



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

301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
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Wednesday, May 6, 2015

7:00 PM Arcom City Hall, 301 E Huron St, Second Floor, City Council chambers

- 9-b 15-0540** Staybridge Suites and Retail Planned Project Site Plan, Rezoning and Landscape Modification - A request to rezone this 3.56-acre parcel, located at 3850 Research Park Drive, from RE (Research District) to C2B (Business Service District) to redevelop for hotel and retail uses, and a proposal to demolish an existing building and construct a two-story, 9,120-square foot retail building and four-story, 90,198-square foot extended stay hotel with 134 rooms. Access to the site will be provided through a driveway on Research Park Drive. A planned project modification is requested to reduce the front setback along South State Street. A Landscape Modification is required because the hedge/berm/wall Right-of-Way screening requirement (Chapter 62, 5:602(1)(c)) along S. State Street cannot be met because it will damage the existing landmark trees. (Ward 4) Staff Recommendation: Approval
Chris Cheng presented the staff report.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Andy Andre, P.E., Bud Design & Engineering Services, Inc, 10775 S. Saginaw Street, Suite B, Grand Blanc, representative for the petitioner, said since they came before the Commission the last time, they have gone back to address the four landmark trees and been able to pull back the location of pavement, adjusting their site to be outside of the critical root zones. He said they worked closely with the City's Natural Resource staff. He said they have been able to make minor changes, and have addressed outstanding comments. He said they feel confident that they have met the intent of the South State Street Corridor Plan, the Master Plan, including the rezoning request and the planned project.

Noting no further speakers, the Chair closed the public hearing, unless the item is postponed.

Moved by Franciscus, seconded by Mills, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve Staybridge Suites & Retail rezoning from RE (Research District) to C2B (Business Service District), and

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Staybridge Suites & Retail Planned Project Site Plan; and

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the proposed landscape modifications to the Staybridge Suites & Retail site in order to waive the required right-of-way screening outside the critical root zones of landmark trees in accordance with Chapter 62 (Landscape and Screening Ordinance), Section 5:608 (1)(c).

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

Bona asked about the planned project and the half foot encroachment at the corner.

Cheng said the building was was half a foot from the front property line, while the minimum requirement is 10 feet.

Bona asked if landscape modification is part of the planned project.

Cheng said no.

Bona said she was generally okay with the encroachment. She asked about statements made by the applicant in the application that one justification is increased usable open space. She said she didn't believe that this type of project required open space.

Cheng said that was correct.

Bona asked the petitioner about the building orientation and in trying to push it closer to the setback.

Andre said in looking at the large right-of-way that they have in this area, they worked with staff in trying to bring the buildings closer to the roadways, giving it more of a pedestrian feel, or even the possibility of vacating the right-of-way in order to put the buildings more forward. He said their intent was to give the building more of a storefront feel along State Street and give it more of walkability. He said they wanted the area to be a focal point even though it is set further off the road.

Bona said the pathway gives an illusion that they are setback further.

Andre said if they move the building further to the east, they are reducing the usable area and not getting the density that is feasible for this site.

Bona referred to the Comparison Chart, noting that the proposed 64% Floor Area Ratio [FAR] is a much greater improvement over the 11% FAR that is existing. She asked why they didn't go to the allowable 200% FAR given the 50 plus year life span on buildings. She said she also wanted to hear about the 2-story proposed retail, adding that the idea was a push in the right direction.

Andre said that the market study came back at the need for about 130-room level, and since market supports a certain count, that's where they want to go. He said they could have gone with a larger impact, from the density perspective, but the market wouldn't support it. He said with the retail, it serves well for the use, at this location. He said he is not sure that all sites can max out the allowable density, adding that in the downtown it is different with different buildings and uses. He said they feel this best suits this type of development and that they are maxed out from a market perspective.

Bona asked about the 2-story retail spaces.

Andre said the second floor allows them to increase the density, and that there is probably a market for mixed use retail office. He said they have looked at possibly a yoga studio. He said a second floor retail in a non-downtown is unique but that the petitioner recognized the need to diversify the property as well as increasing density in the area. He said they do not have a particular tenant now, but that there are a lot of opportunities.

Bona said she believed the two stories would give the building more of a presence. She said as far as the planned project is concerned, she felt it looks the way it's supposed to be to her, regardless of whether we accept the petitioner statement or the staff's explanation that it improves pedestrian orientation. She said she felt we would be getting a better project than if we were to hold them to the setback, so she is supportive of that.

Briere asked about typical life-cycles of building and that in her mind these were not what old buildings looked like. She asked how old Research Park was and in particular how old the building was that would be replaced.

Cheng said he believed it was constructed in the 1970's.

Cheng responded to the density questions, that with every hotel room they would need to add a parking space and without below grade parking they are currently pretty filled up. He also pointed out that if they added more density they would need to begin going up in height, in order to give them more parking spaces, which would require them to ask for additional allowances.

Clein asked how long the current building has been vacant.

Andre said it has had such a low occupancy, that he believes it had the appearance of being vacant, but he believed it has been vacant for several years.

Clein said he believes the proposed plan does a lot of good things for the site and he had no issues with the relief they are asking for on the setback. He asked about the proposed trash enclosure location next to the retail building and the street. He asked about proposed screening.

Andre said they had not wanted to include the dumpster location in the shown location, and had proposed alternate locations, which even included enlarging the one for the hotel. He said the City's Solid Waste Department believed that to be a little too far for retail use, so the current plan incorporates a second enclosure in proximity to the retail use which includes screening; a 6 foot block wall that would match the building, surrounded by landscape material calling for shrubs.

Clein asked if there had been discussion about putting it on the northern side of the building.

Andre responded that circulation became an issue.

Clein asked if the circulation issue was from Solid Waste's perspective or their decision.

Andre said it was their decision on the location.

Clein asked about the proposed art feature.

Andre said they are thinking they will have an outdoor seating feature, encouraging connection to Research Park; the area would be a gathering space where people could come together. He said with the gateway

location, it is an opportunity to do something unique, which would be an art feature, having a focal point to the development that would go along with the theme of the development of this area.

Clein asked the possibility of a restaurant use.

Andre said it is possible, but they are not sure yet.

Clein said the location of the dumpster concerns him, if a restaurant use would move in, given its proximity to public seating.

Clein said the noted construction cost of \$ 6 million represents \$60 a square foot; further questioning the listed cost.

Andre said it would be wood construction, panelized, and pro-forma work. He said given that the petitioner has completed other similar projects the costs are well-understood and correct.

Clein said he's amazed. He asked about the hotel exterior materials.

Andre said it is a mix of stone, EIFS, and brick.

Clein said one of the participants listed on the Citizen Participation Report is Bob Ufer.

Andre said he is the property owner.

Mills asked about the landscape modification. She said she thinks it's great to keep the existing trees and combine them with the new trees. She asked if the root balls for these trees overlap or if there was a gap.

Cheng reviewed the landscape plan with the Commission, noting that there are some trees in there but it is not a continuous hedge berm wall, which is part of the required right-of-way landscaping. He said it is complete where it is required to screen from the parking lot, except where those 4 landmark trees are located. He said the City's Natural Features Coordinator supports the Landscape Modification request.

Andre said they had originally planned for some planting in that area, but the City's Natural Feature's Department thought it would cause more disturbance than benefit given the large root zones. He said they agree that it would be more appropriate to not have any planting than to cause damage.

Mills said she agreed that Bona and Clein that bringing the building up, almost to the property line makes it look like it's supposed to be.

Rampson clarified the third motion wording.

Woods said "that Mayor and City Council".

Woods asked about bicycles and if Staybridge has any plans to make bicycles available to their guests. She said there had previous discussion that sometime people may bring their own bicycles to hotels.

Andre said since an extended stay hotel lends itself to more activity they will have bicycle parking available as well as having bikes available for customers.

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

Yeas: 7 - Wendy Woods, Eleanore Adenekan, Kenneth Clein, Sabra Briere, Sofia Franciscus, Sarah Mills, and Bonnie Bona

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 - Jeremy Peters, and Alex Milshteyn