



City of Ann Arbor
Formal Minutes - Final
City Planning Commission

301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
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Tuesday, June 18, 2013

7:00 PM

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

10-a 13-0742

Hampton Inn and Suites Planned Project Site Plan for City Council Approval - A proposal to construct a new four-story, 72,000 square foot hotel on the west side of this 8.8 acres site located at 2910 Jackson Road, which contains an existing hotel. A planned project modification is requested to allow the new hotel building to exceed the maximum setback of 50 feet; the building is proposed to be located on the previously constructed foundation, which is 72.5 feet from the Jackson Road right-of-way. A landscape modification is requested to provide the required bio-retention in one large area south of the building. A total of 337 parking spaces are proposed for the two hotels. Ward 5

Enter Clein at 6:57 p.m.

Thacher presented the staff report.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Andy Wakeland, PE, Giffels Webster, 6303 26 Mile Road, Suite 100, Washington, MI 48094, introduced the rest of the team, including the architect, developer and owners. He noted that this project started prior to 2008, with the installation of the infrastructure and foundation, and when the economy took a downward turn they lost the financing. He said the owners held onto the property and now want to proceed to build according to the plans, explaining that they would like to use the current foundation and underground utilities. He said they have revised the parking orientation and consolidated landscaping into the bioretention area that follows drainage pattern in order to collect as much water as they could. He said they had to meet new standards for parking lot landscaping and have incorporated as many green elements as possible to liven it up and not have it just look like a hotel.

Jeff Ryntz, 430 N. Woodward, Birmingham, MI 48009, architect, displayed a sample board of proposed materials. He said the building will have brick at the base, and EFAS at the top with metal trim topping it off. He said these materials are an upgrade from Hampton Inn standard materials.

Akram Namon, 27725 Greenfield Rd. Southfield, MI, owner of the project, said this presentation shows his firm commitment to this project

and the City of Ann Arbor to proceed with this project. He explained that during the loss of financing in 2009, 2010, and 2011, he used his own finances and personal loans in an attempt to keep the project moving along. He added that Hampton Inn is a high scale brand and near the Hilton Hotel and he felt it will make a nice addition to the area and the City.

Steve Bison, 829 Tappan Street, Ann Arbor, stated that he didn't have anything specific to say about the project, but wanted the Commission to think about the aesthetics and the pedestrian experience when walking past a brick wall versus a parking area. He said it sounds like a good project and the proposed brick looks cool. He commented that developers will not come before the Commission without a guide.

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

Moved by Briere, seconded by Giannola, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Hampton Inn Planned Project Site Plan and Development Agreement; and

that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the proposed modifications to the interior landscape island bio retention requirements of Chapter 62 (Landscape and Screening Ordinance)

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

Giannola asked staff if it is better to have the driveways across from another or offset.

Thacher said staff encourages having them opposite each other in order to lessen conflicting points.

Giannola said her concern is for vehicles cutting across from Weber's Inn.

Thacher said it will be posted as right turn only.

Briere asked about the lack of reference to maintenance of the new sidewalk in the Development agreement and what 'maintenance of the sidewalk' means.

Thacher said she is mostly concerned with snow removal, pointing out that the island is in the MDOT jurisdiction, and staff would like to have it clarified in the agreement who is responsible for what.

Briere asked if the frontage sidewalk connects with other sidewalks.

Thacher said no.

Briere asked if there was an expectation that when the vacant parcel becomes developed that the sidewalks would connect.

Thacher said, yes, if the vacant land is in the City.

Clein said in reviewing the plan it looks like the sidewalk is close to the road and the parking lot won't be a visual impact due to the landscaping and berm. He commented that it makes sense to allow the petitioner to use the foundation that was already started on. He asked if the proposed material on the bottom part of the building is split face block.

Ryntz said yes, and the brick will be standard size. He added that the building would be a wood frame building, and the building code allows for thin brick above 30 feet instead of the EFAS.

Clein asked if the building is fully sprinklered.

Ryntz said yes, and explained that the building plans, along with mechanical, electrical, and plumbing, had been reviewed earlier by the City's Building Department before the project initially began.

Clein asked if every room would have individual air conditioners.

Ryntz said yes.

Clein asked about the placement of mechanical equipment.

Ryntz explained that it would be located on the roof with parapet walls that shield it from view.

Woods asked how the site works, and if the two hotels work together.

Akim said he has been in the hotel business for many years and he believes the two hotels will complement each other perfectly. Clarion is a full service hotel with banquet, restaurant, conference and meeting space while the Hampton will have limited service, intended for transient and corporate business. He explained that the management is together and from a business standpoint it will work perfectly, when looking at the economics of management, sales, and marketing.

Woods asked if they will maintain two separate names.

Akim said yes, this will be Hampton Inn by Hilton and the other is Clarion by Choice Hotels

Woods asked about traffic flow through the site, noting that it looks like traffic can go behind both hotels.

Wakeland showed a drawing with the proposed sidewalk (purple outline) and driveways, which connects to the other hotel site.

Woods asked about bicycle parking and if they plan on providing customers with bicycles.

Wakeland responded the bicycle parking is shown to meet City code and they don't anticipate too many bicycles but they want to be as intermodal as possible.

Rampson said their experience has been that bicycle parking facilities are mostly used by staff.

Woods asked how traffic will be stopped to get pedestrians across the street from the proposed AATA bus stop.

Thacher said MDOT has not mentioned any planning for special signalized crossing, noting that they are willing to allow it, but beyond that, there are currently no proposals.

Woods said this is one of the worst places for pedestrians to cross with people starting to head east, getting onto I-94, and others coming out from the hotel as well as those getting off I-94. She stressed that this site is one of the most challenging sites for pedestrians and while they want to encourage people to use the bus, it will require some thought from all involved, including AATA. She asked if the petitioner had any further thoughts on the matter.

Wakeland said they will be using the boulevard as much as possible which will provide for a safe harbor, adding that this is the best place in the area to cross. He explained that cars are already slowing down to make turn onto east bound I-94 entrance and with the freeway exit on the other side they won't have excessive speeds with the signal and turns.

Woods said it will be important as MDOT starts to look at the issue and possibly consider signage to alert the public to the crossing as well as posted speeds in the vicinity.

Bona asked staff about the standards for a Planned Development listed

in the staff report and about the new sidewalk along Jackson Road.

Thacher clarified that the west sidewalk is on the site's property with it crossing onto MDOT's right-of-way.

Bona commented that it looks like the petitioner put a lot of thought into the vehicular access with the sidewalk as an after-thought. She said with Ann Arbor's bicycle traffic and the increasing retirement community using the bus service, the City can only expect it to increase with time. She stressed the need for the building site to be more pedestrian and bicycle friendly than what is currently proposed. She asked the petitioner to demonstrate how a pedestrian gets into the building from the surrounding access points.

Wakeland demonstrated access on the site plan.

Bona said she cannot vote for a Planned Development since she didn't see a public benefit in how the sidewalks are laid out. She suggested that the design be made for the pedestrians first, with the parking fitting in around the sidewalks. She said she would like for the petitioner to take the matter on and return before the Commission with a site plan showing sidewalks that make sense.

Woods asked about the sidewalk along Jackson Road and how the slopes interact with it.

Thacher reviewed slides of the site showing elevation and topographical information.

Briere noted there are no connecting sidewalks shown on the plan, adding that sidewalks are not decorative, but should be useful and must lead to somewhere. She asked how much conference space is in the Clarion hotel.

Namon said 5,000-6,000 square feet.

Briere asked how many people would be expected to utilize that space.

Namon said 200-300 people.

Briere stated that the petitioner needs to decide if the sidewalks are an amenity for those utilizing the hotels.

Wakeland explained that they proposing to install sidewalk all along the front of the site, because that is where the City would like for them to install it and given the steep slope down to I-94 and the narrow width of

land they don't foresee that strip of land being developed in the future. He suggested that they could add sidewalk from the east end of the site to the Clarion hotel entrance, if it would work with the grades.

Briere asked about proposed snow pile storage shown to be located on the side of the sidewalk.

Wakeland said the sidewalk will be much higher than the curb area so it might be a difficult location.

Mahler asked about proposed lighting on the sidewalks that will make them pedestrian friendly.

Wakeland said most of the lighting will be within the islands, and light poles along the parking lot per lighting standards.

Mahler said he would like to see an alternative proposal of the sidewalk layout with the sidewalks laid out first and the parking secondary, adding that he supports a postponement of the item to a future meeting.

Giannola agreed, adding that she too would like to see an attempt to follow Commission concerns. She said the building seems fine, but if there is a way to improve the walkability of the area, then she would support the petitioner showing an alternative plan.

Clein said he has no objections to having the petitioner show alternative plans, but felt they need to keep in mind the location of the car oriented site, which is between an MDOT business route and the freeway and the site doesn't connect well to other things. He said he didn't want the Commission to get hung up on the idea that everyone will be accessing the site through walking, when in the real world most visitors will most likely be accessing the site with their cars, and the employees will be the ones who use the bus stop. He said it might be helpful to see a wider sidewalk that can be used for more options than strictly pedestrians.

Westphal said while he is not a walkability expert, he couldn't help but notice that there was no acknowledgment of the Webers Hotel across the street, through sidewalk connections or consideration that people might use that destination. He asked if they had considered that connection.

Wakeland said since it is MDOT right-of-way, they would need their permission to stub in a sidewalk. He explained that they went through several iterations to get the bioretention area large enough to meet City code as well as meeting parking requirements, adding that they are willing to continue working with City staff to come up with alternative

ideas.

Westphal said he is concerned about the direction of the sidewalks away from the two-way drive aisles. He asked if the City would require such layouts.

Rampson explained that the City has no standards for parking lot lay-outs except for aisle width and stall size requirements, and that staff looks at the safest and most logical areas for pedestrian crossings with the best visibility taking into consideration interior circulation. She offered staff to work together with System Planning in reviewing the crossing with their guidance or noted that the Commission could postpone taking action until further details had been considered.

Bona said she goes to hotels often through means of driving there and then going for walks or runs around the hotels. She acknowledged that sidewalks are expensive, and therefore often kept to a minimum, but noted that Briere's idea about making a loop around the site through a path that became an amenity for their patrons would be an improvement.

Woods asked if they had considered looping the sidewalk from the top of the ridge and around the pond, making it like a nature walk for their patrons as well as for the public in the area, reiterating that such a path didn't have to be concrete, but could be asphalt when located on their site.

Wakeland explained that the area is quite heavily wooded with steep slopes and a path would have to be wide enough to safely facilitate bike riders as well.

Westphal said he was open to postponement as well as staff involvement if the Commission desired. He reminded the Commission that they have dealt previously with the three frontage issue at Plymouth Road.

Woods said she was not sure to what end a postponement would help, or just delay the project, since any added sidewalk would still need to go to MDOT for review and approval.

Wakeland requested that if the item is postponed, they could come before the Commission at their next meeting.

Bona asked whether the petitioner could get MDOT approval for a crossing to Webers in two weeks.

Thacher said no.

Clein commented that MDOT has approval rights of everything in their ROW.

Bona asked if MDOT has approved the proposed site plan.

Wakeland said, yes, MDOT has said it is approvable, and they won't give formal approval until they apply for permits.

Westphal said he wanted to explore a stub crossing street to Webers but didn't want to hold up the project strictly for that one item.

Moved by Bona, seconded by Briere, to postpone action on this item to the next meeting to allow the petitioner to address concerns about pedestrian access. On a voice vote, the Chair declared the motion carried.

Yeas: 7 - Bonnie Bona, Eric A. Mahler, Wendy Woods, Kirk Westphal, Diane Giannola, Kenneth Clein, and Sabra Briere

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 - Eleanore Adenekan, and Tony Derezinski