



City of Naperville

Spring Avenue Plan



**Planning Services Team
TED Business Group
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Existing Conditions

The Spring Avenue corridor is located immediately south of the Burlington Northern Railway west of Washington Street. The subject area consists of approximately 40 acres and contains a mix of different uses, including single-family residential, townhomes, institutional uses (Washington Junior High School, DuPage Children's Museum) and industrial. The study area is located within the city's East Sector and possesses a unique geographic location within close proximity of Downtown Naperville as well as the city's downtown METRA Station.

Purpose

The Spring Avenue Plan strives to address the conflicts resulting from the close proximity of existing residential and industrial uses in order to foster a cohesive, considerate, future land use composition that builds upon the existing strong residential character of the Spring Avenue corridor.

Background

In 2005, City Council identified the Spring Avenue corridor as an area that warrants further study with respect to future land use. Council's direction was based upon the denial of a variance request that would have allowed for the construction of a multi-tenant industrial structure on the property commonly known as 607 Spring Avenue, which is located across the street from a residential neighborhood, thus triggering discussion regarding the appropriateness of industrial land uses within close proximity to residential land uses. In response to City Council's direction, the Planning Services Team included the Spring Avenue Land Use Study in their 2006-2007 work plan.

Public Outreach

In order to gain an understanding of the common hopes and concerns shared by the public, city staff executed an aggressive public outreach campaign. Over the course of the six (6) months between January and June, 2007, city staff solicited input from a wide variety of stakeholder groups by using a number of different methods. Valuable stakeholder input was gathered through property owner surveys, key person interviews, a public open house, and two (2) public hearings held before the Plan Commission.

The information gathered through the public participation campaign provided much needed contextual perspective that can only come from those who live and work within the study area. The testimonials provided by the stakeholders supplemented the empirical data collected by staff and added an irreplaceable human element. The Study Area's existing conditions, the input provided by stakeholders, and land use planning principles work together as the foundation for the recommendations made within the Spring Avenue Plan.

Public Input Results

Throughout the entire public process, the majority of the stakeholders voiced concerns related to conflicts between the industrial uses located north of Spring Avenue and the surrounding residential properties. Of those who responded to the survey, 79% identified

the industrial properties within the Spring Avenue Corridor as an area of concern. Common concerns related to the industrial properties include:

- Truck traffic
- Noise (related to non-residential uses)
- Pedestrian safety
- Poor street condition
- Property maintenance

When the survey respondents were asked what type of future development they would like to see in the Spring Avenue corridor, 66% identified residential development as best suited for the Spring Avenue Study Area. Property owners consistently praised the existing residential uses and expressed an overwhelming desire to foster continued residential growth in the area. The promotion of residential development was viewed by the stakeholders as a vehicle to address the concerns generated by the existing industrial uses.

Future Land Use Recommendation

The information collected by city staff and analyzed throughout the public outreach campaign has led to the conclusion that the most appropriate future use of the properties located along the Spring Avenue corridor is medium density residential. This recommendation is based upon the following findings:

Property Size

One of the most significant factors influencing the recommendation to create a consistent residential land use pattern is the size of the properties within the Spring Avenue corridor. The small property sizes lend themselves toward a consistent land use scheme that does not require extensive buffering in order to provide a reasonable level of separation between differing uses (i.e. residential adjacent to industrial). The ancillary impacts associated with nonresidential development (parking, waste, loading, lighting) would be unreasonably difficult to address given the geographic constraints of the study area and the close proximity of uses. This is evidenced by the number of concerns regarding property maintenance, noise, and hours of operation related to existing industrial uses expressed by the stakeholders that participated in the public process.

Location

The Spring Avenue corridor possesses a unique location within the city that is highly favorable for residential development. The corridor has great potential to act as a model pedestrian environment due to its proximity to a variety of destination uses that cater to foot traffic. Downtown Naperville's cultural resources, restaurants, and retail attractions are located between 3 and 5 blocks south of the Spring Avenue corridor. The downtown Naperville METRA station is located less than a mile from the western terminus of Spring Avenue, thus providing the residents of the Spring Avenue corridor with easy access to mass transit. Additionally, the Spring Avenue Study Area contains two pedestrian destination points itself, with the DuPage Children's Museum and Washington

Junior High located at the eastern edge of the study area. Residential properties will benefit from the amenities identified above.

Traffic

The majority of the traffic-related concerns expressed during the public input campaign were related to the truck traffic attributable to the existing industrial uses. Both the amount of truck traffic and the road-maintenance issues that result from high volumes of large vehicle traffic were identified as concerns that must be addressed. The phasing out of the existing industrial uses will alleviate truck traffic and slow the rate of road deterioration, thus improving travel conditions along the Spring Avenue corridor. Additionally, the city will continue to monitor the traffic levels along Spring Avenue as redevelopment occurs to determine if the installation of additional roadway improvements such as new turn lanes or traffic control devices is warranted within the Spring Avenue corridor. Future improvements will be included in the city's Capital Improvement Plan which will be implemented when the traffic indicators deem such improvements to be necessary and appropriate.

School Generation

Enrollment projections provided by School District 203 indicate that District-wide enrollment has been on the decline since 2003 and is expected to decline an additional 5.3% by 2009-10, with the largest reduction in enrollment being felt in 203's elementary schools (-7.4%). School-age children who reside in the Spring Avenue corridor attend Naper Elementary School, Washington Junior High, and Naperville North High School. Enrollment at Naper Elementary School is trending down and is expected to decline at a rate between 5% and 8% per year for the next four academic years. Enrollment figures for Washington Junior High are anticipated to remain steady for the next four years, as is the total enrollment at Naperville North High School.

School District 203 is comprised of a number of aging, more established subdivisions, Downtown Naperville, and a significant amount of office space along the I-88 corridor. These factors contribute to the declining levels of enrollment currently being experienced by School District 203.

By allowing the existing industrial properties, which encompass approximately 8.5 acres, to be redeveloped for residential purposes at a maximum density of 10 units per acre (identical to Naper Station), the city can anticipate the introduction of 16 new students into School District 203 (Sec. 7-3-5 of Municipal Code). However, the configuration of the industrial properties within the Spring Avenue corridor does not guarantee that 10 units per acre is attainable or appropriate, as the site is oddly shaped in comparison to the rectangular Naperville Station Site. The appropriate development density will need to be determined on a development-specific basis, but the general enrollment trends support reasonable residential development that does not impose an undue burden on School District 203's facilities.

Recommended Zoning Classification

Upon analysis of the existing conditions present within the study area and in an effort to realize the desired residential character for the Spring Avenue corridor, staff recommends that the existing industrial properties be rezoned to R2, Single-Family and Low Density Multiple Family Residence District. The R2 zoning classification allows for the development of single-family and two-family residences by right and also provides the opportunity for single-family attached (townhomes) dwelling units to be constructed with the issuance of a Conditional Use by City Council. By mandating that a public hearing be conducted, the city will be able to analyze each development on its own merits and mandate changes in order to complement the existing residential character of the neighborhood. The R2 zoning classification is also consistent with the zoning composition of the surrounding area, thus creating consistent zoning standards applicable to the entire area.

Upon rezoning to R2, the existing industrial land uses will become legal nonconforming and will be subject to Section 6-10 (Nonconforming Uses) of the Municipal Code. All existing nonconforming uses will be permitted to continue to operate at their current extent but may not expand or alter the nature of the nonconformity. All future changes in use must comply with the underlying R2 zoning regulations.

Design Considerations

Throughout the public input campaign, a number of design considerations were identified as desirable for all redevelopment projects. All future redevelopment projects shall address the following design considerations, which shall be implemented for the benefit of the Spring Avenue corridor when practically feasible.

1. Open Space – All redevelopment proposals should emphasize open, communal gathering spaces as the focal point of residential redevelopment. In order to promote the preservation of the city's open space resources and foster a pedestrian friendly character, all redevelopment proposals shall preserve approximately 30% of their development for open space amenities such as gazebos, water features, and passive green space.
2. Pedestrian Friendliness & Connectivity – The Spring Avenue corridor is located within a close proximity of a number of the city's resources (DuPage Children's Museum, Downtown Naperville, METRA, Forest Preserve). All redevelopment proposals should focus on how the pedestrian travels through the Spring Avenue Corridor and shall provide connectivity in the form of sidewalks, private walkways and other pedestrian oriented amenities designed to enhance the pedestrian experience. Special consideration shall be given to providing pedestrian connections between the surrounding resources and the Spring Avenue corridor and a premium shall be placed upon providing a pedestrian connection from the Spring Avenue corridor to the Forest Preserve District's property to the west.
3. Sound Buffering – Due to the Spring Avenue corridor's location immediately south of the Burlington Northern Railway, noise was commonly identified as a concern. This is partially attributable to the age of the homes in the Spring

- Avenue corridor and the previous construction standards (lack of insulation, etc) as well as the noise generated by the existing industrial uses. In order to ensure that the Railway does not become a detriment to the study area, all new development will be required to address sound protection through natural plantings, berming, or the construction of privacy fencing.
4. Landscape Buffering – In order to ensure that residential redevelopment is properly buffered from the existing industrial uses, all residential redevelopment will be expected to provide buffering from existing industrial uses in excess of the city’s Landscape Ordinance. Buffering shall include, but not be limited to, the following design / landscape provisions: increased building setback, use of vegetation measuring at least 6 feet in height, reliance upon coniferous vegetation to provide increased degree of opacity, berming, and privacy fencing.

Conclusion

The recommendations and design considerations contained within the Spring Avenue Plan are intended to act as a guide to realize the desired character for the Spring Avenue Corridor. The collaborative process of formulating recommendations represents a proactive approach at addressing concerns commonly identified by the stakeholders vested in the Spring Avenue Area. The success of the existing residential land use mix speaks to the viability of future residential development, which has been deemed the most appropriate means to foster a consistent, high quality, pedestrian-friendly character throughout the Spring Avenue corridor.