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## News

### Montgomery officials back downtown vision New plan recommends sites for Metra Park-n-Ride, commuter station

by John Etheredge

7/30/2009

A team of consultants presented a vision of what Montgomery's downtown area could one day become to the village board Monday evening.

The vision is contained in a 28 page Transit Oriented Development Plan that the consultants have been working on with village officials and downtown area residents over the past year.

Following the 50 minute presentation, Village President Marilyn Michelini and a majority of the six-member board voiced support for the plan and its recommendation.

The board is expected to adopt the plan as part of the village's comprehensive plan following a final public hearing next month.

The plan suggests that a proposed Metra commuter rail Park-n-Ride lot be located one block east of the village hall, in the block bounded by Main, Clinton, Railroad and Webster streets. The lot, which is proposed to accommodate 150 vehicles, would be situated just north of businesses that now front Webster Street.

Area Metra riders would be able to park in the lot and then be transported to and from the Metra station at the Aurora Transportation Center via Pace buses using Mill Street and South Broadway Avenues.

The plan also recommends the village continue a program of 'streetscape' improvements begun last year when the village hall was built along sections of Webster and South River Streets in the downtown area.

Another plan recommendation proposes the village install new gateway signage at the intersection of Ill. Route 31 and Webster Street to alert motorists that the village's downtown area is located just one block east of Route 31.

Longer-term, the plan anticipates extensive re-development in the downtown area, including the potential siting of a full-fledged Metra station and parking lots on the current site of the Lyon Workspaces Products, Inc., plant.

The plan also shows locations for future residential, office and small retail shops.

The plan also envisions potential retail development on the east side of Ill. Route 31 north of Webster Street at the current site of Ozinga ready mix facility.

On the current site of the Montgomery VFW Hall at 121 South River Street, the plan proposes the eventual creation of a "signature public space that opens up views to the river from village hall and (South) River Street." Access to the area would be off of South River Street or a riverwalk which would be installed along the west bank of the Fox River extending south from the Mill Street bridge.

The village board received a federal transportation grant in 2006 to pay for the bulk of the study's cost.

The board subsequently hired the consultants to prepare the plan over the past year. To seek public input as they worked on the plan, the consultants held a design seminar or 'charette' and two public hearings. In addition, information on the plan has been available on the consulting firm's web at: [teskaassociates.com/Montgomery](http://teskaassociates.com/Montgomery).

### **'We're on the right track'**

Village President Marilyn Michelini thanked the consultants for their work and said she believes the plan shows some "very exciting possibilities" for the downtown area.

"We're on the right track, we're moving forward and we're excited about it," Michelini said.

Board member Pete Heinz questioned how quickly the study's many recommendations could become reality.

"Are we talking 15, 20 years down the line?" Heinz asked.

"It could be, but it could be 10," Michelini said.

Board member Robert Watermann said he believes that it is important to the village that a plan is in place if and when opportunities for a Metra Park-n-Ride, Metra station or other projects are proposed.

Referring to Metra service, Watermann said, "The need is there. Just today my mother had to go to Chicago on Metra and she couldn't find a place to park at the (Aurora) station."

Watermann added, "By having a plan, I think Montgomery is well positioned. It could be five years or it could be 20, but we are ready and we've got something to give to developers and show them we have an idea."

Michelini agreed with Watermann.

"Otherwise, if we don't have a plan we'll get gobbled up by those around us," Michelini said. "When development kicks in, we have to be prepared."

Heinz, however, questioned how the village could secure the properties necessary to make the plan a reality.

"These people aren't ready to sell," Heinz said.

"In time, you don't know," Michelini said. "But we aren't pushing anyone. Nobody is going to do that. It's just that we have a plan in place, some of it is long-term, but some of it is shorter term."

Michelini added that she recently met with representatives from Metra and they suggested that commuter rail service may be extended out to Kendall County sooner than previously anticipated, possibly in the next three to five years.

"If that happens in Kendall County, the commuter train traffic is going to go right through Montgomery, so we have to be prepared," she said.

Board member William Keck said he was "very pleased" with the plan and described it as "thorough and well thought out."

"We have to have a plan in place. We can't allow things to unfold haphazardly," he said.

Referring to the plan, Keck added, "This is a long-term commitment on the part of this community to this area. If we don't get out on front on this it will steamroller us."

Board member Denny Lee attempted to put the plan's recommendations in perspective.

"10 years ago when we had just 5,400 (people) in the village, who would have thought we would be at 17,000 today and a lot of those people would be living out on Route 30 near our new police station?" Lee asked.

Lee noted the village's previous comprehensive plan anticipated projects such as the new police station and the new village hall.

"This plan shows us what we think (now)," Lee said. "And it also gives the people in this (downtown) neighborhood an idea of what may be coming down the road. Maybe not every home will be sold, but there are some people who want to sell very badly."

Board member Andy Kaczmarek, who has previously questioned the cost for the study and proposed the board shelve it, did not comment during Monday's meeting.

A total of four consulting firms worked on the plan: Teska Associates, Inc., Hitchcock Design Group, Business Districts, Inc., and Metro Transportation. Teska, based in Evanston, served as the lead consultants on the plan.

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