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CONCORD TOWNSHIP LAUNCHES COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM TO CORRECT TOWN CENTER MISINFORMATION
ConcordFacts.com to Aggregate Information about Town Center; Dispel Rumors

CONCORD TOWNSHIP, Ohio (October 11, 2017) – Concord Township officials announced at Wednesday, October 4th's Board of Trustees meeting that they are launching a communication initiative –ConcordFacts.com – to correct misinformation circulating in the community about a possible mixed-use Town Center development.

A mixed-use development is being discussed for seven township-owned acres at the southwest corner of Auburn Road and Capital Parkway. Additional acreage surrounding this property and owned by others could also be available for further development. The current zoning allows for a Town Center concept that could include a mixture of retail, personal services, restaurants and offices, as well as a high-end residential component, including townhomes and loft units above commercial structures.

Kathy Mitchell, Concord Township Administrator, stressed at Wednesday's meeting that no plan or proposal has been approved by the Township to date and no Master Development Agreement is in place to move forward with any developer.

At the same time, Mitchell said, a Town Center development is an idea whose time has come in Concord Township. "A mixed-use Town Center would bring us the type of development and services that residents and area workforce have asked for and would like to see more of in the community," Mitchell said. "But there's a lot of misinformation about the project and questions being asked throughout the community, as well as a whispering campaign spreading rumors about the proposed concept and the review and approval process that are not correct. We need to set the record straight, which is why we have put together this Concord Facts page on our website."

At Wednesday's meeting, Township's Legal Counsel Mike Lucas explained the zoning approval process currently in place for any proposed mixed-use Town Center development. Review and approval of such a plan would go through the Concord Township Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) upon application of a conditional use permit, not the Board of Trustees. "The BZA is completely autonomous from the Board of Trustees. The Ohio Revised Code designates the exclusive authority of reviewing any proposed conditional use to the BZA in Ohio townships," Lucas explained.

In May of this year, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was initiated to solicit interest for a Master Developer for the mixed-use Town Center Concept. At Wednesday night's Trustee meeting, Mitchell provided an update on the status of the RFP process. She specified:

- One developer has been qualified to provide a proposal as part of Phase II of the RFP Process.
- The developer has submitted a "draft visionary plan" only to date.



- No Section 8 housing has been proposed as part of that draft visionary plan and nor has this type of housing been discussed as part of a Town Center concept.
- **No** plan or proposal has been approved by the Township and **no** Master Developer agreement is in place to move forward with the developer.

“We know there is confusion about the status of the Township’s discussions with developers,” Mitchell said. “So, I want to emphasize that we have no formal proposal in front of us to date; nothing has been approved and Concord is not under any obligation to approve the developer’s proposal, once it is submitted.”

The developer has requested an extension to Nov. 15th under Phase II of the RFP to submit a formal plan for consideration.

Mitchell said Wednesday that she also wanted to set the record straight on some misunderstandings about residential units being discussed as part of the Town Center concept and about the current zoning requirements for this type of use.

- The current zoning use classification for a mixed-use development is known as an Innovative Site/Planning Development and it does not allow housing on more than 30 percent of a proposed planned development’s gross acreage.
- By existing zoning requirements, the predominant uses within such a proposed mixed-use development **must be** commercial – primarily retail and personal service uses, restaurants and offices.
- Existing zoning laws **do not permit** vertical, stand-alone multifamily buildings. “That means no high-rises,” Mitchell said.

“There is also misinformation out there about where the money came from to buy the seven acres of land at Auburn and Capital Parkway. The Township bought the seven acres with income tax money generated from the Concord-Painesville Joint Economic Development District – the JEDD. It did **not** come from our residents’ property taxes,” said Mitchell. “And, we fully intend to recoup our investment for the Township and eventually sell the property.”

“The fact of the matter is, with all of the vacant land still available in the Auburn-Crile business corridor, development will continue with or without a mixed-use Town Center project. The question is, do we want planned, cohesive development or a hodgepodge of businesses and fast food chains developing up and down the corridor?” added Mitchell. “A coordinated approach through a planned development like a mixed-use Town Center gives us greater control in layout and design. We want to protect this community as it grows and provide sustainability within the corridor for years to come.”

Administrator Mitchell says much of the confusion in the community about this project stemmed from the recent repeal of zoning text amendments proposed over the summer relating to the guidelines for this type of mixed-use Town Center development. But the Township zoning that is already on the books permits the project to move forward within the commercial corridor without the text amendment, and has stringent standards guiding such a mixed-use development. By repealing the proposed text amendments, the area within the corridor that allows for this type of development was reduced to the original zoning boundary of the Capital District, which went into effect in 2015.

“We’ve talked about this project openly and transparently for more than 10 years,” Mitchell said. “Since 2006, we’ve consistently asked for input as plans for the Town Center project developed at public meetings and



through various planning processes, like the 2006 Auburn-Crile Business Corridor Study, at JEDD strategic planning worksessions and the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update. We're eager to keep talking and answer any questions."

The communications program includes a Town Center web page that can be accessed via ConcordFacts.com, as well as regular information updates on the Township's Facebook page.

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