



**City of Ann Arbor**  
**Formal Minutes - Final**  
**City Planning Commission**

301 E. Huron St.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
<http://a2gov.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

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Tuesday, December 18, 2012

7:00 PM

City Hall, 301 E. Huron Street, 2nd Flr.

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**9-4 12-1637**

544 Detroit Street Planned Project Site Plan for City Council Approval - A proposal to demolish the existing structure on this 0.10 acre site and construct a 4,077 square foot, three-story mixed-use building with three covered parking spaces on the ground level. The first floor will be office use; the second and third floors will be residential use. Planned project modifications are requested to exceed the 35 ft height limit by 3 feet 6 inches; to reduce the front setback requirement along Detroit and Division Streets from 10 feet to 5 feet; and to reduce the rear setback from 30 feet to 7.5 feet. A landscape modification is requested to reduce the conflicting land use buffer along the rear property line. Staff Recommendation: Approval

*Thacher presented the staff report.*

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

*Christine Crockett, President of the Old Fourth Ward Association, said she spoke about this project at the HDC [Historic District Commission]. She said this property is significant and a gateway to Ann Arbor's oldest residential neighborhood, noting that the architecture has been designed to provide a beautiful gateway to the historic district. She said this will be wonderful public art. She noted that because the property is zoned C1 and given the shape of the site, the petitioner is asking for a planned project. She said the last building on the site, before the Clark Station, was a barn, so it never contained a house. Crockett said they are happy with the design, and at the neighborhood meeting, they looked at design and can't wait to see the building built. She said the height exceeds the requirement, but the site sits lower than adjacent structure. She asked the Commission to approve the project.*

*Dan Williams, Maven Development, 2232 S Main Street, Suite 391, Ann Arbor, developer, said the site is unique and constricts setbacks. He explained that they had held two neighborhood meetings, and there was a lot of support for the project.*

*Mark Rueter, architect for the petitioner, said that Dan Williams had a great vision for this parcel. He said it was a unique opportunity to create a flatiron building in Ann Arbor. He explained that this building is similar to the building in Kerrytown, but taller. He showed that they had pushed*

*the building far to the point, making use of the parcel. He said they want to maintain some landscaping on the sides, but it didn't leave much space in the rear. He said the only paving seen is the turnaround area. He showed the illustration board for context and scale.*

*Serge Van der Voo, the landscape architect for the petitioner, described the landscaping plan.*

*Ed Mahoney, 524 North Division Street, said while he would like to see blight cleaned up, he would not like to see a three-story building, since it would block the view from his porch. He asked that the variance not be granted to allow the building to be built or that the building size be minimized.*

*Noting no further speakers, the Secretary declared the public hearing closed.*

**Moved by Briere, seconded by Mahler, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the 544 Detroit Planned Project Site Plan, subject to providing a road restoration plan for the brick replacement in Detroit Street for approval by the Systems Planning Unit prior to the issuance of right of way permits.**

**and**

**The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the proposed modifications to the conflicting land use buffer requirements of Chapter 62 (Landscape and Screening Ordinance), because the standards contained in Section 5:608 (Modifications) have been met.**

*COMMISSION DISCUSSION:*

*Briere asked if this site plan needs to go to the Zoning Board of Appeals for landscape modifications.*

*Thacher said no, City Council may approve the modification.*

*Briere asked about refuse collection.*

*Thacher clarified that four 96-gallon charts will be rolled to the curb on Detroit Street.*

*Briere asked that when elevation renderings are shown, they show projects in context. She noted that an adjacent property owner expressed concern about proximity of building. She would like to look at*

*an image in context with surrounding properties.*

*Briere complemented the landscape architect on the choice of catmint.*

*Giannola asked about Historic District Commission discussion.*

*Thacher said it was a short, glowing conversation, and they were pleased with the brick and fenestration. She said the vote was unanimous. The only issue was at that point, no landscape plan had been provided, but it is not something they would review.*

*Giannola asked if there was concern about massing.*

*Thacher said that, with anchor buildings nearby that are also masonry, it will fit in and be a welcoming sight as one crosses Broadway bridge.*

*Derezinski noted comments about setbacks and asked if the project could work without modifications.*

*Thacher said this building would not work. She said if the setbacks were enforced, they would lose significant square footage, stressing that the building was tightly fit into the lot.*

*Derezinski said that given the lot, it needed creativity to come up with a unique building that would fit the lot, and he didn't want to see the lot continue to stand vacant.*

*Mahler asked about comments from the neighbor to the south. He asked why they should keep the setback at four feet.*

*Thacher said the conflicting land use buffer requirement is four feet. The property owner next door agreed to remove the existing trees along the wall, adding that the parcel was owned by a rental company.*

*Clein asked the developer if the units were for rent or for sale and how much.*

*William said they are for sale and being marketed to empty nesters and price will be dictated by demand and finishes.*

*Clein said this is a handsome design that fits on this site. He said he understands the concern about losing viewshed, but without approving these modifications, it is not a suitable building site. He said the building will enhance value of buildings in the neighborhood.*

*Bona said the planned project benefit of having parking under the*

*building but still open is a benefit, as is the energy conservation due to its density. Relative to the massing, this is no taller than what is allowed for other houses. She said it provides buffering to the neighborhood from primary streets, and there are other similar buildings in the neighborhood. She noted the proposed landscaping in the rear seems to be meeting the intent of the code.*

**On a roll call, the vote was as follows with the Secretary declaring the motion carried.**

**Yeas:** 6 - Bonnie Bona, Eric A. Mahler, Diane Giannola, Kenneth Clein, Tony Derezinski, and Sabra Briere

**Nays:** 0

**Absent:** 3 - Wendy Woods, Kirk Westphal, and Eleanore Adenekan