



# City of Ann Arbor

301 E. Huron St.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
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## Meeting Minutes City Planning Commission

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Thursday, January 19, 2012

7:00 PM

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

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**12-0082**

618 South Main Planned Project Site Plan for City Council Approval - A proposal to demolish two existing structures and construct a 7-story residential building containing 190 apartment units, 121 underground parking spaces and 65 bicycle parking spaces on this 1 acre parcel. Planned project approval is requested to modify the building height limit of 60 feet to allow a portion of the building to be 85 feet from average grade. Staff Recommendation: Approval

**COMMISSION DISCUSSION:**

*Bona said that in response to Mr. Detter's comment, there was a distinct intent that Commission would not discuss design. She said the public conversation is very important for the developers to hear the input and get better. She said that while talking about the design is good, the City Planning Commission doesn't have the ability to deny a project as a result of design.*

*Bona said it was helpful to see drawings of the original design as explanation for the Planned Project. She said the D2 zoning district stops at this site, and the height shadows primarily to the north, so the height does not bother her from that perspective. She asked about the Ashley Street wall, which seems a little scary, making it look like a gated community.*

*Gibb-Randall said they are rethinking the wall. She noted there is a significant grade change from the courtyard to the sidewalk and they were thinking about the wall height from the resident perspective and not from the pedestrian perspective. She said when one is on the south side of the courtyard you are 4 feet higher than the sidewalk and on the north side you are 7 feet higher than the sidewalk. She said the plan will be revised to reduce the wall height, but that the wall will have to be solid for rainwater containment.*

*Bona said in theory, the lowest would be two feet.*

*Gibb-Randall said they are happy to work with staff and the community to rework this issue.*

*Bona said that whatever is above the wall should be kept transparent.*

*Westphal asked for before and after drawings addressing the Design Review Board's input.*

*Siegel said that the drawings are not available this evening, but he described the changes. He explained that pre-Design Review Board meetings, the low 3 story masonry wall turned the corner along Main and Mosley Street and the DRB thought the urban corner should be reinforced to make a potential shoulder on that corner. He said they took that street wall and pulled it up to the full height of the building and while doing that they also took the setback on 4, 5, and 6, and averaged it out along the street wall. He said they added a little tower halfway down, along Main Street, to emphasize the entry point and break up that street wall. He said along the lower bay,*

*they added landscape planting beds and stepback parking bays with residential balconies setback 5 feet, which helps create a very soft and porous street facade.*

*Westphal asked if there was a gap in the South Main facade.*

*Siegel responded, No.*

*Westphal asked for the distance from the entrance to the north part of the building.*

*Siegel answered it is 290 feet long and the tower is in the middle of the whole length along Main Street.*

*Westphal asked if parking spaces will be part of the rent?*

*Siegel said they will be separate.*

*Westphal asked if this had ever been written into a development agreement.*

*Kahan said no.*

*Ketelaar said that they would prefer to do a project without cars but that is unrealistic, but they are looking at Zip Cars and ways to get people out of their cars. He said it's expensive to build underground parking, but wanted to keep the courtyard. He said that as you go down Main Street, the grade goes up 7 feet from south to north, but people will be right next to the street, which enlivens the streetscape experience.*

*Westphal said there is always a struggle between providing more parking, then tenants end up subsidizing parking through rental rates.*

*Westphal said that the D2 zoning requires 66 foot maximum module articulation. In his opinion, there is no articulation and questioned how it passed the requirement.*

*Kahan explained that this is a new D2 zoning requirement. He said that the code isn't very clear on what is a module, noting that it can be created with surface plane changes, materials, and texture. He said when staff first viewed this project, they determined that the columns from the third floor to the street provided this break, since they were using materials to delineate the column at one end of the module and the other column would be the other end of the module and in between would be glazing or windows which would break up the façade. He said he can understand concerns and added that staff could do additional work on clarifying the language as to what module length refers to because staff wants code to be clear on this issue.*

*Westphal said he enjoys industrial aesthetics, but doesn't want to create a precedent through giving this project a pass because of the brickwork and stepback bays of the design.*

*Pratt said that he likes the high percent of transparency, so it doesn't seem so repetitive. He agreed with the need to revisit the code language and clarify. He appreciated knowing what changed in the design and that the process is working well. He said it is great to incorporate infiltration systems on site and said it appears that soil capacity is appropriate. He added that the public benefits are strong in multiple areas for Planned Project justification. He said he still doesn't understand the brick wall, but sees the goal is to respond to public comments. He said it may look goofy from both sides, which is good for Ann Arbor!*

*Woods asked about access from Ashley and if the entrance provided public access*

to the pool area or if there would be a way to keep children out of the courtyard.

Ketelaar said the wall will keep non-residents out. He described the entrance to the community rain gardens.

Woods asked about the two entrances to the parking levels.

Ketelaar said that the entrance on Ashley Street goes down to the below grade parking, with a roof above with gardens on top. The two garages are not connected. The upper level garage is served off of Main Street on the north east corner of the property. He said both provide entrance and exit, with the Main Street exit limited to right turns only.

Woods asked about the traffic study.

Kahan said the petitioner has provided the information, with the only proposed modification being a revised signal timing at Main and Madison streets.

Woods said that if they charge too much for parking, people will start parking on the street. She asked if the neighborhood has parking restrictions?

Kahan said yes, this is a residential permit parking area, with parking restricted on one side of the street.

Woods asked if residents would be able to purchase permits.

Kahan said that staff could look into the issue.

Derezinski noted that there is a potential for a brownfield designation and asked if it was contingent.

Ketelaar said that it is an essential element to their financing. He added that staff has asked them to look at clean up of the Armen Cleaners site located across the street.

Derezinski complemented the development team and staff. He said it is rare on any project to get almost unanimous support, adding that the site is being utilized fully with a creative design.

Ketelaar said that the Old West Side community had specific concerns, but they were reasonable concerns, which allowed them to be responsive. He noted that regarding the articulation the columns are 4-5 feet wide with 16-20 feet between them, which breaks up the massing.

Briggs said that she is glad that this process has worked well. She asked if the sidewalk on Mosley Street is narrow.

Gibb-Randall said it is the standard width of 5 feet, in contrast with Main Street, which is 9 feet.

Briggs wanted to echo concern about the wall on Ashley, to keep the project from being blocked off.

Giannola said that her only concern is guest parking and asked how it would be addressed.

Ketelaar said they have not thought this through.

*Giannola said this will be important to residents and if residents are able to buy permits, that would help. She asked if one of the parking decks could be converted to something else if not used.*

*Ketelaar said if they end up not being used they could lease them to community members.*

*Westphal asked about the LEED requirements.*

*Kahan said that this will be added to the draft development agreement.*

*Westphal said this is the ideal use of the Planned Project, to move height away from the residential area. He commended the petitioner for working diligently on the issue. He said the water is handled more elegantly than just dealing with the 100 year storm and will provide educational value to the residential neighborhood.*

*Pratt emphasized that the parking is only for the premium floor area. He noted that in the A2D2 process, they found that the market had provided 1 space per unit. He pointed out that this project has less than that. He said he thinks they are responding to what they've heard from the community and he appreciates that they are not just following what everyone else is doing.*

*Bona said that she hopes this project cannot get a residential parking permit, since it is a D2 zoned site. She said that the parks contribution should be used to improve the pedestrian experience along Main Street. She would like to see the park's contribution put toward the streetscape and perhaps language to that end should be included in the development agreement. She said she will let staff take care of the specifics.*

*Kahan said staff is evaluating whether this contribution can be applied to streetscape improvements.*

*Bona appreciates that this isn't actually a park, but this may be an opportunity for Council to direct the money to street improvements and along the Allen Creek Greenway.*

*Briggs said she supports Commissioner Bona's recommendations as improving downtown.*

*Woods said she disagrees that these residents should be excluded from the residential permit parking. She said these residents will become a part of the Old West Side neighborhood, as was stated in the letter from the Old West Side neighborhood group.*

*Pratt agrees that the parks contribution should be allocated to whatever makes sense. He said he is uncomfortable recommending one designation over another without feedback from Parks staff. He feels it makes sense to make Main Street more parklike.*

*Mahler shared Woods' concern about northbound Main Street traffic making a left turn onto the parking deck and how this will impact traffic. He asked staff if they could explain the traffic study conclusions, since he felt there would be traffic conflict with left turns made at E. Madison.*

*Kahan said that Planning staff does not review the Traffic Impact Study; this is*

*reviewed by traffic engineer. He said this study looked at all intersections; with a 60-car parking lot on Main and a 60-car lot on Ashley, and that during peak periods they determined that they can accommodate turning movements. He added that all along this corridor there are vehicles turning left and that this additional volume would not substantially impact the traffic.*

*Mahler said this mid-block has not seen this amount of traffic. He stressed that streetscape improvements will increase pedestrians, so he hopes the developer does whatever it takes to protect the pedestrians at the parking lot entrances. He said he hoped this could be addressed before going to City Council.*

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

**Yeas:** 9 - Bonnie Bona, Evan Pratt, Eric A. Mahler, Wendy Woods, Tony Derezinski, Erica Briggs, Kirk Westphal, Diane Giannola, and Eleanore Adenekan

**Nays:** 0