

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For the Planning Commission Meeting December 15, 2020

**SUBJECT: 416 West Huron Parking Lot
(416 West Huron)
Site Plan for Planning Commission Approval – Project No. SP19-034**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission approves the 416 West Huron Parking Lot Site Plan conditioned upon a variance being granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals for two street trees.

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby approves the proposed landscape modifications according to Chapter 55 Unified Development Code, Section 5.20.3.A, to require one tree for Right of Way screening where three trees are required and Section 5.20.3.B to require no trees in the interior landscape islands where six trees are required due to the location of the Allen Creek Drain directly below the site.

SUMMARY:

Two related applications have been submitted for approval. First, a site plan to modify an existing 96-vehicle parking lot by re-paving, adding landscape islands, landscape buffers, and bicycle parking. The improved parking lot will contain 75 vehicle spaces and will meet all City Codes conditioned upon a variance being granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Second, a Landscape Modification has been submitted for relief from some interior landscape islands and parking lot screening.

A variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals is required to eliminate the requirement for two additional street trees along the frontage of the parking lot. The variance and landscape modification requests are supported by staff due to the location of the Allen Creek Drain and associated easement that runs directly under the subject parking lot.

LOCATION:

The site is located on the north side of West Huron just east of the intersection with Chapin (Ward 2).

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the **site plan** be **approved** because, with the modifications and variance, the contemplated development complies with all applicable state, local and federal laws, ordinances, standards and regulations; the development limits the disturbance of natural features to the minimum necessary to allow a reasonable use of the land; and the development does not cause a public or private nuisance and does not have a detrimental effect on the public health, safety or welfare.

SITE PLAN APPLICATION:

Description – The site currently contains a 96-vehicle parking lot that is approximately half gravel surface and half asphalt. The parking lot is in very poor condition and the owner would like to re-construct the parking lot and formalize the vehicular use area with required landscaping elements and improved circulation. The existing parking area does not contain any landscape islands and encroaches into the adjacent railroad ROW. This encroachment will be removed and restored with vegetation. Impervious surface will be reduced overall. There are no trees being removed or affected by the proposed project. The site is located with a floodplain/floodway and has been reviewed by the City's Floodplain Coordinator. There are no structures or fill being added to the site that would affect the Floodplain.

The reconstructed parking lot will contain 75 vehicle parking spaces and 4 new Class C bicycle parking spaces. The parcel is located within the DDA district which does require a minimum number of parking spaces.

The Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission (WCWRC) reviewed the site plan because of the project location and the existing storm drains that lead directly to the Allen Creek Drain below the site. Per the direction of the WCWRC, no stormwater detention is provided because of the location site in the overall floodplain of Allen Creek. This location is near the end of the creek and it is better to have the water enter the systems quicker at this point. There may be an improvement in water quality due to the deteriorated nature of the paving and gravel surfaces on the site, the new pavement will decrease sediment flowing into the drain.

As noted, two landscape modifications (Landscape Modification Standards: Section 5.30.2.A, [Application attached](#)) are being requested: one for the tree planting in interior landscape islands and one for tree planting within the ROW buffer along Huron. The need for the modifications arises from the location of the project directly above Allen Creek Drain.

The WCWRC prohibits planting of trees directly over the storm drain or within that easement. While the petitioner will be providing the required area for interior landscape islands and the buffer area along Huron, there will be no trees planted. The required shrubs and seasonal grasses will be planted in the islands that are unable to support trees. Staff supports the landscape modification requests due to the unique constraints on the site with the enclosed creek flowing directly under the site. A Conflicting Land Use buffer is also required along the western property line adjacent to residential uses. That buffer will be installed as required by code. No buffer currently exists in this area.

The zoning variance is being requested to address the code requirement for street tree plantings. The subject site requires five street trees and three are currently existing and will remain. The variance request would cover the requirement for the additional two trees required. These trees are not able to be planted due to the location of the Allen Creek Drain. Staff supports the variance request. If the site plan and landscape modification are approved by the Planning Commission, the project will then proceed to the Zoning Board of Appeals for action on the variance request.

Development Standards Review – Staff has reviewed the site plan for compliance with all applicable development standards of the C3 district provided in Chapter 55 Unified Development Code. A summary of staff findings is provided in the chart below.

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/ PERMITTED
Zoning	C3	C3	C3
Lot Area	1.6 ac. (71,022 sq. ft.)	1.6 ac. (71,022 sq. ft.)	6,000 sq. ft. MIN
Vehicle Parking	96 spaces	75 spaces	None - DDA Special Parking District
Bicycle Parking	None	4 spaces Class C	3 spaces Class C MIN

Staff Comments – The proposed site plan will upgrade an existing parking lot to meet all city codes as much a possible given the site conditions. The new landscape islands, required vegetated buffer along the western property line and additional pervious surface with plantings are an improvement to the site and surrounding neighborhood. All Landscape Modifications and the variance request are supported due to the unique circumstances of the site directly above the creek.

The petitioner also met with staff and representatives from the Treeline Conservancy. This site is identified and as key location in the plan for the proposed greenway trail. The petitioner has indicated a willingness to work with the City and provide the required easement width along the east and north sides of the site. The proposed site plan removes parking currently encroaching into the railroad ROW and allows an area for future placement of the Treeline trail.

Prepared by Matt Kowalski
Reviewed by Brett Lenart
12/7/20

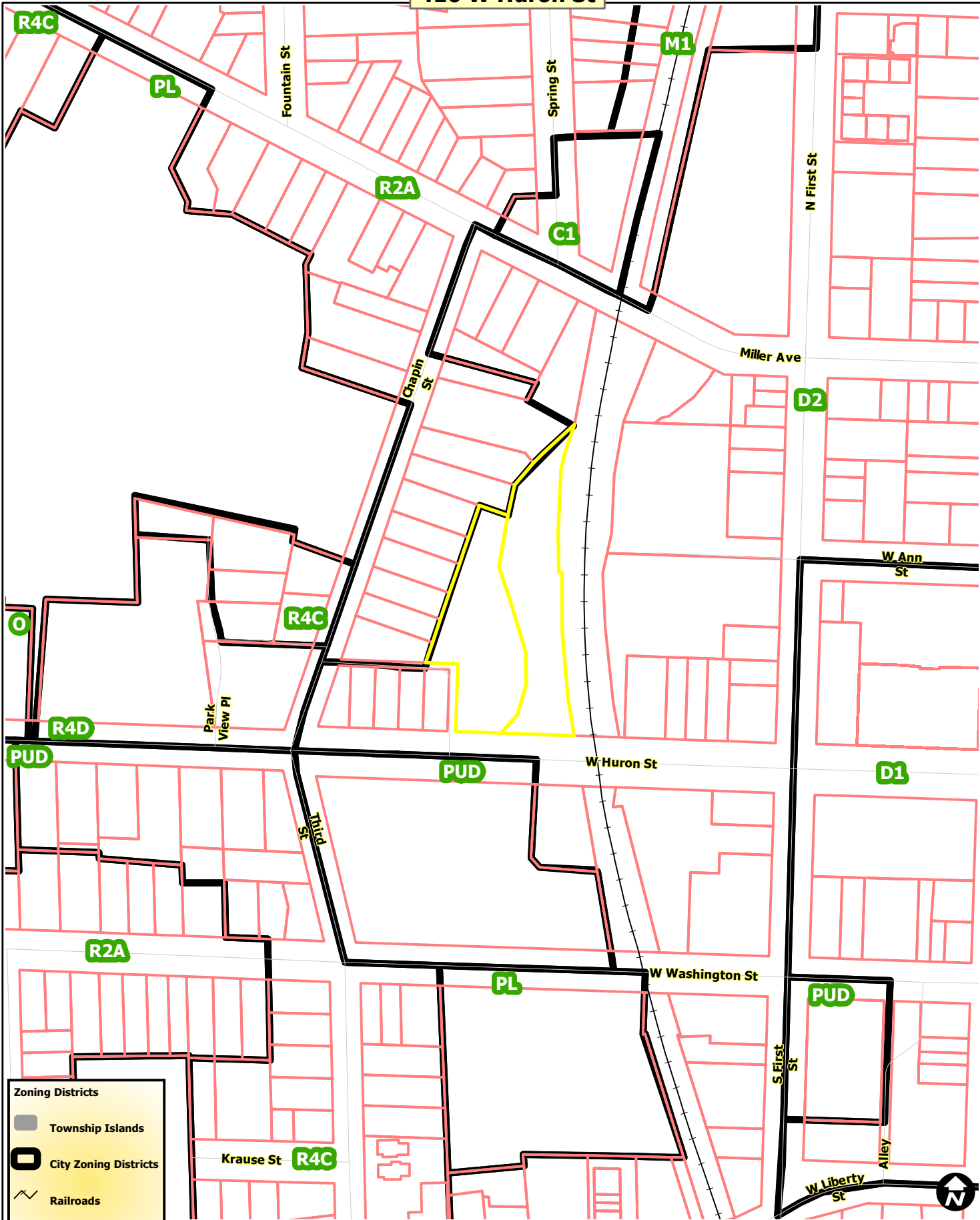
Attachments: Zoning Map
Aerial Photo
[Landscape Modification Application](#)

Links: [Site Plan](#)

c: Owner and Applicant – West Huron Properties, LLC, 416 West Huron St, Suite #23,
Ann Arbor, MI 48103 (Cathy Kimmell)
Applicant's Engineer – SME (Hugo Ceron)

Systems Planning
Project Nos. SP19-034

416 W Huron St



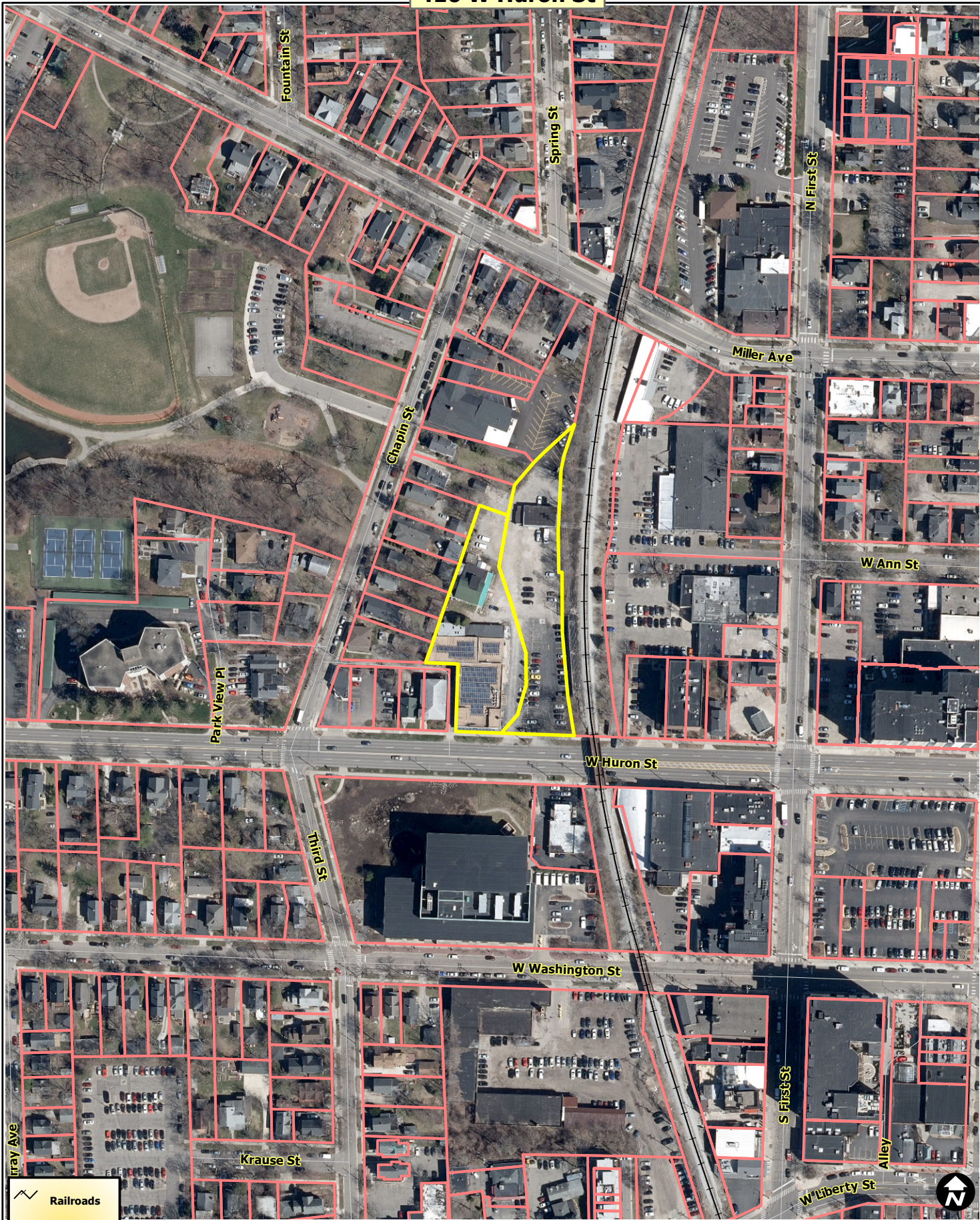
Zoning Districts




- Township Islands
- City Zoning Districts
- Railroads
- Huron River
- Tax Parcels



Map date: 9/25/2019
Any aerial imagery is circa 2018 unless otherwise noted
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416 W Huron St



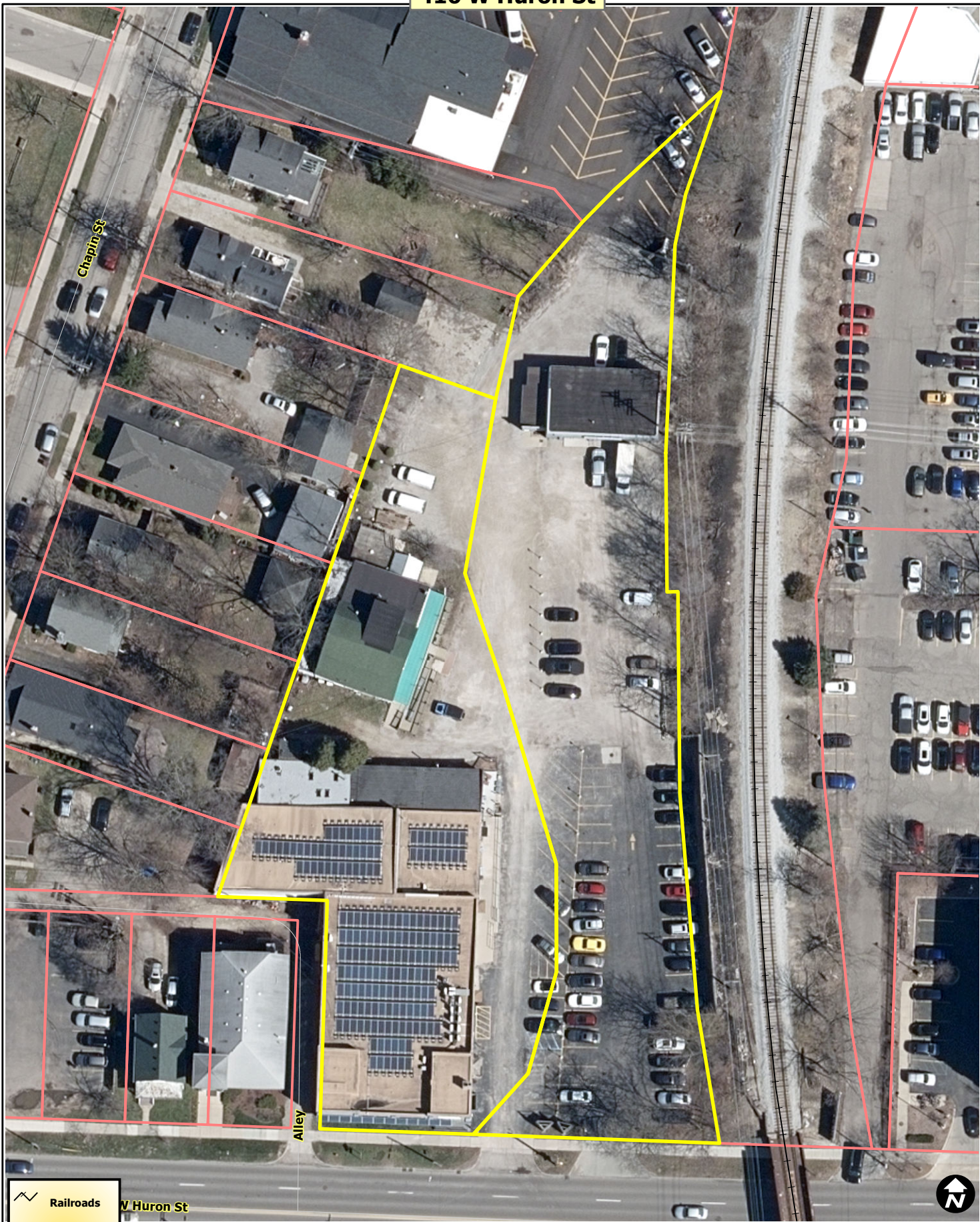
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416 W Huron St



- Railroads
- Huron River
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Application for Modifications to Landscape and Screening Requirements

City of Ann Arbor Planning Services

City Hall: 301 E Huron Street Ann Arbor, MI 48107-8647

Phone: 734-794-6265 Email: planning@a2gov.org

To: Ann Arbor City Planning Commission and/or City Council

We, the undersigned, respectfully submit this application for modifications to the landscape and screening requirement(s) set forth in Section 5.20 of the Unified Development Code and request approval as provided in Section 5.30.2.

Project Information

Project Name: Paving Improvements Site Address: 416 W. Huron

Applicant Information

Name(s): Cathy Kimmel, Property Manager for West Huron Properties, LLC

Address: 416 W. Huron St., Suite #23, Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Phone Number: 248-921-6879 Email: admin@westhuronproperties.com

Interest in Property:

Owner Representative

Applicant Signature:  Date: 10-14-20

MODIFICATION REQUEST

1(a) Landscape and Screening Requirement(s) to be Modified

- Section 5.20.3.A Vehicular Use Area Right-of-Way Screening
- Section 5.20.3.B Vehicular Use Area Interior Landscape Islands
- Section 5.20.4 Conflicting Land Use Buffers
- Section 5.20.5 Private Streets and Shared Driveway Buffers
- Section 5.20.6 Refuse/Recycling Container Screening
- Section 5.20.7 Material and Design Standards

1(b) Explain Proposed Modifications. Attach additional pages as needed.

The project involves reorganizing and paving an existing lot which is currently half asphalt in poor condition, and half gravel. The work will reduce the quantity of parking, and add islands and landscaping, but we are prevented by the various utility easements under most of the parking area, and by the floodplain, from adding trees that would obstruct floodwater flow.

2 (a). We are eligible to submit this request because:

- The Site is located in a special parking district as designated in Section 5.19.3
- Strict application of the requirements checked above will result in a loss of existing Parking Spaces required by Sections 5.19.2 or 5.19.3 and the Site does not abut residential uses.
- The topographic features of the Site create conditions so that the strict application of the requirements checked above will result in less effective screening and landscaping than alternative landscape designs.
- Existing vegetation and landscaping are located or spaced in such a manner that the addition of required landscaping would be detrimental to the plant material or create undesirable conditions.
- Bioretention areas, Native or Prairie Plantings, structural amenities or Xeriscaping, are proposed would prevent strict application of this chapter.
- Planned projects or planned unit developments, and rearrangement of the landscaping elements will achieve the spirit and intent of the requirements checked above.
- There is an approved site plan, no alterations to the approved landscape elements are proposed , and the approved plans will be maintained.

2 (b) Complete the following statement: The requested modifications are consistent with the purposes stated in Section 5.20.1 because:

Landscaping will be added to a site which has very little now, including improving the CLUB with the adjoining residential neighbors and providing islands.

2 (c) For each of the specific site condition(s) associated with the site checked above, describe how strict application of the requirements will impact that site condition, and how and to what extent the modifications are justified. Attach additional pages as needed.

Strict application of the requirements would prevent the parking lot work from happening, because the project would not be allowed to plant the required trees. The result would be a higher density of cars, but on a less safe and less attractive lot.
