



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

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

Tuesday, November 19, 2013

7:00 PM

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

10-a 13-1457

Montgomery Building Site Plan for City Council Approval - A proposal to construct a 21,100 square foot, four-story addition on top of a 17,270 square foot, two-story commercial building located on this 0.22 acre site at 210-216 South Fourth Avenue. A total of 32 dwelling units are proposed on floors 3-5. The building is located in the Main Street Historic District, and the Historic District Commission approved a Certificate of Appropriateness on September 12, 2013. (Ward 1) Staff Recommendation: Approval

Matt Kowalski presented the staff report.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Luke Norman, South Fourth Avenue, asked if there was going to be any affordable housing made for this new development site plan.

Brad Moore, architect for the project, was present and described the project. He noted that he was available to answer the Commission's questions.

Ray Detter, Downtown Citizens Advisory Committee, stated that the Committee took a look at this project, and the work that will be added to this building will be a marvelous addition and goes a long way in restoring a part of the City's past that will become a part of the future. He said the committee strongly supports the mixed income housing in the downtown.

Noting no further speakers, the Chair declared the public hearing closed.

Moved by Adenekan, seconded by Briere, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Montgomery Building Site Plan.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

Bona asked if there were any affordable housing units incorporated in this project.

Moore responded that none would be dedicated per the City's zoning ordinance, but that there would be some smaller units, 4 studio

apartments, with approximately 500 square feet each, which given the small square footage the rent would be less. He said the 1-bedroom units will average 750-800 square feet each, and the 2-bedroom units would average 950 square feet.

Bona said it will be interesting to see if the City can get market rate affordable units versus subsidized affordable units. She suggested that Moore try to provide relative going rates for those units, based on income, when the project moves on before City Council.

Bona asked about the north and south elevations in relation to the buildings next door, noting that the building looks like there are windows on the property line. She asked if any part of the building is on the property line.

Moore said yes, the depicted beige colored part of the building shown on the site plan was on the property line and the grey colored area was recessed light wells.

Bona asked how they could get windows on a building elevation that is built right up to a property line, knowing that the neighboring site could one day also build right up to that same property line.

Moore explained that they would be applying to the Building Board of Appeals to obtain a variance for the windows that aren't set back in the light wells. He said the Building Official had explained that the pattern has been that they grant variances for limited quantities of windows on common property lines with a caveat that there be a special sprinkler head placed in front of those windows that would put a sheet of water in front of those windows in case of a fire, so the risk of fire being transferred from one building to the other is minimized. He explained that, should the property owner next door wish to build up in front of those windows, the windows would be blocked in. He added that apparently there are sizable windows in Ann Arbor that have such variances, specifically on One North Main and Sloan Plaza. If the variances aren't granted, there is enough light from other sources.

Bona asked if the same applies on the northern elevation, or if the alley provides some relief.

Moore said there is an 8 foot easement across the neighbor's property for access to their building, so it would be difficult for the neighbors to build right up to their property line.

Bona said the Building Board of Appeals would interpret it the same way, even with an easement currently there.

Moore agreed.

Woods asked about the back alleyway. She asked about the view from the balconies on the western elevation.

Moore said with the adjacent buildings being 3 stories, you wouldn't be able to see beyond them until you got to the forth and fifth floors. He said the ones on the second and third floors would be looking across the alley into adjacent apartments.

Woods asked if the alley is where refuse would be collected and if those balconies will at times be looking over those activities.

Moore explained that the balconies are less protrusive and higher up than the existing DTE transformers which the current trash pickup has to negotiate.

Woods asked where the proposed studios would be located.

Moore said in the southwest corner of the building where the two alleys meet and daylight is coming in.

Woods asked about daylight in the units.

Moore said currently there is plenty of light on the second floor martial arts studio, since there is light coming from both sides.

Clein asked if the intent is to keep the arcade walk-through the building that goes to the back alley.

Moore responded that the arcade walk-through ceased to exist about 10 years ago when the hair salon was extended across the rear portion of the building. He said they haven't established the ground floor tenant layout yet, but could leave the possibility open.

Clein asked if the windows on the north-south side elevations are inoperable and if so, is there enough ventilation through the operable windows.

Moore said the units will have both natural and mechanical ventilation.

Clein asked about the balconies facing the alleyway, westward, and their depth and intent.

Moore said 2' 10" deep and the intent would be to catch some fresh air.

Clein asked about the upper cornices on the building and their colors, noting that one was darker than the other, and if that was intentional.

Moore responded that it was a suggestion of the Historic District Commission to have the lighter color on the rear portion of the building as not to draw attention to the building when walking down the north side of Washington.

Clein suggested that PVC material, as noted on the plans, is not a highly sustainable material, while aluminum has a higher recyclable content potential, so if more sustainable material could be incorporated that would be preferable. He asked about the decorative masonry units and if they will be split face block.

Moore responded that it is a brown faced or burnished faced block giving it a nicer face and not so rough looking, no bigger than 8 x 24 units.

Giannola asked if there would be any coordination between this project and the Running Fit addition.

Moore said it is possible, but each building is owned by a separate owner and have relationships with different contractors. He said they have agreed with the DDA to not close the sidewalks during construction but rather to tunnel over them, to keep the sidewalks open to the neighboring merchants.

Giannola asked about the neighboring PUD zoned building and when the zoning occurred.

Kowalski responded that it is the First National Bank site.

Rampson explained that it was zoned in the 1970's when First Martin requested to build a second tower, consistent with historical plans.

Peters commented that he was glad to see this project coming to the street to revitalize this area. He liked the historic face on Fourth Avenue and is happy to see more residential units in the downtown.

Bona asked about the penthouse unit and how the mechanical equipment was proposed to be screened from view.

Moore showed the mechanical equipment screening on the northern elevation plan. He said they will be using a heat pump system to move heat around in the building, and only a boiler would be mounted on top of the building to make up supplementary heating, and chiller will also be

mounted up there. He said the equipment would be located behind the penthouse unit which would be common use by all the tenants.

Bona asked how the screening would be different from what was shown on the penthouse and if it required ventilation.

Moore explained that the mechanical screen is setback considerably from the perimeter of the building, and there is a parapet on the perimeter of the building that is about 2 feet tall so the mechanical screen will start about 2 feet above the roof so air can circulate upward to the open top area.

Bona asked about the top of the building and usable space.

Moore said they currently don't have a program for the rooftop around the mechanical area since they wanted to reserve that for potential solar panel locations. He said the roof on the front of the building between the common space and the parapet would be green roof; the building would have a green roof on 3 sides, wrapping around the patios.

Clein agreed with Peters and echoed the positive attitude towards having the proposed building in the downtown. He commended Moore and the owners for their proposal.

Briere asked if they have any idea how much noise the mechanical equipment will produce, adding that she hears from a large number of constituents about noise caused by heating and cooling elements in the downtown.

Moore responded that they hope the screening will move the sound upward, rather than lateral, but they don't have any sound levels for the equipment at the property line.

Briere asked the petitioner to please consider the residents that live above the stores on Main Street when they select the mechanical equipment, noting that increased noise could send some over the edge from acceptance to hostility.

Moore said they will certainly take that into consideration.

Clein added that most boilers and chillers can be made quiet these days with the screens muffling the noise and making it rise. He asked if there would be an emergency generator on the roof.

Moore said the generator would most likely be in the basement in the electrical room.

Woods asked about the history of building and if the fire that burned the Montgomery Ward building was the same one that burned the Running Fit building.

Moore said no, the fire that burned the Running Fit building in the mid 1950s pre-dated the Montgomery Ward fire in the mid 1960s.

Westphal echoed the positive comments on the building and plans, noting the great tile work added to the building. He asked about ground floor uses, noting that the Master Plan called for active uses on the ground floor. He asked if the petitioner was willing to abide by the Master Plan desires when the time comes for them to select ground floor tenants.

Moore said absolutely.

Westphal asked about storm water detention requirements and if there currently is a first flush detention.

Kowalski said the project would only require first flush, given the building is less than 10,000 square feet of impervious surface.

Westphal asked if there currently is a system in place.

Kowalski said he didn't believe so, noting that the proposed system would be an infiltration system with an open bottom.

Moore said the soils are perfect in this area for infiltration systems, as the City well knows, since they recently installed a large infiltration system under Fourth Avenue.

Westphal asked if they currently have a contractor in mind and if they use local labor.

Moore said he believed so, adding they are in Ypsilanti.

Westphal stressed how great it was to see a building that had a real cornice on it.

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

Yeas: 9 - Bonnie Bona, Wendy Woods, Kirk Westphal, Diane Giannola, Eleanore Adenekan, Kenneth Clein, Sabra Briere, Paras Parekh, and Jeremy Peters

Nays: 0