

## **LAND USE REVIEW SUMMARY FORM**

**Date of Application:** September 3, 2019

**Name of Applicant:** IDOT

**Purpose of Proposed Request:** IDOT is seeking to reconstruct the intersection of 95<sup>th</sup> Street and Archer Avenue (IL-171) to improve safety. The intersection was originally built in 1926 and according to IDOT, there have been 8-9 crashes a year, including a fatal crash in 2022. The proposed scope of work includes converting the 'Y' shape intersection to a 'T' shape, installing traffic signals, turn lanes, drainage improvements and retaining walls. Permanent easement areas totaling under one acre are needed for a retaining wall, ditch and slope work to raise the road to improve sight lines and for drainage infrastructure. The project has been under study for over 20 years, and IDOT is now seeking to proceed with easement acquisition and construction bidding.

**General Location of Proposed Impacted District Land:** Intersection of 95<sup>th</sup> Street and Archer Avenue extending approximately 1,000 feet in each direction. Three of the permanent easements are at the intersection for a retaining wall on the Northwest side of Archer, ditch and slope work and storm drain piping. The fourth permanent easement is located roughly a mile south on IL-171 for an existing box culvert under the road that was previously installed that would now be under easement. Temporary easements are needed for construction at the intersection.

**Acreage and or square footage of Impacted District Land:** The work will require permanent easements totaling 0.962 acres (41,905 square feet) and temporary easements totaling 1.459 acres (63,552 square feet) outside the existing right-of-way. Temporary easement areas would be restored in accordance with plans and FPCC instructions. While IDOT has requested permanent easements for 0.962 acres, the Forest Preserves staff recommends granting and recording of up to 6.5 acres of total permanent easement at no additional cost to IDOT in order to include existing right-of-way areas within the project improvement limits to confirm IDOT responsibility for these areas.

**The Potential Impact and Benefits to District Land:** The proposed project would change roadway alignment and elevation and require considerable grading and earth moving within the project limits, both in the existing right-of-way and in easement areas. The intersection would be closed to traffic but access to Forest Preserve facilities at Maple Lake and Camp Bullfrog Lake would still be maintained from the east during the construction period. The proposed work will impact 207 live trees and 54 dead trees.

In addition to payment of required compensation for the easements (total appraised value of \$18,900 for permanent easements and \$17,200 for temporary easements) and tree mitigation (approximately \$1.5 million), the Forest Preserve would benefit from safer road access at a major entrance to the Palos Preserves, one of its flagship holdings, as well as improved project design to avoid large retaining walls that would have been highly visible from the intersection under the original concept plans. IDOT's preliminary plans were submitted more than a decade ago and were rejected in 2013 due to unacceptable impacts. IDOT modified the original plans and in 2019, Forest Preserve staff finally concurred in a Section 4(f) determination of "no adverse impacts" subject to mitigation and other

conditions, including shifting a large proposed retaining wall to the north side of Archer Avenue to eliminate visibility from the road level and minimize the additional easement area needed. IDOT staff have stated that the requested changes increased the project cost by more than three times the original cost.


The improved intersection would also have a reduced pavement footprint by removing the old “Y” ramps and building the more compact “T” shape road intersection. Areas that would no longer be needed for roadway (estimated at 10,000-15,000 s.f.) would be restored by IDOT as green space. Staff therefore recommend approval based on improved safety, reduced pavement and IDOT’s agreement to design changes to avoid visible retaining walls at a major gateway to the Palos Preserves.

**Alternatives Considered:** As this is an unsafe condition, the project needs to be done at this location. The original plans were modified, however, in response to staff comments and conditions of concurrence over many years of review as described more fully above.

**Completion Date of Staff Review:** May 29, 2024

Referred to Board of Commissioners   XX  

Not referred to Board of Commissioners \_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
General Superintendent

5-30-24  
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Date