PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of March 6, 2007

SUBJECT: Liberty Place Condominiums Rezoning and Planned Project Site Plan (northeast corner of Liberty and I-94) File Nos. 8254H15.2 and .5

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Liberty Place Rezoning from Unzoned to R4B (Multiple-Family Dwelling District) and Planned Project Site Plan and Development Agreement, with proposed modifications to the west front setback requirements of Chapter 55 (Zoning Ordinance), Section 5:33, subject to maintaining a minimum usable open space of 63 percent.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **approval** of the R4B zoning because it is consistent with surrounding land uses and development trends in this area.

Staff recommends that the planned project site plan be **approved** because it would comply with local, state and federal laws and regulations; the development would limit the disturbance of natural features to the minimum necessary to allow a reasonable use of the land; would not cause a public or private nuisance; and would not have a detrimental effect on public health, safety or welfare. The requested planned project modification of the west front setback is consistent with the standards of Chapter 55 (Zoning Ordinance), Section 5:70.

DESCRIPTION OF PETITION

The site plan proposal was tabled at the February 6, 2007 Planning Commission meeting to allow the petitioner additional time to respond to comments from the Commission and staff, including site layout and pedestrian access. All action items mentioned by Planning Commission and significant changes to the site plan have been addressed below.

<u>Site Layout</u> – Building 1 has been shifted to the east to save 12 existing pine trees along I-94, including a 20-inch landmark pine tree. This reduces the number of landmark trees removed on site from three to two and reduces the number of non-landmark trees from 48 to 36. Approximately 138, six-foot tall Arbor Vitae trees are proposed to be planted along this west property line to screen the buildings from I-94. Due to the other buildings placement remaining unchanged, the planned project requested front setback of ten feet along I-94 remains. Two additional shade trees and a park bench are proposed for each of the three courtyards as shown on the attached landscape plan. These shade trees are part of the required mitigation trees.

<u>Sanitary Sewer Improvements</u> – Off-site sanitary sewer improvements to West Towne Condominiums have not been completed. The City shall issue certificates of occupancy for two of the eight buildings on the West Towne Condominiums site prior to construction of the improvements, if: 1) the proprietor provides evidence satisfactory to the City that the existing sanitary sewer system has adequate capacity for the two completed buildings; 2) the proprietor has completed the required number of footing drain disconnects for the two completed buildings; and 3) the proprietor has complied with all other necessary City requirements for issuance of certificates of occupancy for the two buildings. Otherwise, construction of the improvements shall be made prior to application for and issuance of any other certificate of occupancy for West Towne Condominiums.

<u>Elevations</u> - The petitioner plans to bring building elevations for the proposed development to the Planning Commission meeting. The petitioner agrees to build such elevations according to the ones presented. This item has been added to the site development agreement.

<u>Natural Features</u> – The grading limits in the vicinity of landmark trees 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 located at the northeast corner of the site have been revised to maintain a minimum of ten feet of undisturbed area around these trees.

<u>Miscellaneous</u> – The petitioner proposes presenting details of the garage layout in regards to Class A bicycle parking and to present the sound proofing levels of the units from I-94.

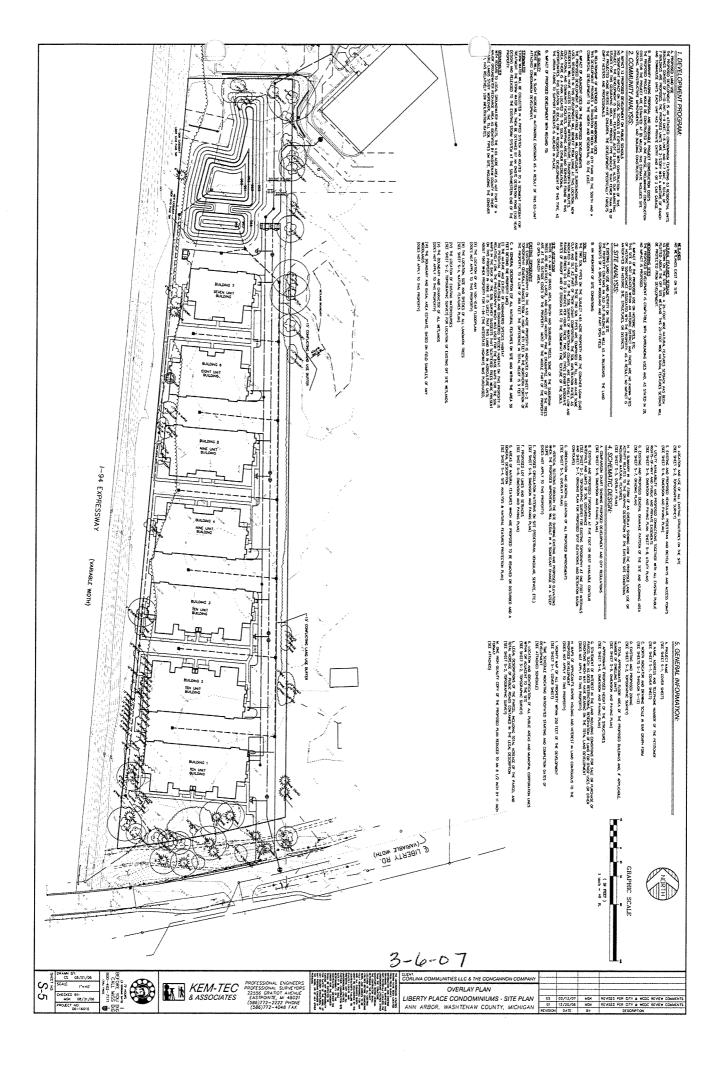
COMMENTS PENDING, DISMISSED OR UNRESOLVED

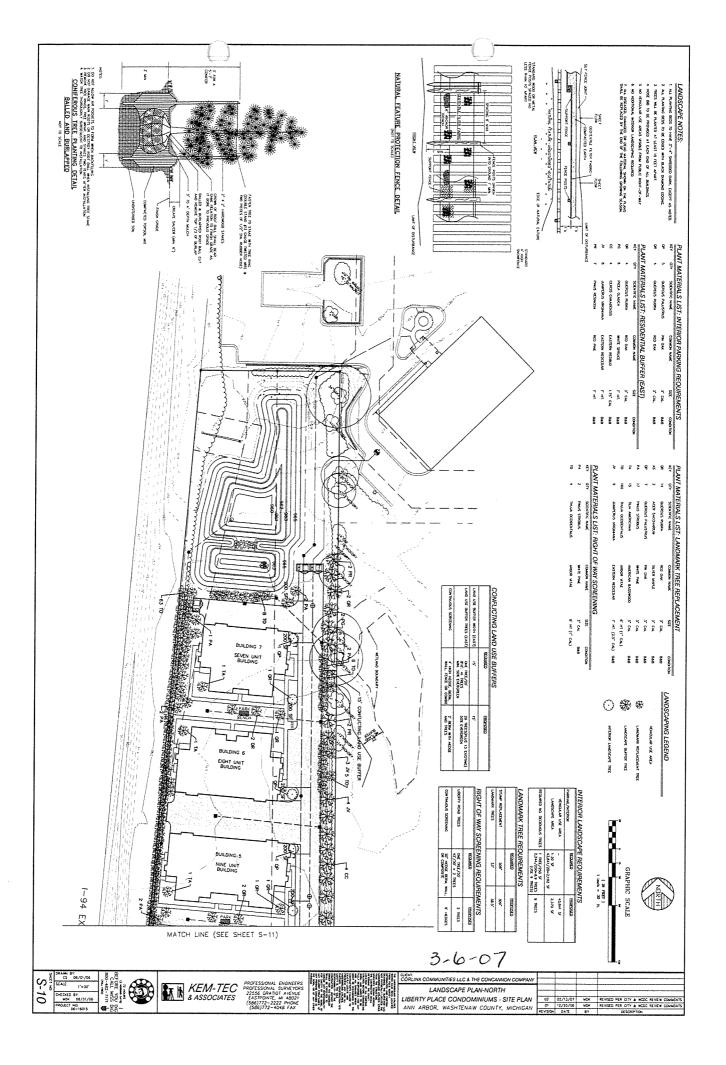
<u>Systems Planning</u> - The petitioner has chosen to grade within the West Liberty Road right-ofway, a location for a future sidewalk to be constructed under a special assessment district, rather than construct the sidewalk as part of the development. The graded area shall include from the back of the existing guardrail to a minimum of 16 feet to the north. Staff supports deferring the construction of the sidewalk along Liberty Road until walkways are provided to the west (over I-94 bridge).

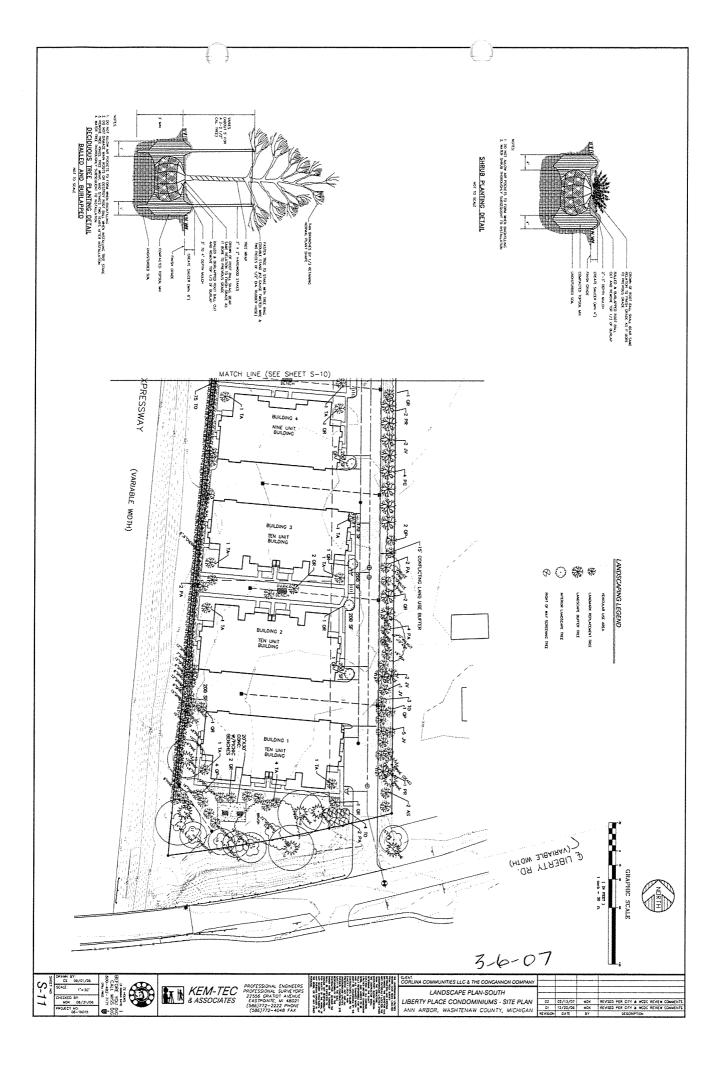
Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner - Preliminary approval pending.

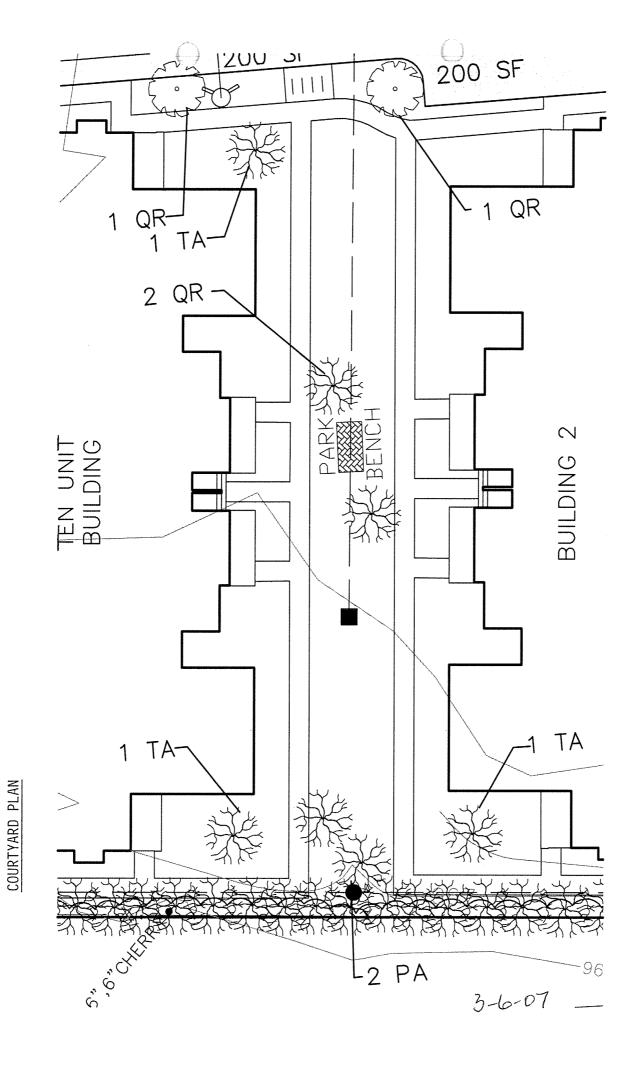
Prepared by Christopher Cheng Reviewed by Coy Vaughn and Mark Lloyd jsj/3/2/07

Attachments: Revised Site Plan Revised Landscape Plan (2 sheets) Courtyard Plan 1/18/07 Staff Report









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PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of January 18, 2007

SUBJECT: Liberty Place Condominiums Rezoning and Planned Project Site Plan (northeast corner of Liberty and I-94) File Nos. 8254H15.2 and .5

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Liberty Place Rezoning from Unzoned to R4B (Multiple-Family Dwelling District) and Planned Project Site Plan and Development Agreement, with proposed modifications to the west side setback requirements of Chapter 55 (Zoning Ordinance), Section 5:33, subject to maintaining a minimum usable open space of 63 percent.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends tabling of the R4B zoning until outstanding staff comments are addresed.

Staff recommends that the planned project site plan be **tabled** in order for the petitioner to address outstanding staff comments.

LOCATION

The site is located northeast of the Liberty Street/I-94 intersection (West Area; Allen Creek Watershed).

DESCRIPTION OF PETITION

This site is currently unzoned and the petitioner is requesting R4B zoning with planned project modifications to accommodate this proposal. The planned project modifications include reduced front yard setback fronting I-94 and reducing the building spacing between the three southern most buildings.

This 4.65-acre site is currently vacant except for a small garage/storage structure located on the southeast corner of the site. A planned project site plan is proposed to remove the existing structure and to construct seven two-story structures containing 63 dwelling units. The units would be arranged perpendicular to I-94 on the west and to the access drive along the east property line from Liberty Street. Parking is provided for each unit in attached one and two-car garages (83 spaces) accessed from common driveway entrances and in 15 surface parking spaces on the main drive (98 spaces total). Sidewalks are provided adjacent to Liberty Street (see Engineering comments) and parallel to the drive, with connections through the site, access to the fronts of the units within shared open spaces between pairs of buildings, around the storm water detention basin, and connecting to the property on the north. Class A bicycle parking

spaces will be provided in each garage in addition to seven Class C (hoops) bicycle parking spaces around the site. Traffic generation during the AM and PM peak hours is anticipated to be less than 50 trips; therefore, a traffic impact study is not required.

The site contains 21 landmark trees. Three of the landmark trees are proposed to be removed along the west property line and, in mitigation, ten trees (29.5 inches DBH) would be provided. There is a densely vegetated area between the I-94 right-of-way and the development that will be undisturbed for a depth of approximately ten feet to continue its buffering effect. A 15-foot wide conflicting land use buffer has also been provided along the eastern property line to screen the parking area from the adjacent site. Before the parcel was annexed to the City, a number of trees were removed from the site and the Planning Commission inquired about the circumstances. The petitioner proposes 50 percent replacement of these trees (not the 200 percent required replacement if these trees had been removed without permission from a parcel in the City). These replacement trees have been provided throughout the site. There is a wetland on an adjacent parcel to the east; however, no impact is anticipated from development of this site.

The storm water management system is designed with a detention basin located in the north portion of the site, which will also capture offsite run-off from the northeast from an adjacent site. The system requires preliminary approval by the Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner. City water service is available in Liberty Street. The 63 additional dwelling units require the disconnection of 18 footing drains from the same sub-area of the sanitary sewer system. Additionally, upgrades are required in the downstream sanitary sewer capacity to support the multiple-family use and a portion of the cost will be the responsibility of the development.

	LAND USE	ZONING	
NORTH	Offices	C3 (Fringe Commercial District)	
EAST	Commercial	TWP (Township District)	
SOUTH	South Maple Park	PL (Public Land District)	
WEST	I-94 Right-of-Way; Multiple-Family Housing west of Right-of-Way	R4A (Multiple-Family Dwelling District)	

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

COMPARISON CHART

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
Zoning	TWP	R4B	R4B
Gross Lot Area	4.65 ac (202,554 sq ft)	4.65 ac (202,554 sq ft)	0.32 ac MIN 14,000 sq ft MIN
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	N/A	3,215 sq ft	2,900 sq ft MIN
Usable Open Space – Percent of Lot Area	N/A (vacant)	63 percent (127,609 sq ft)	55 percent MIN (111,404 sq ft MIN)
Setback – Front	N/A	Liberty (S) – 40 ft I-94 (W) – 10 ft *	Liberty (S) –37 ft MIN I-94 – 37 ft MIN
Setback – Side(s)	N/A	(E) – 46 ft	E - 17 ft MIN
Setback – Rear	N/A	(N) – 260 ft	N – 30 ft MIN
Height	N/A	29.5 ft	35 ft MAX
Parking – Automobile	N/A	Garage –83 spaces Surface – 15 spaces	95 spaces MIN
Parking – Bicycle	N/A	Class A – 83 spaces (garage) Class C – 7 spaces	Class A – 7 spaces MIN Class C – 7 spaces MIN

* Deficiency that will be addressed with the planned project approval.

HISTORY

The property was annexed from Scio Township and is currently undeveloped and unzoned. An appropriate zoning district must be finalized by June 1, 2007. This site was annexed in 2005 with an accompanying PUD zoning and PUD site plan recommended for denial at the January 20, 2005 City Planning Commission meeting. Neither the PUD zoning nor the PUD site plan petitions were forwarded to City Council for action.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

This property is a portion of Development Site 24 of the <u>West Area Plan</u>, adopted in 1995. The Plan recommends office, research or light industrial uses for the site, emphasizing a desired clean, green, and uncluttered approach to the City from the west. The Plan cites an increase in the employment base and the limited availability of office, research, or light industrial uses in the West Area for the recommendation.

There are some constraints in the developable area of the 4.65-acre site. In both the ORL (Office/Research/Light Industrial) and RE (Research) zoning districts, the required front setback is 75 feet (from both Liberty Street and I-94), with a 100-foot setback where the adjoining residential development exists on the east. In the ORL zoning district, the maximum floor area in percentage of lot area is 40 percent, allowing a building or buildings of up to 81,021 square

feet of floor area (approximately 20,000 square feet on four floors, up to 50 feet in height). Required parking for a building of this size would range from 243 (general office) to 135 (limited manufacturing), depending upon use. In the RE zoning district, the maximum floor area in percentage of lot area is 30 percent, allowing a building of up to 60,766 square feet. The allowed height is based on one-half the distance to nearest property line (for example, a 50-foot setback allows a 25-foot height, approximately two stories with 30,000 square feet each maximum), with a similar parking requirement. The required setbacks would necessitate significant setback variances to develop the property in the ORL or RE zoning districts.

The O (Office) zoning district requires 25-foot front setbacks and, where the property adjoins the residentially zoned land on the east, a 20-foot setback. In the O zoning district, the maximum floor area in percentage of lot area is 40 percent, allowing a building or buildings of up to 81,021 square feet of floor area (approximately 27,000 square feet on three floors, up to 40 feet in height). Parking requirements for the O district for a floor area of this size range from a minimum of 243 spaces (1:333) for general office uses to a maximum of 686 spaces (1:118) for medical/dental uses. The O zoning district would also allow residential uses, subject to the regulations of the R districts (residential zoning districts), so the parcel could be developed in a similar way if zoned office. A similar development located at the northwest corner of Liberty and Maple, West Towne, was approved in 2005 for 87 condominium units. This site had the same recommendations of O and RE in the <u>West Area Plan</u> and was rezoned to R4B.

PLANNED PROJECT STANDARD FOR APPROVAL REVISIONS

The R4B zoning district requires that additional building spacing setbacks be provided depending on the length of the building along with additional front, side and rear setbacks. The spacing between Buildings 1 and 2 and Buildings 2 and 3 fall short of the 40.6 feet required by seven inches and 1.7 inches. A reduced front setback along I-94 from 37 feet to approximately 11 feet has also been requested as part of the planned project application. The required additional front (Liberty), rear and east side setbacks have been met.

According to Section 5:70 of the Zoning Ordinance, the City Planning Commission may recommend approval and City Council may approve modifications of the area, height and placement regulations of the Zoning Ordinance in the form of a planned project site plan, based on the following standards (Petitioner's responses in regular type, *staff comments in italic type*).

(a) The lot or lots included in the planned project must meet the minimum gross lot size requirement of the zoning district in which they are located. In residential zoning districts, the minimum gross lot size shall be the combined total of the minimum gross lot sizes for each dwelling on a parcel. However, the minimum gross lot size and width requirements may be reduced as part of a planned project for a zero lot line duplex or townhouse development which provides affordable housing for lower income households. For purposes of this section, zero lot line duplex or townhouse development shall mean a development containing attached single-family units on individual lots. In no case may the gross lot size be reduced below the minimum lot area per dwelling unit requirement for the dwelling unit type proposed.

The lot meets the minimum gross lot size requirement in the R4B zoning district.

(b) The proposed modifications of zoning requirements must provide one or more of the following:

- 1. Usable open space in excess of the minimum requirement.
 - 2. Building or parking setback(s) in excess of the minimum requirement.
 - 3. Preservation of natural features.
 - 4. Preservation of historical or architectural features.
 - 5. Solar orientation or energy conservation design.
 - 6. An arrangement of buildings that provides a public benefit, such as transit access, pedestrian orientation, or a reduced need for infrastructure.
 - 7. Affordable housing for lower income households.

The proposed modification addresses Items 1,2,3 and 6.

- 1. Useable open space in percentage of lot area is 63 percent, 55 percent is required
- 2. Parking located in the rear of buildings as well as guest parking along the main roadway.
- 3. Landmark trees and other woodland area being preserved in the open space area for the residents and of the development and neighboring residential neighborhoods.
- 6. The integration of sidewalks to the existing Liberty Street to provide access to the public park. The arrangement of buildings to the streets shall provide a streetscape for years to come.
- 2. Increased front, rear and east side setbacks are proposed for this project beyond the required additional setbacks due to building length.
- 3. Three landmark trees are proposed to be removed and 6 additional trees are proposed to be impacted with the current proposal and require mitigation. Landmark trees removed on this site while in the township have been mitigated at a 50% DBH replacement.

(c) The planned project shall be designed in such a manner that traffic to and from the site will not be hazardous to adjacent properties.

Not hazardous to the adjacent properties.

This site meets the required site distance requirements.

(d) The proposed modifications shall be consistent with the proper development and use of adjacent land and buildings.

The development shall provide an appealing aesthetic visual screen to neighboring commercial and residential sites.

Residential uses exist to the east of this site with I-94 to the west and parkland to the south.

(e) Required off-street parking and landscaping must be provided in accordance with the provisions of Chapters 59 and 62.

Required and proposed off-street parking and landscaping requirements are shown on Sheets S-6 and S-10 of the site plan set.

The minimum number of parking spaces is being met. Mitigation is being provided for trees removed under township jurisdiction.

(f) The standards of density, allowable floor area and required usable open space for the zoning district(s) in which the project is located must be met.

The required and proposed standards of density, allowable floor area and required useable open space for the zoning district is provided below and on Sheet S-5 of the site plan set.

This site allows for up to 69 dwelling units and exceeds the open space requirement of 55 percent.

(g) There shall be no uses within the proposed project which are not permitted uses in the zoning district(s) in which the proposed project is to be located.

The proposed use is permitted in this zoning district.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS PENDING, DISMISSED OR UNRESOLVED

<u>Land Development Coordinator</u> - Grading limits are shown to pass within ten feet of landmark trees 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 for utility installations. The disturbance of these landmark trees is inconsistent with Chapter 57, Section 5:129, and the Guidelines for the Protection of Mitigation of Natural Features. Staff is not supportive of the proposed disturbance within the critical root zones of these trees for the current layout. If utilities are to remain in this location, staff requires boring rather than open trench if the ten feet of undisturbed area cannot be maintained around these trees.

Mitigation is required for landmark trees 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 under the currently proposed limits of earth disturbance. Please provide the requirement landmark tree mitigation if the proposed limits of disturbance is not moved beyond a minimum of ten feet from the base of the trees.

<u>Systems Planning</u> - Locating the fire hydrants on the east side of the drive has effectively cut off access, to residents as well as emergency vehicles, through the site in the event of a fire. The hydrants should be located on the west side of the drive. The water main and sanitary sewer utility easements shall extend to the easterly property line. The utilities may also be shifted to the east with the easement.

The petitioner has chosen to grade within the West Liberty Road right-of-way, a location for a future sidewalk to be constructed under a special assessment district, rather than construct the sidewalk as part of the development. The graded area shall include from the back of the existing guardrail to a minimum of sixteen feet to the north. This work shall be shown on the grading plan being reviewed for site plan approval. The area must be stabilized as all other areas on the site. Care shall be taken in the design so that during construction of the sidewalk the landmark trees in this area are protected, particularly the 24-inch pine. To protect this tree properly, at least ten feet of undisturbed area from the trunk of the tree shall be provided. Mitigation must be performed for any landmark tree that must be removed. If there is question of the survivability of other landmark trees in this area, it is strongly suggested that mitigation also be planned for those trees in advance.

The proposed buildings are shown to encroach into the existing access easement. Please indicate on the plans what changes are proposed for the access easement. The owner should provide written confirmation from the party benefiting from the easement that any proposed changes are acceptable.

The City is collecting an improvement charge for sanitary and water service connections made to newly constructed sanitary sewer and water mains. In addition, the City will reimburse a developer for the costs associated with this main installation, including design, construction, testing and inspection. For privately constructed mains, the improvement charge will be a per connection charge based on the reimbursement amount.

Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner - Preliminary approval pending.

<u>Parks and Recreation</u> - A park contribution of \$38,279 for the 63 proposed dwelling units will be due before issuance of permits and is reflected in the development agreement. This amount may be reduced if on-site amenities are provided by the petitioner. The park contribution will be used to make improvements to South Maple Park.

<u>Planning</u> – The R4B (Multiple-Family Dwelling) zoning district is consistent with the zoning to the east of this proposed development. The R3 zoning district facilitates townhouse development but its minimum standards of usable open space (65 percent) and lot area per dwelling unit (4,300 square feet) would permit only 47 dwelling units.

Staff supports the R4B zoning district, provided upgrades in the sanitary sewer system in the applicable trunk lines are completed.

Although the <u>West Area Plan</u>, adopted 1995, recommends office, research or light industrial uses for the site, other goals, objectives and actions recommended within the Plan are supportive of the development. The goals include:

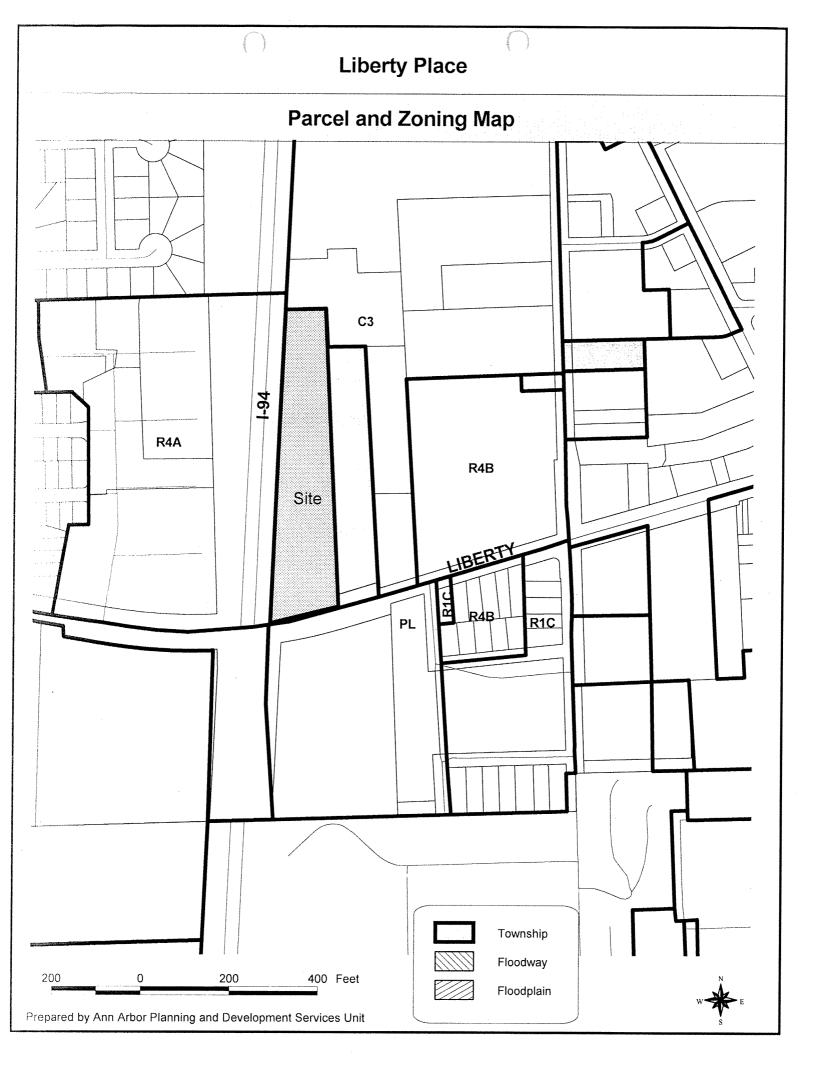
- Provide convenient access from neighborhoods to business areas while protecting residential areas from the disturbing aspects of business;
- Integrate...new multiple-family uses into the fabric of surrounding neighborhoods through sidewalk and bike connections and shared open space;
- Encourage construction of buildings with scale and detailing appropriate to surroundings;
- Decrease vehicular trips by making it easy to walk or bicycle;
- Replace and upgrade sanitary sewers, including replacement of pipe in poor condition and sewer which is under capacity;
- Create residential streets that convey a sense of neighborhood and contribute to neighborhood quality by offering a place to walk, play, visit and park rather than stressing cars and traffic movement;
- Encourage development of alternative site development arrangements that may not be consistent with the accepted norm.

If the Planning Commission concludes that multiple-family residential uses are appropriate for this site, staff suggests that the land use recommendations for this area and surrounding parcels be revisited, in light of changing conditions in the West Area and in the surrounding townships.

Prepared by Christopher Cheng Reviewed by Coy Vaughn and Mark Lloyd jsj/1/11/07 Attachments: Zoning/Parcel Maps Aerial Photo Site Plan Landscape Plan Elevations

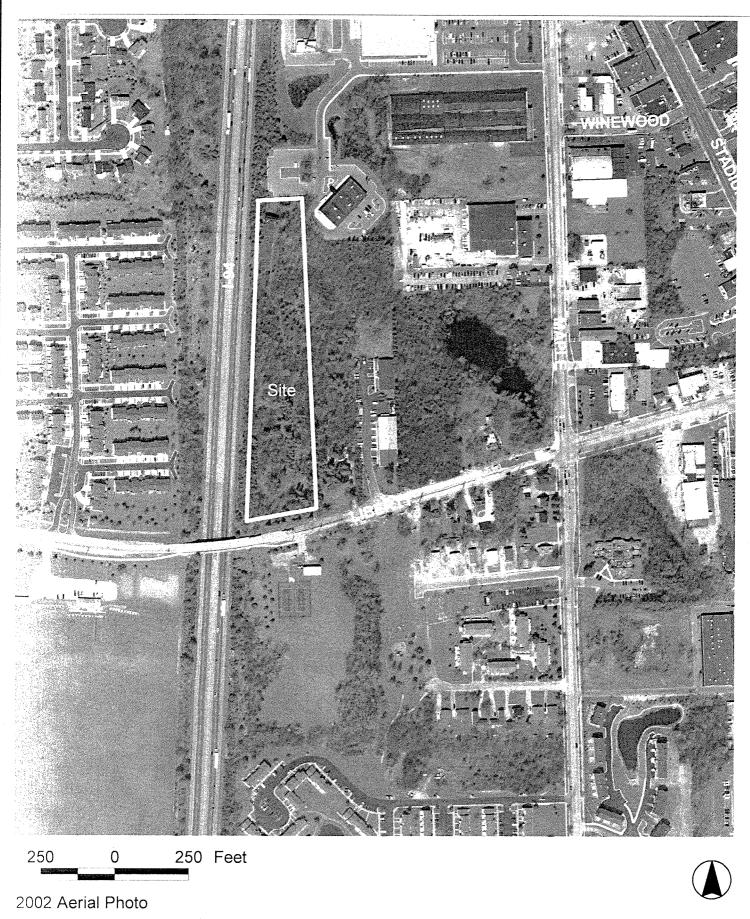
c: Petitioner/Owner: Liberty Pines LLC 550 Forest Avenue, Suite 15 Plymouth, MI 48170

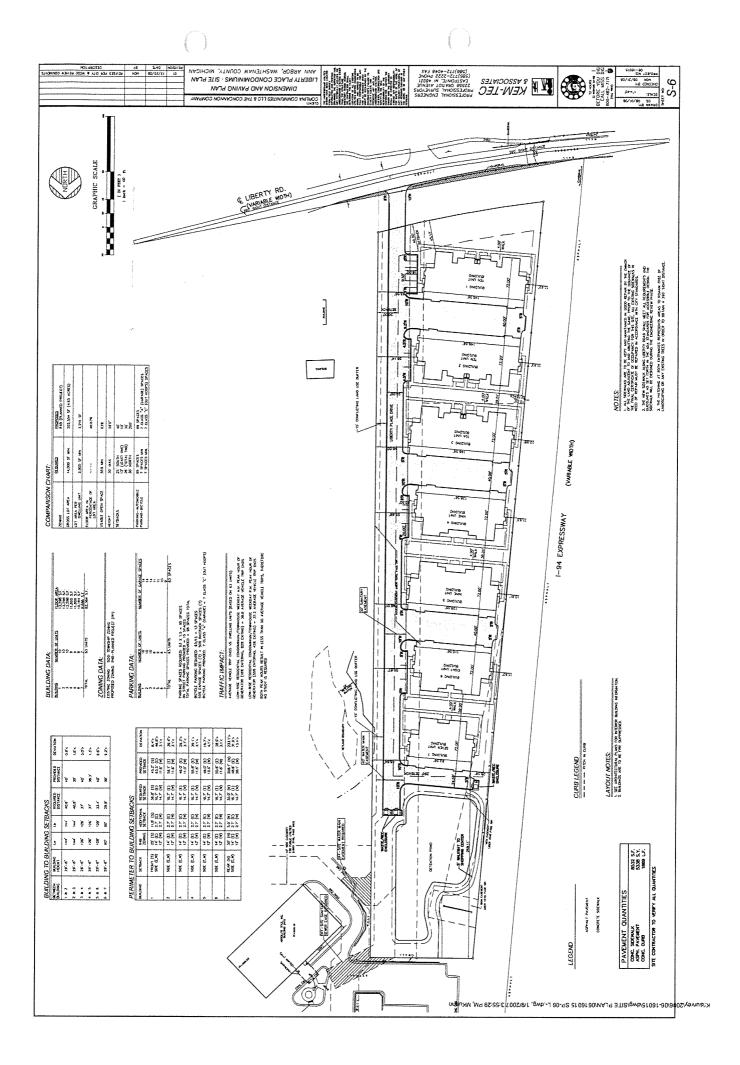
> Systems Planning Parks and Recreation File Nos. 8254H15.2 and .5

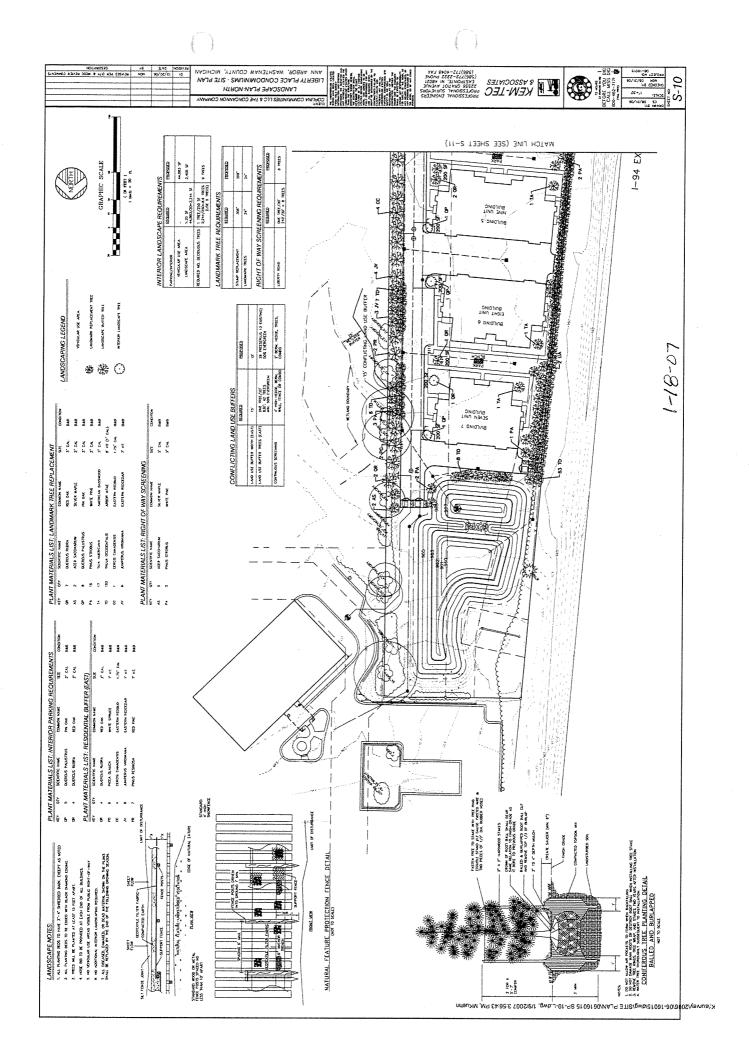


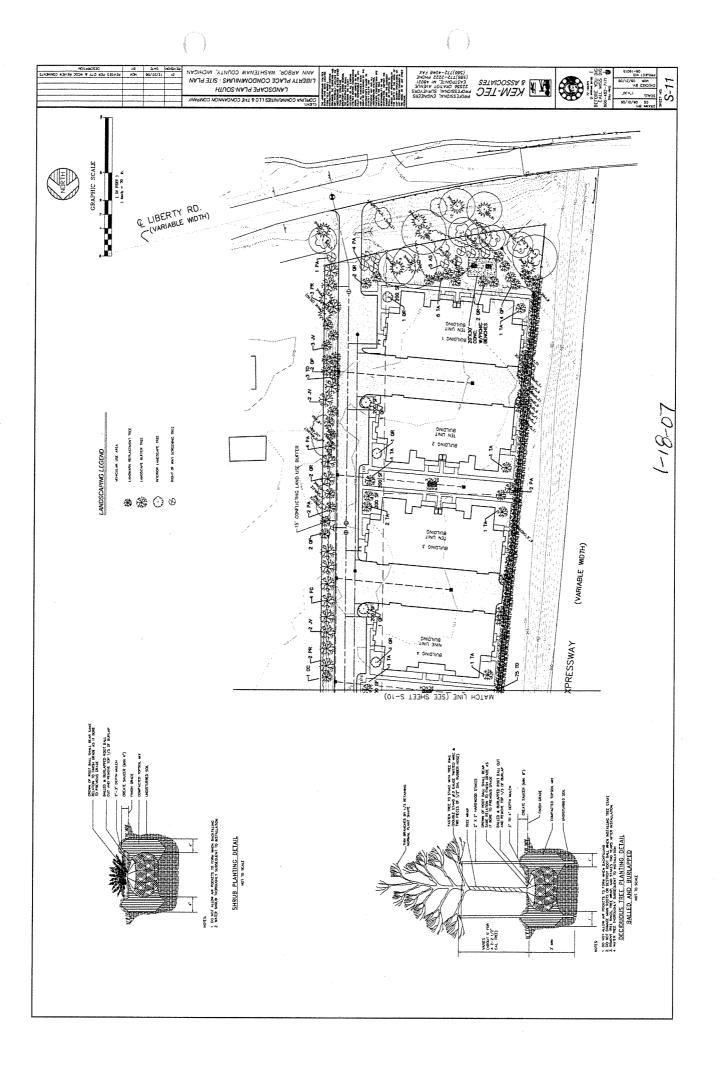
Liberty Place

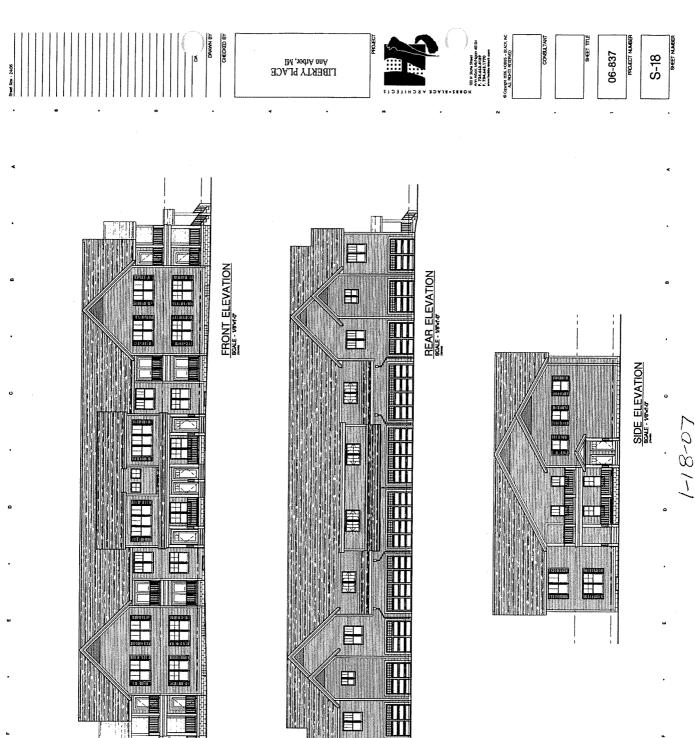
Aerial Photo











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