



## City: CVS plans need doctoring

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**By Thomas Jewell Correspondent**

**The Sun Press**

SHAKER HTS. The owners of CVS officially announced their plans to move out of Shaker Towne Centre on Lee Road in favor of a free-standing building with a drive-through at the southwest corner of Chagrin Boulevard and Avalon Road.

But the city planning commission dismissed the design as too box-like, sending architects back to the drawing board for a building that is more in keeping with its surrounding streetscape.

They pointed to Huntington Bank and the fire station, where there is more brick than what CVS is proposing -- primarily exterior insulation that resembles imitation stucco.

"We're suggesting that they look at the existing buildings on the south side of Chagrin Boulevard," said city Planning Director Joyce Braverman.

As a result, no action was taken last week on the request for what could amount to six zoning variances, as well as a conditional use permit. The request could be taken up at the planning commission's next meeting on June 30.

"We can't be so inflexible that we can't allow business to proceed in our community," said Mayor Earl Leiken. "It's important to have a dialogue, particularly at a site where we have already made such a significant financial investment."

Officials at CVS plan to buy and raze three buildings, the most significant being a brick structure dating back to the 1930s that is home to Sam's Fashion Post.

But the building is not an individual landmark and CVS is negotiating a deal with the owner that could keep Sam's in the area.

During a public hearing, much of the concern focused on the prospective departure of one of the anchor tenants from the Shaker Towne Centre, access and traffic congestion, beer and wine sales -- as well as the appearance of the building.

"The building I saw in your plans doesn't seem to fit," said Clarence Clark, who also voiced concern over increased traffic congestion on Avalon and Chagrin.

Rhonda Moore, regional property manager with Edens & Avant, the owner and developer of the Shaker Towne Centre, said that "losing an anchor would hurt us tremendously -- we should do what we need to do to keep CVS (where it is)."

Deborah Heller agreed, questioning the logic of the move and arguing that the community is better served with CVS in its current location.

But Gillian Graham countered that the future of CVS in its current "strip mall" location is "unfortunately, a fantasy." She favors the relocation, if it is handled correctly and designed properly.

James Gibson, an employee of Shaker Hardware, another anchor in Shaker Towne Centre, said that while

the proposed move represents a potential "win-win" for the city, he is concerned about the years ahead for the center, where the owners had approached the hardware store at one point about "flip-flopping" store space with CVS.

"The planning commission cannot debate whether or not CVS should be moving from its current location," Braverman said.

"CVS has been very upfront with Shaker Towne Centre owners all along that they've wanted a drive-through," Braverman said.

Russell Lamb, who used to buy baseball cards at a store on Avalon and Chagrin, would also like to see more of the architecture that is representative of Shaker Heights.

Rob Forward, whose family co-owns Brown Forward Funeral Home behind the proposed location, asked the planning commission to back up and show a slide of the less-than-picturesque view that many out-of-visitors get of Shaker Heights from his perspective.

"I hope that everybody can give a little bit to make sure that the greater good is done," Forward said.

Judy Strauss, a member of the Lomond Neighborhood Association, believes the drive-through, coupled with beer and wine sales, is an important issue.

"If they're open 24 hours it could be very obnoxious," Strauss said. "They should close at a more reasonable hour, like Walgreen's."

William Gruber, an attorney for the Planning Commission, said the city already has an ordinance prohibiting 24-hour operation of drive-throughs, limiting them to hours of operation of 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. Contact Jewell at (216) 721-8737.

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