CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, March 16, 2026

BOARD MEMBERS:
Valeriano Gomez, President
Lilia Ramos, Vice-President
Lydia Lopez, Secretary
Marino Solorio, Commissioner
Stacy Winfield, Commissioner
Jaylen Johnson, Commissioner
Grayling Gordon, Commissioner
Hashem Alhashem, Commissioner

STAFF:
Tracy Ailes
Eduardo Fontanez

Reported for Fissinger & Associates, Ltd.
By: Peggy S. LaLonde, court reporter

Call to Order: 4:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Present in Chambers: Val Gomez, Lilia Ramos, Marino Solorio, Jaylen Johnson, Stacy Winfield, Grayling Gordon

Present Via Zoom: Hashem Alhashem

STAFF - Present in Chambers: Tracy Ailes

MR. GOMEZ: Good afternoon everyone. We do have a quorum. I would like to call to order the Plan Commission meeting for Monday, March 16th, 2026.

First on the agenda is approval of the minutes from March 2nd, 2026. I'd like to make a motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 2nd, 2026, as written.

MS. WINFIELD: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

Move to New Business. We have two items on the agenda for today. We have Lucky Brothers Quick Run Gas Station, northwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Guthrie Street and we have RC Development,

New Construction Duplexes at 4029 to 4037 Parrish Avenue. I believe we are doing RC Development first.

MS. AILES: James is here to speak on that project.

MR. PORTALATIN: James Portalatin, Building Commissioner. I'm speaking to you concerning the duplexes that will be at 4029 to 4037 Parrish and at the other end we have 4030 Grand, 4034 Grand, and 4038 Grand; all off of Washington Square. Those are the remaining parcels that are on each end there.

So the intention is to have the duplex on the Parrish side and two duplexes on the Grand side, for a total of eight individual units on these three parcels.

MR. GOMEZ: I just want to explain, on the agenda we have the Parrish Avenue only. You are reading Grand and Parrish.

MR. PORTALATIN: Well, right now we have only the Parrish because those are the ones we have. But it's going to be the same duplexes that are going to be on both sides.

I have a site plan for the Grand side. But if the Commission sees fit, that upon receiving those site plans we'll conduct a Tech Review and those will be presented to all of us, if you see fit we can approve ones for all the actual duplexes on both sides. Then that's something that the City Planner can possibly address.

MR. SOLORIO: Given the context of what we are seeking today is approval of the duplex that is going to be duplicated in the Washington Square corridor, and possibly in other parcels in the City. So the idea here, instead of coming every time for the same thing, we are asking for the duplex as a project to be approved, and then we would just come back to the Commission, for the record, on what the site plan of where these are being put for a formal, kind of a formal record. But the idea today would be approve the project so it can be duplicated in other parts of the City.

MR. GOMEZ: So you do want Parrish and Grand?

MR. PORTALATIN: Yes.

MS. WINFIELD: So the wording is correct on here, because we are just saying Parrish Avenue, even though you are saying the other project, right now it's just at Parrish?

MR. GOMEZ: We can amend the agenda to include Grand Boulevard.

MR. PORTALATIN: I would request that because that's the intention.

MR. GOMEZ: Do you have the plans for the address on Grand Boulevard? What is the Grand Boulevard address?

MR. PORTALATIN: So it would be 4030 Grand -- I would remind you, right now these are the parcels that are there. So 4034 Grand and 4038 Grand. The idea is that these three parcels will then, the one in the middle, 4034 Grand will be split in half to accommodate Parrish. So two separate parcels, actually being four, but one duplex will be on the parcel and a half, and the other duplex on the parcel and a half. It's going to mirror the same thing with Parrish. Then once we have asphalt, we'll subdivide those to have separate parcels. So those will be sold as individual unit home ownerships. That's the intention.

MR. GOMEZ: Right now I'd like to make a motion to amend our items on the agenda to include RC Development new construction for duplexes on Grand.

MR. GORDON: We have to make a motion to amend the agenda first.

MS. RAMOS: Go ahead. My question is pertaining to the Grand Boulevard.

MR. GOMEZ: Well, we have, for the record, two for Grand. We are amending the agenda to add to the RC Development, New Construction Duplexes on 4029-4037 Parrish to include 4030 to 4038 Grand Boulevard.

Any questions or comments?

MS. RAMOS: I have a question. So you said pending, you said that they have to go to Tech Review. So do we have to approve the project for those plans pending Tech Review?

MR. PORTALATIN: So the plans per se don't need amending because the approval of the Tech Review duplex plan, the only thing we did not have at the time of the Tech Review was the site plan for the utilities coming in and stuff which would be more on our side of the Building, Water and Sanitary to look at that. But you are approving the same design that will be on Parrish, same design that would be on Grand. There is nothing that would be different.

MR. SOLORIO: So you would be approving today the project, because its a capital improvement project of more than $10,000.00, so that's what you are approving. The actual site plans and things like that is handled through the departments, like Planning, Engineering, Building, Water, all that, etcetera.

So, today we are asking for approval of the duplexes as a project that could be replicated in the parcels that we just discussed right now.

And the reason he brings up the whole -- currently there are three parcels on each side. So currently, by code, you can build three duplexes because there is three different parcels and three on the other side, meaning you can have a total of 12 units versus what they are proposing, which is eight units.

And so, yes, he mentioned about the splitting is that they are going to re-plat those parcels to be merged and then split so that someone can't come in later on, for example, and say, we are going to put a deeper dip on this. But say a portion of the duplex gets burnt or something like, no one wants to rebuild, but the parcels are going to be split further and then someone can't misconstrue that. I can build a duplex back in the burnt area, that's what we are allowing. We want to make sure, making sure it's still a single family ownership.

So the parcel is split so that people can take advantage of the Home Ownership Program and actually own the duplex versus like renting and things like that. The project is being -- what we are requesting is approval for the project that would be duplicated in the parcels that were discussed.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay. We'll get back to the motion. We have a motion on the floor to approve the addition of Grand Boulevard.

MR. GORDON: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor?
(All signify aye.)
MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.
Now we'll go on to your request.

MR. PORTALATIN: So the duplexes, each unit for the area will have three bedrooms, nice master bedroom. You see walk-in closets, really nice design, open space kitchen, attached garage. So it's going to have, in the front it's going to have the nice hardy board siding, different from the duplex that we have on this one. It has two split roof lines where you can see a little bit of the lift where there is a clear brick between the two. So that if one owner has to do the roof, then the other -- the only thing that will be here is this gable in the front, but you could take the ridge out and it's easy to do. So there won't be, that's your part or my part. You are touching my roof. So it would be a lot easier in the future, until we get design standards.

MR. GOMEZ: So do we have any more questions? (None)
MR. SOLORIO: Just so we are clear with this approval currently right now, it's not re-platted, which we would have to come back to this Board for approval of re-platting the parcels. So I am going to add the condition that the re-plat has to come back and fully be executed in terms of code wise by the end of the project being done. Meaning, so when the project is finalized and deeds are given to owners and things like that, that re-plat has to have happened already. So I want to make sure that's put in the record as a condition for approval.
MR. GOMEZ: The re-plat has to be presented.

MR. SOLORIO: And approved, yes.

MR. GOMEZ: Thereby we have a motion approving the project.
MR. SOLORIO: Yes.
MR. GOMEZ: There being no further questions or comments, I'd like to make a motion approving the RC Development duplexes on Parrish and

Grand Boulevard. I am asking for approval of the project. Additionally, the re-plat will be presented and approved at a later date. Is there a second?

MS. WINFIELD: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries. Thank you. We move on to our second project, Lucky Brothers Quick Run Gas Station. It's at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Guthrie Street.

MS. AILES: Please state your name for the record.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: My name is Christian Kalischefski with WT Group. We have been hired as the architect and engineers for this proposed development. Thank you so much for taking your time for allowing us to present our project today, and if we can go to our slides.

Our project is right here on Michigan and Guthrie. This kind of small L-shaped parcel right adjacent to the new fire station. What we are planning, and you can see the proximity of Cline here, and this is very important, the off ramp that brings traffic back to the site. This is just a survey, the parcel is actually made up of ten parcels. So we are consolidating that into one parcel as well.

MR. GOMEZ: So you have -- you have acquired the entire lot?

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: We have acquired everything but the one corner.

MR. GOMEZ: The whole block then.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: Yes.

MR. SOLORIO: Minus a corner.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: This is just the preliminary plat to consolidate all those into one lot. This is what is missing.

MR. GOMEZ: Is there a business there?

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: There is a structure there.

MR. SOLORIO: No business, it's defunct.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: This is our site plan. We are adjusting this per Tech Review committee meeting. We just are in the process of doing that. This driveway right here, this is just going to become a ride out. There will be no inbound traffic to the site, but generally the presentation of this site, this shape right here is a detention area, and then this would be the auto lanes. It's called an in line, 6 canopies. So there is six islands. So possibility of one car on each side, so total of 12 there. And then we have a C-store, with a chicken offering as well, and have a drive-thru that comes around. So the pick-up window is on this side. And then we have the front door and side door, parking as well.

The building is approximately 4500 square feet, plus or minus. In addition to those customers, we do have a drive here for the CFL, commercial feeling lane, which would be the day runners. We are not anticipating any interstate traffic, you know, with big sweepers and all that. They all have their travel memberships with Pilot and Flying J and all that. This is the trucks that are in the area that are on the road already. And so that's -- so it's just two lanes for that. This is two tanks for that and then these are the tanks for an auto. So we'll have access points for the site.

So with that, my client sends his apologies. He had a conflict with scheduling, with actually the chicken operator, the chicken company that is going to be operating here. He's taking training right now and so that's where he is today. I apologize.

So really that's our proposed plan.

The next slides please. One thing on that, this is a higher rise sign and this would be our ID sign here, and that's part of the variation that will be required. So we can continue.

The signage plan, again we'll talk about that. This is the ID assignment. This is based on the visual reaction time, VRT, which is a mathematical formula by the United States Sign Council, that determines the number of lanes in the road, plus the speed limit, determines the square footage of the sign. And so that's based on that.

This one we have an elevation, but

we don't want to be the highest thing in East Chicago. We do want to have this at least as tall as the City billboard sign. But what my client feels is very important is to be on the site of the property, to direct, especially if you notice that in the aerial that one ramp that's coming off, which is right now proposed to be removed, and that ramp would move further to the east side of the existing water tanks. And so our clients won't even see our site any longer as they come off that ramp. And working with the Mayor's office to hopefully have some help in terms of not eliminating that, because that's spaghetti -- existing spaghetti bowl of ramps doesn't clear it up. We have got a real good plan to do that, in addition to what they are doing.

They are taking down that ramp, which is a perfectly good ramp. Why not just keep it? It would benefit our development and actually that whole area there. Because then you wouldn't get into the turnabout, because there is going to be a turnabout on the other side or the east side of those water tanks. So that's why we are proposing these signs here. The sign is a little higher.

I want to point out, even though we are asking for variances for the tall sign, in terms of height and the square footage, overall all we are asking for an addition of 40 square feet. What is allowed is 456 square foot and we are asking for 496, and what we are asking for is based on the roadway. That's based on Cline and the speed, and the complexity. It's based upon Michigan with its four multi plan. If you plug that into the VRT, visual reaction time formula from the United States Sign Council, which is also supported by the American Planners Association, that determines our sign site. It determines the numbers for people to recognize it safely to move to the lane and then pull off and get to the site safely.

MS. AILES: Just to go ahead and clarify, you are not getting a variance for the sign today. This is just for your project. A variance for the sign would go before the Board of Zoning and Appeals.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: I've got my meetings confused.

MS. AILES: This is the Plan Commission to approve your project.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: Thank you for your clarification. So the education was in math and we'll just keep proceeding then.

MS. AILES: I don't know. We have a pretty good overview of the project.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: I just want to show the covered elevation of the building and then we'll stop. The one thing I want to show is all four aspects of the building. It's an all masonry building all the way around. So it's a four-sided building. And in our case, we are bounded, basically our property is bounded by four streets. So if we continue down, it's all masonry throughout. We have a commitment from the owner to the community, that high quality material is used in terms of their initial presentation, but also a long lasting good impression to the community.

The next slide please. Now this is a different -- this is still Lucky Brothers, but we are showing -- it's got a different fuel vendor, it's Shell, but you can see the building here. And in the next slide, it's a little bit closer, so that's the building that we are proposing. So we are totally all masonry as you can see, all the way around the building.

I think that's the last slide. So this is the back, kind of a bad shot because it's in shadows, but you are not seeing the windows and all that. So again, truly a 360 building. So presenting a very nice aesthetic face to all sides of the building, which was said in way too many words.

I'm available for your questions.

MR. GOMEZ: Questions or comments?

MS. WINFIELD: Have you contacted Councilman Garcia about this? This is his district.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: I don't know about my owner, I have not.

MS. AILES: We normally don't.

MS. WINFIELD: Are you planning on contacting him, because it's in his district?

MR. SOLORIO: That's not a procedure that we normally do.

MS. WINFIELD: Is he not made aware of this? It's in his district. If it was in mine, I would want to be notified.

MR. GORDON: I live in the Fifth and I didn't know nothing about it.

MS. WINFIELD: If it coincides with their District, I think they should know and they be made aware of it.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: We can certainly reach out.

MR. GORDON: It's right by my house.

MS. WINFIELD: He lives down the street.

MR. GOMEZ: Usually the Administration is the one that contacts, the Mayor's Office. I don't think our Board does that.

MR. ROBINSON: In relation to that traffic light right there, has been there for years, is that going to be repaired?

MR. SOLORIO: There is suppose to be a traffic light added there permanently because they were removed as part of the Guthrie project, but never replaced. And so that was identified and the Engineering Department knows to replace that and permanently put it there. So they are redoing Michigan Avenue and it will be part of that project.

MR. ROBINSON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. GOMEZ: Any other questions?

MR. SOLORIO: I do want to state certain things for the record, for this project. It did go through Tech Review. Parking wise, it doesn't really meet parking requirements. However, there being exceptions to that because how we use gas stations. So normally they would be double the parking spaces that they have, however, because when you put gas you technically park on the stall where you would put gas. So I am counting these stalls where you would put gas as a parking space for you to be able to go to the convenience store or not. Some people don't because

they pump gas and that's it. And so square footage to parking ratio, keep that in mind, that is over the amount that is needed for parking.

Also we did put in Tech Review making sure that right turn on the corner is only a right turn because of the proximity to the light. I think there is only 40 feet from the right of way. For safety reasons we need to make sure people aren't turning on the light trying to head what would be towards Cline Avenue. And then I did talk about the light on Guthrie. So, you know, there is going to be a light installed.

And lastly for the record, I just want to make sure this gentleman understands, because at Tech Review it was mentioned, we do not control what INDOT does or doesn't do in reference to this project. What I did make you aware of, and anyone that was part of your project, is that INDOT has no plans on reopening that piece of that ramp. They will be demolishing that as part of the roundabout project. That ramp will just move towards the roundabout and that's where people will be coming in and out of that area.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: We are still trying to see if that's possibly a change with the taxpayers money and not demolish something that's totally viable. So we are still approaching that. We understand that for sure. It's a hard hit on the business model quite frankly in terms of accounting for the traffic to get to the site. So we are trying to contact the Mayor and contacting the State representative.

MR. SOLORIO: Did you do a traffic study on this property?

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: I did.

MR. SOLORIO: You did? So the traffic study would show --

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: We do have a traffic report.

MR. SOLORIO: A recent one?

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: Few years ago.

MR. SOLORIO: Right. So the reason I say that, is the traffic tone has completely changed since

maybe three years ago at least, because that ramp has been actually closed for at least three years. So if you would have done a new traffic study, it would show the new conditions of that corridor and how much traffic is going in and out, where you are going to receive the most traffic. And frankly, your clientele, is literally coming from the mills, BP, and there is truck traffic, like literally back to back there. So you have traffic, believe me, and it's not coming from Cline. And even if that ramp was open, it's a Toll Road now. A lot of people don't use that Toll Road.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: So that ramp is closed?

MR. SOLORIO: It's closed today and it's been closed for approximately 3 to 4 years.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: Thank you for that.

MR. SOLORIO: No problem.

MS. WINFIELD: Once again, so this would not go in front of Council? It doesn't have to go in front of Council?

MR. SOLORIO: No, it does not.

MR. KALISCHEFSKI: Thank you for that information.

MR. SOLORIO: No problem.

MR. GOMEZ: Any other questions or comments? (None)

There being no further questions or comments -- you are just asking for approval of the project then, right?

MR. SOLORIO: It's approval of the project. I would like to add a condition, if we are going to have a motion to approve.

MR. GOMEZ: I'd make a motion to approve, you can add your condition. I'd like to make a motion to approve Lucky Brothers Gas Station on the northwest corner of Michigan and Guthrie. Marino?

MR. SOLORIO: So I would like to amend

that motion to add a condition of approval, which would be that the signage be approved by the Planning Department because there is a lot of things that we need to make sure that through variance, approved or not approved, it would be conditional to that.

MR. GOMEZ: Is there a second to the motion?

MR. ROBINSON: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

Commissioners Comments: None

Public Comments: None

Our next meeting will be Monday, April 6, 2026 at 4:30 p.m.

I'd like to make a motion to adjourn.

MS. WINFIELD: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

Thank you everyone. Have a good evening. Meeting adjourned.

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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Monday, March 16, 2026

Approved and signed April 6, 2026

Valeriano Gomez, President

Lilia Ramos, Vice-President

Lydia Lopez, Secretary

Marino Solorio, Commissioner

Stacy Winfield, Commissioner

Jaylen Johnson, Commissioner

Grayling Gordon, Commissioner

Hashem Alhashem, Commissioner

Tracy Ailes, Recording Secretary

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Peggy S. LaLonde, a competent and duly qualified court reporter, do hereby certify that I did report in machine shorthand the foregoing proceedings and that my shorthand notes so taken at said time and place were thereafter reduced to typewriting under my personal direction.

I further certify that the foregoing typewritten transcript constitutes minutes of the said proceedings taken at said time and place, so ordered to be transcribed.

Dated at Munster, Indiana, this 18th day of March 2026.



Peggy S. LaLonde