

Village of Lansing
Commercial Low Traffic Development Guidelines
Focus Group Meeting 4
December 20, 2000

CLT Focus Group Presentation – Kathryn Wolf:

Hickey welcomed the Focus Group to the meeting and introduced himself and Kathryn Wolf of Trowbridge & Wolf.

Wolf passed out her agenda which was also mailed to members prior to the meeting. First, she would briefly summarize the written feedback she received after the last meeting of Nov. 13. Then, she would talk about the range of concepts and ideas which would generate guidelines for the N. Triphammer Road CLT area. These would then be developed into a check list document for use by the Planning Board. She also proposed to show slide examples illustrating the various proposed guideline concepts. She would end the meeting with feedback and comments.

Wolf summarized the last Focus Meeting using a series of sketches for specific properties as a tool to explore certain design guidelines. The feedback received after that meeting was overwhelmingly supportive. Wolf then extracted key points from the feedback endorsing several general concepts for the overall area. From these she developed the 6 proposed guidelines which were provided to the group prior to the meeting. The 6 guidelines are: 1. For new construction for buildings along N. Triphammer Road, the building front yard setbacks should be minimized to allow the buildings to be placed closer to the road. This would require a Zoning Law change. 2. Location of parking should be on the interior of the lot (behind the building) rather than along the road. Again, a Zoning Law revision would be required to eliminate parking in the front yard. 3. Minimize curb cuts, esp. along N. Triphammer Road, and encourage the sharing of parking and driveways. 4. Develop a location such as the corner of Oakcrest and N. Triphammer Roads as an identifiable Village Center location with a link between the east and west sides of the road to make it clearly a Village Center. Relocation of the Fire Station to the Oakcrest N. Triphammer Road location was also proposed. Also the need to develop recreation fields and open space as part of this site was suggested. 5. Incorporate open space, parks and greenway linkages using the Greenway Plan as a guide. 6. Develop concepts that will create visual unity throughout the district.

All the information gathered will be used to write specific guidelines as a planning tool for the Planning Board. The Final Guidelines will be generic guidelines and sketches rather than sketches for specific properties.

Concerns and comments were expressed by members present at the meeting: Sorel Gottfried spoke about Guideline Number 3 regarding minimizing curb cuts and the difficulty in seeing properties located in the rear. Wolf stated these are guidelines and sometimes shared driveways work and sometimes they don't. If it is not practical, it would not be used in that location, but when possible, shared driveways should be attempted. Each proposal must be site specific. Signage as a tool to help locate businesses will be reviewed later in the meeting and a few suggestions given. Some places, like Village Office Campus may not need a sign on the street listing the specific businesses within the property relying instead one on a directory sign like the one currently installed to direct visitors once they have entered the property.

Herman Sieverding, spoke about parking in the rear of the building and confusion as to what is the front of the building when it is being approached. Wolf stated side yard parking would probably also be allowed but in some locations double facades might be necessary. Andy Sciarabba spoke on the importance of the entrance to the building. Parking on the side would allow the entrance to be visible from the street. The concept concerns him if the side facing the street is never utilized as an entrance. Costs are a factor for smaller buildings if two entranceways are needed. Ned Hickey noted it would be consistent with the Village's goal to make the Village more accommodating for walkers if buildings are closer to the roadway, but he can understand the concern of the developer if two entranceways would

then be necessary. Sieverding recommended small setbacks and rotating the building 90 degrees so the entranceway would be accessible by a sidewalk from the roadway with the entrance being on that side and limited parking also available on that side. Wolf stated that flexibility is necessary for this plan to work. Sciarabba stated his concern with the building placed next to it also sharing the driveway and having parking along the side, again there would be a great expanse of asphalt and cars and he wonders what is the goal that the Village is trying to accomplish. Wolf stated the cars would not be hidden but there would be more building mass at the street edge which is better than large expanses of parking at the street edge. Hickey stated some land would have access from the rear such as the property near Billy Bob Jacks and the YMCA. Wolf stated it will be a slow process realizing the visual image as many of the parcels are already developed and the guidelines would not apply until significant changes were proposed for those buildings. Sciarabba asked about the possibility of relaxing height restrictions and permitting three story buildings. Hickey stated the restrictions used to be based on the limitations of fire fighting equipment but that has probably changed now. Gottfried stated that taller buildings would increase traffic and density. Hickey stated it depends on what the third floor would be comprised of because the third floor could feasibly be residential with the first two floors being commercial.

Wolf went on to discuss measures to create unity within the district. She felt there were two distinct areas of development: 1. Public Infrastructure - N. Triphammer Road and the other roadways and right-of-ways 2. Private development - new development and redevelopment of existing properties. Using photos, she noted the lack of a unified appearance along N. Triphammer Road other than the utility poles and overhead wires. There is much inconsistency in building setbacks, lighting, and amount and types of vegetation. The single most important factor in creating a visual unity will be what happens in the public ROW for the N. Triphammer Road Reconstruction Project. Wolf presented an optimistic view and overlay with a sketch of what N. Triphammer Road might look like, based on TG Millers plan for N. Triphammer Rd. Reconstruction. It showed three lanes, bike lanes, trees, decorative lights and underground utilities. The feasibility and cost of underground utilities was discussed. Hickey stated that underground facilities might not be possible for the entire CLT area from Brook Drive to Pyramid Drive, but should work for at least the Oakcrest Road to Pyramid Drive segment. He said the Mayor is supportive but costs must be reviewed. Hickey also noted that signage is missing from the sketch. The next sketch illustrated a metal sign framework which would be repeated throughout the CLT. It would have a Village logo and would also incorporate directions to individual businesses. The size of the signs could vary as needed. This system would both promote decorative unity and reduce clutter. Wolf showed a diagram of a landscaped hedge behind the trees with a decorative railing or picket fence which could provide further unity. Signage could also be incorporated into the fencing theme. Hickey asked about the split rail fences which already exist and were intended by the Green Space Committee to be continued throughout the CLT District. Wolf stated that could be a possibility particularly if it were continuous and combined with a landscaping plan. Sciarabba stated much can be accomplished through landscaping and the use of durable, cost effective measures. The sidewalk will also provide for visual unity. Hickey recommended burning bushes as providing a screen year round if planted thickly. Wolf stated a buffer between the sidewalk and parking is what makes the walking comfortable for the pedestrian. Hickey felt the tunnel effect of the trees would cause drivers to slow down and he was supportive of this concept.

Next, Wolf showed slides illustrating examples from Lewiston, NY. They showed the downtown business district on Main Street with a picket fence and stone piers for a unifying theme. The signage system also showed the town logo on top and varying signs which were also coordinated with business signs and street signs.

The next series of slides showed examples of the inconsistency of signs found throughout the Village of Lansing with varying colors, styles and heights. Wolf's recommendation is that signs be limited to the height of the building, although lower would be better. Sciarabba expressed the need for illumination for visibility purposes, especially during the winter months. Sciarabba also noted that signs equal to the height of a three-story building would be lost in the tree line.

The next series of slides showed examples of various design considerations which would be desirable. These included: (1) height of sign limitations (2) continuity of sidewalks to provide clear preference to pedestrians for safety (3) connections between sidewalks and buildings (4) bike rack implementations at building entrances (5) tree lines and sidewalks for new roadways linking to N. Triphammer Road (6) areas between sidewalks and streets may have other treatments rather than grassy area and (7) parking lots broken up by landscaping and percentage amounts required.

The next series of slides illustrated the design guidelines to be included or generated for the Planning Board to be used as a checklist for development. (1) Developers shall consider, minimally, a 10% of gross site as a landscaped area associated with parking and around the buildings. Landscape areas required for vegetative buffers, either on or off site, are not to be considered as part of the 10% landscape requirement. For example, if a property requires a 75 ft. buffer around the perimeter, this is not counted towards the 10% landscape in the parking lot. (2) Landscape in parking lots to be arranged so it is distributed for visual and environmental enhancement. (3) Parking shall be designed to provide easy, safe access to buildings and consider shared parking allowance.

Sieverding recommended the landscape requirement be based on the number of parking spaces. Wolf stated that what is important is that the landscaping be evenly distributed. Sciarabba wondered why there is a concern about the parking since it is in the rear and the money could be better spent on landscaping along the street edge. Wolf suggested walking through any parking area should be visually appealing and broken up. Sciarabba felt this is not a Village concern but a property owner's concern and cost. Hickey stated there must be a commonsense approach to guidelines depending on the size of the proposed parking areas. Wolf felt it might prove valuable to look specifically at a few sample sites within the Village to see what might be feasible. Wolf will pursue this guideline further.

Regarding architectural design guidelines, a blank wall should not face a street. Roadway facing buildings should include such things as projections, canopies, covered entrances, varied colors and materials, varied rooflines, windows, etc..

Wolf stated the slides covered examples of negotiable guidelines which would be used to assist the developer and the Planning Board. A few examples of properties within the Village will be looked at specifically. Wolf will then flush the guidelines out in greater detail and will submit them to the Focus Group for review and comments. She will then collect the comments and develop a specific set of design guidelines.

Curtis stated Planning Board discussion often include opportunities for mass transit and bus stops and these need to be worked into the design. Fresinski stated that traffic lights did not appear on the drawings tonight and to be a realistic picture they should be. Wolf will see that they are added. Hickey noted that the traffic light being placed at Graham Rd., and the one to be placed at Craft Rd. in the future, are both one-arm masts rather than like those at the corner of Pyramid Dr. where there are poles on each corner.

Sieverding expressed support for what has occurred thus far. Wolf felt the first draft of the guidelines could be mailed out in January for a couple of week's review and then the next meeting held in February. Hickey stated it is important to receive feedback from the public and would appreciate comments being returned. Hickey thanked those present and the meeting ended.