stifle redevelopment. To me the question is how we support "good" development.

As the governing body we are tasked with supporting the unique positive aspects of Elm Grove, encouraging high quality property maintenance, encouraging investment and improvement of village commercial properties, encouraging development of new business offerings and services desired by residents and adapting Village policies and regulations to address regional and national housing and shopping changes. All these efforts are directed toward private property where owners have rights principally defined by state law and Village zoning regulations. As a result, we are in the position of encouraging property owners to respond in desired way. We are mostly reactive to proposed plans.

The Village could activate the Community Development Authority (CDA), borrow money, purchase land and solicit offers for development with defined requirements and limitations. Consideration of direct Village CDA involvement would likely involve significant public involvement as to which parcel(s) would be purchased and what specific development is desired.

Typically, Community Development Authorities are created when large and usually undesirable land is not economically attractive to private investors and often requires environmental cleanup. Elm Grove does attract private interest. We need to work on ways of rewarding development which provides public benefits such as parking, public gathering spaces and high quality design and building materials which can still make economic sense for a developer.

Neil Palmer
Village President