

**Minnetonka Planning Commission  
Minutes**

**April 20, 2017**

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Kirk called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**2. Roll Call**

Commissioners Calvert, Knight, Powers, Schack, and Kirk were present. Sewall and O'Connell were absent.

Staff members present: City Planner Loren Gordon, Assistant City Planner Susan Thomas, and Water Resources Technician Tom Dietrich.

**3. Approval of Agenda**

***Calvert moved, second by Schack, to approve the agenda as submitted with modifications and an additional comment provided in the change memo dated April 20, 2017.***

***Calvert, Knight, Powers, Schack, and Kirk voted yes. Sewall and O'Connell were absent. Motion carried.***

**4. Approval of Minutes: April 6, 2017**

***Powers moved, second by Knight, to approve the April 6, 2017 meeting minutes as submitted.***

***Calvert, Knight, Powers, Schack, and Kirk voted yes. Sewall and O'Connell were absent. Motion carried.***

**5. Report from Staff**

Gordon briefed the commission on land use applications considered by the city council at its meeting of April 10, 2017:

- Tabled action on The Enclave at Regal Oak in response to the applicant's request.
- Adopted a resolution approving a modification to the interim use permit for The Big Thrill Factory to add an outdoor trampoline.

The next planning commission meeting will be May 4, 2017.

6. **Report from Planning Commission Members:** None
7. **Public Hearings: Consent Agenda:** None
8. **Public Hearings**
  - A. **Amendment to the existing Ridgedale Festival master development plan for façade changes.**

Chair Kirk introduced the proposal and called for the staff report.

Thomas reported. She recommended denial of the request based on the findings and subject to the conditions listed in the staff report.

Knight asked what would happen if tenants adjacent to the proposal would want a façade similar to the current proposal. Thomas stated that that application would be reviewed by the planning commission at that time.

Chair Kirk asked if the adjacent façades extend to the height of the roof line. Thomas referred the question to the applicant. Gordon noted that the roof heights increase from the west to east and get taller nearer to the Toys R Us site. The roof heights are equal in proportion to the parapet heights.

Chair Kirk asked if there is a correlation between a store's square footage and the size restriction of a sign. Thomas answered affirmatively. There is a sign covenant that allows an anchor store to have a 5-foot tall, 250-square-foot sign.

Calvert asked if any of the other signs for the building would be improved. Mr. Gibson stated that a canopy is being considered for the adjacent facades.

Dan Gibson, representing Kimco Realty Corporation, part owner of the building and applicant, stated that Kimco Realty is the largest owner of open-aired shopping centers in the country. The goal is to be sensitive to communities, but be driven by what retailers need. The applicant wants to make the 25,000-square-foot space viable again. One vacancy can cause a prolonged vacancy. The proposal would help the situation. It would not feel out of place. The small tenants want an anchor that will attract customers to the site.

Chair Kirk asked for the square footage of the Total Hockey site. Mr. Gibson answered 8,700 square feet.

Powers asked where the proposal has worked in other locations. Mr. Gibson responded “everywhere.” The location at Arbor Lakes in Maple Grove is an example. The tenant would apply for sign approval. He added that limited signage is a deterrent to retail.

Tom Winter, of Welsh Architecture, representing the applicant, explained that the façade plans would create a cohesive unit. The proposal would be four feet lower than the Toys R Us façade. The width of the proposed façade was increased to identify the space as an anchor tenant. The tower helps to balance the other two anchor tenants.

The public hearing was opened. No testimony was submitted and the hearing was closed.

In response to Schack’s question, Mr. Winter explained that from the top of the Toys R Us parapet, it drops 7 feet to the next level and 10 feet to the lowest level.

Schack wants malls and retailers to be viable, but the proposal does seem like a lot.

Powers likes the proposal. It is a commercial area. He likes the variation in heights. It is a strong-looking structure. He supports the proposal, but he would still like to see other areas that have done the proposal successfully.

Knight agreed with Powers. He likes the idea of varying the heights of the building. He did not like the idea of having a large amount of space above the doors and windows compared to Toys R Us. He supports the proposal.

Chair Kirk thought the proposal would be too big. What exists now is too low, but he would prefer something in between. The proposal would have a lot of blank space. He was frustrated that the sign plan would not be reviewed at the same time as the canvas. He preferred decreasing the height four or five feet.

Calvert was also conflicted. She still did not like the very large “Macy’s” letters on Ridgedale Center. It is a commercial area and she wants the businesses to be viable, but she was not convinced that a façade so much higher than the store on the west would be attractive. She was concerned with the size of the canvas looking like a billboard.

Powers noted that outdoor retail centers are not doing well. He did not know if the height would be appropriate, but a retailer has to be visible. He would like additional pictures of existing similar signs.

Schack agreed that some increase would be appropriate, but the west side of the proposal seems really extreme.

Calvert understood the need to draw attention to a store, but there are reasons for sign regulations. The height differential between the top of the façade and the western most store front would be too extreme.

***Powers moved, second by Calvert, to recommend that the city council adopt the resolution denying an amendment to the existing Ridgedale Festival master development plan for façade changes.***

***Calvert, Schack, and Kirk voted yes. Knight and Powers voted no. Sewall and O'Connell were absent. Motion passed.***

**B. Items concerning Ridgedale restaurants at 12415 Wayzata Boulevard.**

Chair Kirk introduced the proposal and called for the staff report.

Gordon reported. He recommended approval of the application based on the findings and subject to the conditions listed in the staff report.

Calvert asked how four restaurants on one pad would impact the master development plan. Gordon explained the history of the site. The style of restaurants is changing.

Chair Kirk asked if the site would have walkability. Gordon pointed out proposed sidewalks on the site plan. The site would be much more walkable than it is now.

Powers asked if the sidewalks would be handicap accessible. Gordon answered in the affirmative.

Ben Freeman, representing General Growth Properties, applicant, thanked the commissioners for their consideration. He appreciated staff's input. The proposal is an opportunity to invest in and improve Ridgedale Center. The company is proud of how far the center has come and excited to continue the momentum with the current proposal. There has been an evolution in restaurant demand. He envisioned pads two and three being used by single users. He looked forward to resolving minor traffic issues with staff. The applicant is more than willing to incorporate the recommended changes.

Knight asked for the height of the façade. Mr. Freeman answered 25 feet.

Schack asked for the number of seats in the restaurants. Mr. Freeman said that it would really depend on the layout.

The public hearing was opened.

Annette Bertelsen, 13513 Larkin Drive, spoke on behalf of a group of residents who live in the Essex neighborhood west of Ridgedale Village. She stated that:

- The group is beyond thrilled that the developer continues to improve Ridgedale Center. She thanked staff and commissioners for creating design standards.
- They liked the idea of having new restaurants and redevelopment that align with the city's growth strategies.
- The city council did not discuss restaurant land use and density. Those discussions need to take place. The commission exists to follow the comprehensive guide plan.
- The strategy is to drive robust growth.
- The comprehensive guide plan says that Ridgedale Village is guided for mixed uses and housing. The proposal has no mixed uses or housing.
- The comprehensive guide plan does not prohibit the type of use being proposed, but the proposal does not meet the goals of the comprehensive guide plan.
- The proposal would have extremely low density in an area that is designated for big growth.
- The PID allows a use with much higher density on the site.
- The proposal is proposing 30 Legos when 75 Legos would be allowed and be closer to the city's goals.
- The Ridgedale Village Center study calls for a floor area ratio of 1.1 which would represent 110 Legos. The proposed development and land use would represent 19 Legos.
- Building heights should be taller closer to the mall and get shorter as buildings get closer to neighborhoods. That provides a good transition. This proposal would be contrary to that because the proposed buildings would be too short.
- She asked if there is room to improve the proposal; if the development must remain retail or commercial, then what can be done to increase the density; can the proposal be adjusted to include mixed use or housing; and what incentives are available to offer to a developer to get mixed use or housing.

No additional testimony was submitted and the hearing was closed.

Calvert asked if parking regulations would be met. Gordon explained that the current parking ratio is 4.4 vehicle stalls per 1,000 square feet of shopping center. The proposal would have 4.1 stalls per 1,000 square feet. A shopping center typically has 3 stalls per 1,000 square feet for a non-December event. There would be proof of parking east of Nordstrom's. There would be sufficient parking. Someday parking might become a concern with additional development.

Gordon explained the creation of the village study and the variety of uses included in a "mixed use" designation. New development leads to additional development and improvements. Public improvements, such as the construction of the on-ramp to Interstate 394, spurs private investments.

Chair Kirk thought the pads at the end of the parking lot seem too dense. He questioned where snow would be stored and if there would be enough parking stalls in December. The proposal is located within the Ridgedale Center inner loop. He could not imagine adding housing or increasing the density further in the inner loop.

Calvert asked if a taller and denser project would be allowed. Gordon answered that a more dense use could be approved. A market study found that Ridgedale is lacking food and beverage stores, grocery stores, full-service restaurants, and drinking places. There is also a need for additional general merchandise stores.

Schack noted that the Bonaventure corner is an already congested area. Having a variety of food choices in one area is appealing. The proposal is consistent with what is allowed.

Powers likes the plan.

Mr. Freeman stated that competitors like being located next to each other because it attracts patrons to the area. He was not against increasing the density. Reciprocal parking agreements would be made between tenants.

Calvert asked if the third phase was discussed by the city council. Gordon explained that the minutes did not reflect the discussion of the third phase, but the third phase was reviewed by the city council and included in the approval of the master development plan. Chair Kirk recalled the planning commission discussing the phases. General Growth Properties has done a great job promoting new development.

Chair Kirk thought that the building pads would be able to provide a use with more density in the future. He was comfortable recommending approval to the city council. The inner ring is different than the second ring from Ridgedale Center. He could see structured parking and a theater in the future. There is still a lot of potential to develop the inner ring in the future. He appreciated the residents attending the meeting.

Calvert loved the proposed materials and design. The proposal would be very attractive. Chair Kirk agreed.

***Schack moved, second by Calvert, to recommend that the city council adopt the following resolution approving final site and building plans and a resolution approving conditional use permits for restaurant uses and outdoor seating areas for Ridgedale Restaurants located at 12415 Wayzata Boulevard with a modification provided in the change memo dated April 20, 2017.***

***Calvert, Knight, Powers, Schack, and Kirk voted yes. Sewall and O'Connell were absent. Motion carried.***

**9. Adjournment**

***Knight moved, second by Powers, to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.***

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lois T. Mason  
Planning Secretary