



OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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**JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
AND PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
MAY 24, 2022**

Present: Council President David Greenspan; Councilmembers Duane Van Dyke, Nick Nunnari, Dennis Sullivan, Michael O'Donnell, Amy Havelka and Mark Getsay.

Also present: Law Director Mike Maloney; Planning Director Jim Bedell; Economic Development Manager Michelle Boczek; Planning Commission members Brad Lamb (Chairman), Matt Jones, Lauren Falcone, Bonnie Smith; and various real estate agents.

The meeting convened at 7:04 p.m.

I. Discuss real estate in Westlake.

Council President Greenspan explained the purpose of this meeting was for both Council and Planning Commission members to get a better understanding of land use in the city so as to strategically control and manage growth that will impact the city for the next 50 years. By hearing from the various real estate agents on the trends in the area, it can assist in determining what is most appropriate for Westlake.

Bob Szarek of Howard Hanna and Sylvia Incorvaia of Keller Williams spoke on the residential market trends. The general consensus was that there is always a need for cluster homes or townhomes with first floor master suites for people who are looking to age in place, downsize and/or not have stairs and limited or no yard work. Higher end developments like Wyndgate that offer a pool and clubhouse and other amenities and are close to shopping appeal to various age groups. Suggestions were made for the historic Dover Village area to make it a walkable mixed-use center for residential and boutique shops with schools, restaurants, the library and post office nearby. Discussion included the desire to keep as much green space as possible; the impact of new townhouse developments on established existing single-family developments; density; and the best use of smaller parcels of land. Rental units, apartments and assisted/independent living facilities and their desirability and demand were discussed.

Connor Redman of Cresco Real Estate and Steve Ross of CBRE spoke on the office market trends. The market is slightly slower moving but still healthy since the pandemic, and working from home has become more popular. However, the market for quality office space in the suburbs is in high demand, especially single-floor with parking in front. Renovating existing office buildings draws tenants and can command top rent.

Possibilities for office space in the Dover Village area were discussed and would be more likely for smaller entrepreneurial needs like an accounting or law firm.

Before Councilmember Nunnari had to leave (at 8:45), Council President Greenspan requested that Councilmembers review the city zone map and consider which code sections they would want to study to make recommendations. It was suggested that a consultant be brought in for guidance with such a review to get best practices from other cities. Council President Greenspan also proposed giving Council time to review items before referring them to planning commission.

Joe Barn of Cresco Real Estate spoke on the industrial trends. He stated that the industrial market is extremely healthy with vacancy rates at an all-time low. Westlake is a hub for assembly, manufacturing, plastics, metals, robotics and other industries but has limited land for large industrial buildings. Additionally, building costs are currently prohibitive. However, he stated that entrepreneurs and wealthy business owners are trending toward owner-occupied buildings close to home. He cautioned against the tendency of other types of businesses using industrial space because of the cheaper rents since this then prevents a good blend of industrial use within the city. Councilmembers expressed concern about this and felt the need to protect the use of industrial zones created by the good planning of the past.

Keith Hamulak of CBRE spoke on the retail trends. He stated the vacancy rate in Westlake is 2%, reflecting the strongest occupancy rate in northeast Ohio. There is a trend for direct to consumer retailers opening brick and mortar locations. The food industry dynamics have changed entirely, primarily due to the pandemic, with revenue from fast casual pick-up window restaurants being much greater than what eat-in restaurants used to be. Clothing retail has seen a significant increase in activity in open-air, mixed-use places like Crocker Park but not so much in malls like Great Northern. There is much demand for big box stores which compete with industrial warehouses and self-storage places for locations. Car washes are popular; however, retail banking is shrinking, consolidating branches, preferring online banking which is more profitable. Mr. Hamulak suggested possibly refurbishing or redeveloping antiquated retail space on Center Ridge Road. Traffic and the proximity to Great Northern and I-90 will affect that corridor.

Council President Greenspan, on behalf of all of Council and the Planning Commission, thanked the presenters for their insight as the city moves forward in a redevelopment phase, continuing the momentum of the good planning of the past.

The meeting adjourned at 9:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



David S. Greenspan
Chair



Denise L. Rosenbaum, MMC
Clerk of Council