



City of Ann Arbor

Formal Minutes - Final

Planning Commission, City

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

Wednesday, November 5, 2014

7:00 PM

City Hall, 301 E. Huron St., 2nd Fl.

- 9-a 14-1576** Ann Arbor Housing Commission - 3451 Platt Road East Planned Project Site Plan - A proposal to construct 32 dwelling units in 4 buildings with planned project modifications to reduce the additional side setback requirement from 28.3 feet to 25.3 feet. All existing buildings on this 3.11 acre site will be demolished. Other improvements proposed as part of this redevelopment include 56 parking spaces, a community building, and storm water management. The site was recently rezoned from R2A and R1C to R4B. (Ward 3) Staff Recommendation: Approval
Alexis DiLeo gave the staff report.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Paul Zsenyuk, 3304 Platt Road, Ann Arbor, said that there are some things missing from the preliminary site plan and he asked that the Commission postpone taking action until those items have been addressed and reviewed by his staff.

Jean Carlberg, 1902 Independence Blvd, urged the Commission to find a site plan that they could approve for this parcel, noting that Ann Arbor is deficient of 3,000 housing units. She said we have a serious need in this community and need affordable housing. She said this proposed site is good because it is large and can be sheltered from the single-family neighborhoods around it and by a creek that runs along side the parcel. She said the Commission can make sure there is enough vegetation along the parcel boundaries which will benefit the people living on the site as well as neighbors. She pointed out that the proposed housing development was created for a variety of income levels which was the perfect mix, and will benefit the community as well as those who are in dire need of affordable housing. She said affordable rental housing is unavailable and is at an all time high price.

Bill Broderich, 3085 Belvedere, said he sympathizes with the homeless but is against this project for a lot of reasons. He said it is an important habitat for animals, and if you make homes for the homeless you will make animals homeless. He said there is a wetland on the site that was not shown by the developer on the plans and consists of a quarter of an acre and is regulated since it is next to the Swift Run. He said you have to get a permit from the Department of Environmental Quality [DEQ] to

build in a wetland and if you mitigate you will need to create a half acre wetland. He said he had to walk a long way to reach City Hall and his conclusion is that Ann Arbor has too many damn people and the best way to prevent more people moving to Ann Arbor is not to build more housing. He asked how many of the people living in subsidized housing units are native to Ann Arbor. He said he suspects very few and that they consist of people coming from all over the United States and other places in the world. He said homelessness is not caused by a lack of housing, but by a lack of money, and if you really care about the homeless then you should raise the minimum wage so people can have money and have housing. He said this project is a symbolic gesture and is stupid since there will be 32 units with 500 people on the waiting list. He said this will make the businessmen richer while the rest of Ann Arbor's taxpayers end up paying for projects like this through their taxes. He said stop building housing in Ann Arbor.

Wendy Cardy-Saxon, 2926 Marshall Street, which is across the road from Platt Road and this proposed development. She said she also works at Avalon Housing in Ann Arbor, and in that role she has recognized the great challenge of finding units and sites for more affordable units in Ann Arbor. She said there was a recent community discussion calling out the need for affordable housing and housing for the homeless and this project will create more visible housing since they will be new construction along with the community center on site which will be a great service to the community. She offered her support to the project.

Noting no speakers, the Vice Chair closed the public hearing, unless the Commission postpones the item. He stated that if the item is postponed, the public hearing will be continued and individuals who have not previously addressed the Commission may speak at the continued public hearing. Individuals who have addressed the Commission previously during the public hearing may speak again during the continued public hearing if the Chair determines additional public feedback is necessary or if the petition has materially changed from that presented this evening.

Moved by Adenekan, seconded by Westphal, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Ann Arbor Housing Commission Platt Road East Planned Project Site Plan, subject to review and approval from the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner prior to City Council action and subject to receiving a floodplain permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality prior to issuance of building permits.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

Bona asked public speaker Paul Zsenyuk for specifics why he considered the plans to be preliminary.

Zsenyuk said on page 35 of the staff report, he couldn't find any fire hydrants on the site plan or bolsters along the walking path that went between two buildings. He said if this building goes up in fire, his house is at risk. He also said that the traffic backs up on Platt Road from 9 am to 6 pm.

Bona asked staff if there were other plans associated with the site plan.

DiLeo said there are several other pages available for viewing through the 'etrakit' project software which include details on the fire hydrants and utility layout for the site.

Briere asked if floodplain permit from the Department of Environmental Quality as mentioned in the motion would address the wetland issue.

DiLeo said no, since to her knowledge, neither the petitioner, not City staff had found a wetland on this site.

Westphal asked if the DEQ could as part of their review for the floodplain permit, check their records to verify that there is no wetland on this site.

DiLeo said she would pass along the comments and suggestions made to the City's Floodplain coordinator, Jerry Hancock.

Westphal asked about the closest AATA bus stop on Platt Road.

Steve Hart, Midwestern Consulting, clarified that there was a wetland shown on their natural features plan and there were no impacts to the wetland which is located in the southern quadrant.

DiLeo said she believed there were a bus stop close by Redbud Nature Area and the entrance to Scarlett School.

Westphal commented that the zoning allows for 50 percent more housing units on this parcel, as well as less parking.

Jennifer Hall, Executive Director Ann Arbor Housing Commission, said if they could build more affordable units they would, but given the floodplain it restricts the building footprint. She said the reason for additional parking provided on site is because there is no on-street parking available and given the community center on site they want to be sure there is ample parking so it won't spill into the neighborhood.

Westphal asked about the bicycle parking.

Hall said it is unlikely that families with teens would have bicycles.

Clein asked about the stormwater basin.

Hart said due to the presence of the floodplain it is a detention system and is designed for a larger capacity taking into account that the floodplain could be flooded at the same time. He said the water would be held and released within a 24-48 hour period.

Clein asked what the depth of the basin would be.

Hart said he believed from the high water mark level it would be 3-4 feet deep with gently sloping sides with a 5:1 ratio.

Clein asked if the depth posed any danger for small children to fall in.

Hart said not more than at other sites and that the depth did not require a fence to be installed.

Clein asked about the sidewalk and the use of grass pavers.

Hart explained that there was a sidewalk with grass pavers extension on either side of the sidewalk which will allow for emergency vehicles to access the site. He said it will be clearly marked as a fire access route to prevent any parking or blocking of the specified area.

Briere commented there were 3 bus stops along Platt Road within walking distance to this site.

Briere asked about the turn-around requirement and if the brick paver extensions helped meet the requirement of the Fire Department.

Hart said the turn-around access is for any dead-end length in excess of 150 feet. He said with the connection between them it essentially shortens the dead-end length so the turn-around is not required. He said if they chose to, they could use the access path as a place to turn-around or to drive through the site.

Briere asked by adding more units in the center, which pushed the configuration closer to the stream, what does it do with the floodway, given the previous tendencies with flooding.

Hart said the large impact previously was with the southern building and parking lot, so they shrank the southern building and parking lot, moving

units to the northern portion of the site to lessen the impact of the floodplain.

Bona asked about the Housing Commission's plan for addressing the housing shortage and who would be living in the newly constructed affordable low-income units.

Hall explained that the income limit is 60% of median; so a household of 1 would be in the range from \$0 to the high \$ 30,000 or \$ 40,000 incomes, and a family of 4 would be in the range of \$ 50,000 - \$ 55,000 incomes. She said they have 25% of the units set aside for homeless households. She further explained that they have a waitlist and units are filled based on that waitlist so they don't know what the income level mix will be except by using past data and looking at available units. She said for the homeless they will have on-site service through Avalon Housing and CSTS and since they will have on-site office space they can have an on-site property manager, which they currently don't have. She said they will have more eyes on the site through service providers as well. She explained that they have to replace the current bedroom units, so the new site plan will have eight 1-bedroom, twelve 2-bedroom, six 3-bedroom, two 4-bedroom, and four 5-bedroom units.

Bona asked about the largest anticipated family size for these units.

Hall said 10 people would be the maximum allowed, since there cannot be more than two persons per bedroom.

Bona asked what the typical family size would be.

Hall said they would typically have from 7 to 10 persons, with the Muslim families usually having more extended family members together. She said one would not see 1 or 2 persons in a 5-bedroom unit, and as family sizes change, The Housing Commission has the ability to move families into the appropriate sized units.

Bona asked about the Housing First program and how the Housing Commission views it.

Hall said in the world of affordable housing, it used to be that they built shelters for the homeless and worked with the individuals on their needs that kept them from staying housed and then look for housing for them. She said now, after much research, the best practice throughout Washtenaw County and across the country, when someone is homeless is to go immediately into housing, to stabilize their housing situation. She said the homelessness, oftentimes has secondary issues for the individuals, which impact their health, their ability to get employment, so

it becomes important to them to have a stable place to live.

Bona commented on the Planned project modification, that she felt the added setback and open space in excess of the minimum requirement for the zoning district covered the requirement, as well as the preservation of natural features, which would be the floodplain.

Bona asked about the solar ready design of the project. She said she would like that to someday soon to be a site plan requirement.

John Mouat, Architect for the project explained that the project is based on Enterprise Green, which is a little like LEED, and is a point system. He said the building will be built with flexibility in mind, and in making it solar ready the building orientation and roofs will be constructed so it can be added at a future time as well as the addition of solar collectors. He said the trees are well positioned for maximum benefit for the solar exposure.

Bona said regarding the need for affordable housing in Ann Arbor, there are a lot of people working to support what we all do, but they can't afford to live here, and she felt that needs to be a part of a larger discussion to be held.

Briere said most people's greatest fear is for perennial homeless people's housing to be built next door to them, but this isn't that housing unit. She said with this particular housing unit with the mix of incomes is geared to the people that work here but cannot afford to live here. She said the Housing Commission will work with the homeless individuals to give them assistance through various service providers.

Hall said the Housing Commission acts as a landlord but is more sympathetic to the individual's needs than what they would face if dealing with the regular market rate housing.

She asked Hall how long the site had been used for affordable housing.

Hall said since 1969.

She said with this site having been used for affordable housing for 45 years it won't be like putting affordable housing in a new neighborhood. She commented that there is a great need for affordable housing or workforce housing noting that there is little the City can do to promote workforce housing, so she felt the addition of any number of affordable housing units would make a difference in the City. She said she attended the meeting on affordable housing several weeks ago and she was struck by how many units are needed to meet the housing need of

the 60% level. She asked how many units are currently on the site.

Hall said there are 6 units that will be demolished and replaced with 32 units.

Adenekan asked about the number of people allowed in a 5-bedroom unit.

Hall said the least allowed in a 5-bedroom would be 7 individuals.

Adenekan asked about the 4-bedroom units.

Hall said there would be a maximum of 8 individuals and minimum of 5 individuals.

Adenekan said she felt it was excellent that there would be on-site management as well as the community center. She asked about the location of the community center.

Hall said they positioned the community center near the road so there would be good line of sight in all directions and one can see what is going on in vacant space as well as wanting to keep the houses setback as far as possible from the road given the restrictions of the site.

Mouat added that the 3, 4, and 5-bedroom units are grouped together to kids can walk to the center and not have to cross parking lots.

Clein said he felt the project was fairly well planned given the challenging site of floodplain issues, traffic, and density issues. He said he felt they had done a good job of keeping it in scale with the 2-story neighborhood. He said he lives in the Water Hill neighborhood where there is a fair share of affordable housing and it has not affected the property values and is well integrated into the neighborhood and he saw this project as something that will also be nicely integrated into the neighborhood.

Mills asked about listed bicycle parking requirement in the comparison chart, noting it looked like a downgrade.

DiLeo explained the requirement and said she would look into it and if it was a downgrade it would be upgraded before the project moved on to Council.

Clein asked about the difference between Class A and Class B bicycle parking.

DiLeo explained that Class C is intended for short term parking, usually associated with commercial space, like the hoops outside. She said Class B is medium range, usually associated with offices and would be outside but covered spaces. She said Class A is the highest level and most protected, and is fully enclosed and is usually associated with residential uses, and can be in a garage or in a large style boxes.

Hall added that there were discussions with City staff on the practicality of the needed bicycle parking for this site, noting that the Housing Commission had explained that if required, Class A would not be used and would be wasted space as well as wasted funds, and they had suggested increasing the number of lower class parking spaces to make up the difference. She said if required the Housing Commission would install what was required and agreed upon by the City.

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

Yeas: 6 - Bonnie Bona, Kirk Westphal, Eleanore Adenekan, Kenneth Clein, Sabra Briere, and Sarah Mills

Nays: 0

Absent: 3 - Wendy Woods, Jeremy Peters, and Sofia Franciscus