

## ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE KEY PERSON INTERVIEWS

The Zoning Ordinance update project for the Village of Oak Park recently kicked off. One of the earliest steps is to undertake a series of key person interviews to understand the issues and concerns of those involved in Ordinance administration, and those who deal with development regulations regularly. Camiros spoke with Village Board members, members of business district organizations, architects and realtors, and Village staff, among others.



At this point in the process, we have not developed a comprehensive approach to the full update. However, our initial discussions with key stakeholders have identified certain critical issues, which will inform the larger approach to the project. Some of the major issues are highlighted below.

- » **Commercial Districts.** The majority of commercial districts have numerous overlays that make development difficult both in terms of understanding what is allowed, and navigating the special approvals that are typically required. Creating new districts for commercial areas that consolidate all of these standards will address these issues, and make development within each district more predictable and coordinated.
- » **Residential Districts.** Generally, the residential district structure is sound. As we continue to study existing conditions within the Village, it is anticipated that certain regulations within the district standards will be modified to address on-the-ground conditions, and make application consistent and less subject to interpretation.
- » **Uses.** The uses assigned to each district should match the form and function of each. In addition to reviewing the uses allowed and incorporating modern uses, we will continue to evaluate more controversial uses, such as personal care services like hair salons. Part of the issue will be to understand where, within the commercial areas, ground floor uses should be limited to retail uses in order to preserve the retail sales tax base. A related issue under review is to determine where allowing ground floor residential in the commercial districts would be appropriate.
- » **Variiances.** The current Ordinance allows for use variances, which is not allowed within the State's enabling legislation. It is our recommendation to eliminate this. If spacing requirements are still contained within the Ordinance, an applicant would be able to apply for a dimensional variance; what should be eliminated from the Ordinance is the ability to use a variance to permit a use that is not allowed within a district.
- » **Application Process.** Currently all zoning applications are referred to the Village Board before they are sent on to the appropriate review body (Plan Commission or Zoning Board of Appeals). This adds an additional 4 to 6 weeks to the application review time, and most communities do not include such a step. It is recommended to eliminate this step and allow applications to be processed per standard practice: submitted to the Plan Commission or Zoning Board of Appeals for hearing and recommendation then forwarded to the Village Board for a final decision.

*Visit the project website at [www.OakParkZoning.com](http://www.OakParkZoning.com) for further information!*