

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of March 15, 2016

**SUBJECT: Liberty Flats Site Plan for City Council Approval
2658 West Liberty Street
File No. SP16-001**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Liberty Flats Site Plan and Development Agreement, subject to resolving any outstanding comments prior to scheduling for City Council action.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that this petition be **approved** because, once all outstanding issues have been resolved, it will comply with all applicable local, state, and federal ordinances, standards and regulations; it will not cause a public or private nuisance; it will not have a detrimental effect on public health, safety or welfare; and, the development would limit disturbance of natural features to the minimum necessary to allow a reasonable use of the land.

LOCATION

This site is located on the north side of West Liberty Street east of I-94 (West Area; Allen Creek watershed; Ward 5).

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The petitioner seeks approval to develop six three-story apartment buildings, providing 68 dwelling units, on a vacant 4.65-acre site in the R4B (Multiple-Family Dwelling) district.

Existing Conditions – Other than a billboard in its northwest corner, the site is undeveloped. The middle of the site is generally clear. Trees and shrubs grown along the property edges. Seven landmark trees are on the site, two of which are proposed to be removed. There are no other natural features on the site.

Proposed Development – A column of seven three-story buildings oriented with their long dimension parallel to West Liberty Street and perpendicular to I-94 are proposed. The seventh building in line also includes a community center on the first floor. An outdoor pool and tot play structure are proposed behind the community center. A new driveway to Liberty will be constructed to access the site on the east side, opposite from the existing bridge abutments and guardrail.

Four of the proposed apartment buildings have garages underneath providing 30 parking spaces. An additional 106 surface parking spaces are proposed for a total of 136 off-street parking spaces on the site. Two separate bicycle parking areas are proposed at the front and back of the site, each including two Class A and four Class C spaces. Each garage also counts as a Class A space.

Two landmark trees, both Norway spruce, located in the front setback area near the proposed driveway will be removed. These trees have a combined 42 inches of DBH and will be mitigated by planting seven 3-inch caliper trees throughout the site. A 15-foot wide conflicting land use buffer is proposed along the entire eastern edge of the site. It will include evergreen trees and an 8-foot solid fence on the property line.

Soils on the site are unsuitable for infiltration. An oversized stormwater detention pond will be constructed at the north end of the site to control a 100-year storm volume, outletting to the public storm sewer main in Liberty. The pond will be surrounded with a fence.

New public sidewalk is proposed across the site's frontage and will be extended eastward approximately 300 feet across the next two parcels to connect to the sidewalk across the Blue Heron development at 2608 W. Liberty. Starting in May 2016, one AAATA route will serve the site. The nearest stop has yet to be identified but with the new sidewalk installed, wherever it is located will be fully accessible to future residents of Liberty Flats without having to walk on the road shoulder or crossing midblock. Two more bus routes are available within ¼ mile of the site on South Maple Road. A sidewalk connection is also proposed at the northeast corner to the adjacent 242 Community Church site at 410 S. Maple. This connection will enable pedestrian access to the South Maple Road Kroger grocery store and to the Westgate Shopping Center.

The proposed buildings will contain 4 one-bedroom units, 15 two-bedroom units, 37 three-bedroom units and 12 four-bedroom units. The proposed development of primarily larger apartments is intended to address increasing demand the petitioner is experiencing from families who want to live in the Ann Arbor area but are uncomfortable in one or two-bedroom units that dominate the market.

The estimated project cost is \$9,000,000.

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

| | LAND USE | ZONING |
|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| NORTH | Commercial, Religious Assembly | C3 (Fringe Commercial) |
| EAST | Single-Family Dwelling | R1B (Single-Family Dwelling) |
| SOUTH | Parkland (South Maple Park) | PL (Public Land) |
| WEST | Interstate Highway | R4A (Multiple-Family Dwelling) |

COMPARISON CHART

| | | EXISTING | PROPOSED | REQUIRED |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Zoning | | R4B (Multiple-Family) | R4B | R4B |
| Lot Area | | 202,554 sq ft (4.65 ac) | 202,554 sq ft (4.65 ac) | 14,000 sq ft MIN |
| Lot Area per Dwelling Units | | Vacant | 2,978 sq ft per unit | 2,900 sq ft per unit MIN) |
| Lot Width | | 240 ft | 240 ft | 120 ft MIN |
| Setbacks | Front | Vacant | 15 ft – Liberty 15 ft – I-94 | 15 ft MIN, 40 ft MAX |
| | Side | Vacant | 69 ft | 12 ft MIN |
| | Rear | Vacant | 340 ft | 30 ft MIN |
| Height | | Vacant | 34 ft | 35 ft, or 45 ft with parking underneath, MAX |
| Open Space | | Vacant | 56% (121,532 sq ft) | 55% MIN (111,405 sq ft MIN) |
| Active Open Space | | Vacant | 1,350 sq ft per unit | 300 sq ft per unit MIN |

HISTORY AND PLANNING BACKGROUND

The site was annexed from Scio Township in 2005 and zoned R4B in 2007. A Planned Unit Development was proposed in 2005 but withdrawn after Planning Commission recommended denial, never being scheduled for City Council consideration. A planned project site plan was proposed in 2007 and denied.

This site is located in the West planning area. The Master Plan Land Use Element includes this site in a site specific recommendation for a 7-acre area at the northeast corner of I-94 and West Liberty Street (see West Area Site 11, page 118). The recommendation was most applicable when the site was annexed and zoned and is not particularly relevant now that the property is zoned R4B.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The petitioner held a citizen participation meeting on January 7, 2016. Invitations were sent to all residents and property owners within 1000 feet of the site. Three people attended. A report of the meeting is attached.

COMMENTS PENDING, DISMISSED OR UNRESOLVED

Planning – All previous site plan comments have been resolved. A draft development agreement has been prepared to address off-site improvements such as completing the current sidewalk gap as well as sanitary sewer mitigation and utility easements.

Forestry/Natural Resources – A preliminary review of recently submitted revised plans indicates all outstanding comments have been addressed. Confirmation is pending.

Engineering – A preliminary review of recently submitted plans indicates all outstanding comments have been addressed. Confirmation is pending.

Water Resources Commissioner – This office is reviewing and will approve the stormwater management system. Revised plans have recently been submitted and approval is pending.

Michigan Department of Transportation – The petitioner has been in contact and coordination with MDOT agents regarding impacts in the highway right-of-way.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo
Reviewed by Ben Carlisle
3/11/16

Attachments: Zoning Map
Aerial Photo
Site Plan
Draft Development Agreement
Citizen Participation Report

c: Petitioner: Liberty Street Development, LLC
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Systems Planning
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