



City of Ann Arbor
Formal Minutes - Draft
Planning Commission, City

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

Wednesday, February 18, 2015

7:00 PM

City Hall, 301 E. Huron St., 2nd Fl.

9-a 15-0213

Pittsfield Retail Site Plan for City Council Approval - A proposal to construct one-story retail additions totaling 18,800 square feet to connect 4 existing retail buildings on this 5.5 acre site located at 3510 Washtenaw Avenue. An existing bank building on the west end of the site will be demolished. The five tax parcels will be combined into a single tax parcel. The existing parking lots and rear alley will be reconfigured, and stormwater detention facilities will be added. (Ward 3) Staff Recommendation: Approval

Matthew Kowalski provided the staff report.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Noting no speakers, the Chair declared the public hearing closed, unless item is postponed.

Moved by Bona, seconded by Mills, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Pittsfield Retail Site Plan and development agreement, subject to combination of the parcels prior to the issuance of permits.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

Bona asked about the impact of the project on the AAATA Super-Stop.

Kowalski said AAATA is looking at improving the nearby stop but have not yet finalized those plans; they have had conversations with the property owner, noting that their improvements will not have any affect on the site plan and would be in the public right-of-way. He reviewed the right-of-way on the site plan layout.

Bona clarified that those improvements would be on the edge of the property [the parking] and the curb. She asked about the difference between a pull-off and a Super-Stop.

Kowalski said while he didn't have the specifics, he believed them to be a pull-off with a bus shelter and benches and could include enough parking for more than one bus.

Rampson explained the intent of Super-Stops is articulated in the ReImagine Washtenaw Improvements Study, adding that the improvements would include more amenities for the bus riders to make it a central stop along the corridor. She said in the future, this could include bus and timetable information as well as bike parking.

Bona asked about the trees in the rear of the site and how they may affect the deliveries in the rear. She expressed concern that this will not be able to hold up.

Kowalski said many of the trees are required mitigation trees for the site. He said they have shown exit doors and sidewalks on their site plan, and the petitioner presumably has worked with their tenants for suitable loading areas based on their needs. He said the sidewalks would be in place so only location of doors could be moved around to meet tenant needs.

Bona said neighbors had earlier expressed concern about the alley. She said it is unusual to see so much landscaping at the rear of a building and she is concerned about how they will be maintained. She asked the petitioner how they plan on being a good neighbor over the long term.

Arkan Jonna, A.F. Jonna Development, owner of the property, said he is sure Ann Arbor has a compliance department that will make sure the property is kept up. He said their company is a long-term owner and maintenance is important to them. Jonna said they can only put so many trees up front on the site, and they will manicure and keep the site well landscaped at all times.

Bona said the Commission will be able to use the back of this shopping center as an example to the rest of the town and she looked forward to seeing the results.

Jonna said it wouldn't be the first time their shopping centers are used as good examples.

Briere noted the development agreement speaks to keeping the trees in good condition for three years. She said an earlier mentioned concern was with the wall closest to Yost becoming barren. She asked what they have done to make it a more pleasant walk for those neighbors who live by and walk past it.

Jonna said the overall appearance of the center and the appearance of the landscaping will speak for itself. He said they have added more detailing and landscaping along that wall towards Yost. Jonna explained that in these neighborhood centers, most of the business comes from

residents living within one mile.

Briere asked about types of businesses that might occupy the space.

Jonna said in the western end of the center, they are looking to build a new store for Casual Male, and they are in discussion with a large furniture store as well. He said with food and services they know they will fill up, given the high demand for tenant space with such great visibility on Washtenaw Avenue.

Briere said at the previous night's Council meeting, there was a lot of talk about ReImagine Washtenaw. She asked Jonna if he had heard about it.

Jonna said he had heard about it and seen drawings, but he had not been engaged. He said he has been in discussion with AAATA over their plans, and they had provided details of their plans. He said they would like to lease parking spaces for a carpooling area, but they would not be able to agree on the issue until after the retail center is in full operation and they are able to assess their parking demands.

Mills said she thinks it's great that several existing trees can be saved and not mitigated.

Rampson clarified that the reference in the development agreement was for landmark trees to be kept healthy for three years, with specific attention given after construction in hopes of protecting them. She said it is a developer's obligation to keep all site landscaping healthy.

Clein said he believes the proposed changes will be a great improvement to the strip center. His earlier concerns about the façade were alleviated with the positioning of the trees and bushes along the building walls facing both Pittsfield and Yost streets. He said having trees on the rear of the site will be a lot nicer from the neighborhood's perspective, and the added storm water treatment was another positive effect.

On a roll call, the vote was as follows with the Vice Chair declaring the motion carried.

Yeas: 6 - Kenneth Clein, Sabra Briere, Sofia Franciscus, Sarah Mills, Bonnie Bona, and Alex Milshteyn

Nays: 0

Absent: 3 - Wendy Woods, Eleanore Adenekan, and Jeremy Peters