



City of Ann Arbor
Formal Minutes
Planning Commission, City

301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
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Tuesday, August 18, 2015

7:00 PM

Larcom City Hall, 301 E Huron St,
Second floor, City Council Chambers

9-a 15-1034

Davis Row Site Plan for City Council Approval - A proposal to demolish single-family dwellings at 303 and 307 West Davis, combine the two R4C-zoned parcels and construct a four-unit residential condominium building on the 0.23-acre site. Two tandem parking spaces will be provided for each unit in garages at grade level. The two existing driveways are proposed to be shifted to access the garage spaces. A new public sidewalk is proposed along the site frontage. (Ward 5)

Recommendation: Approval

Matthew Kowalski presented the staff report.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Sivanna Heller, 128 W. Hoover, Ann Arbor, said much of what she has to say is in written correspondence in the packet. She noted that there is a city report that recommends that the zoning of the neighborhood be changed, and she hopes this will happen. She said this project is built to the maximum allowed, and it is out of scale with the rest of the neighborhood. She noted that most of the houses are 1,100 - 1,200 square feet. She said increasing density is desirable, but not pushing development to the max.

Dan Williams, 2493 Oak Valley Drive, Ann Arbor, petitioner, said he was available to answer questions, as was the project architect and engineer.

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

Moved by Franciscus, seconded by Milshteyn, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Davis Row Site Plan, subject to variances for tandem parking and curb cut alignment being granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals and subject to the combination of parcels before issuance of building permits.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

Bona noted that Mr. Williams has brought forward other projects in R4C zoning districts. She asked him whether the impacts of the R4C requirements, including the minimum lot size of 8,500 square feet, had forced him to combine the lots to meet code and whether he would have been able to develop the project as 2 two-unit buildings.

Williams said yes and no, adding there are a lot of conflicting zoning codes, for instance the requirement for a conflicting land use buffer. He suggested that moving forward it would be helpful to clear up these contradictions. He noted that different departments have different standards.

Bona said one of the major objections to the R4C requirements is that, by requiring a minimum of 4 units on a site, the buildings become out of scale with the neighborhood. She noted if the required minimum lot size was reduced, you could do two units. She asked if the petitioner could have gotten two such, smaller units on one site.

Williams reiterated that there are a lot of contradictions in the code and this makes it difficult with smaller projects. He said on a high rise building there are smaller parking requirements.

Bona asked if he would provide parking if he didn't have to.

Williams said yes, because it pulls parking off the street. He said that parking underneath the building keeps headlights off the neighbors' property to the rear, and tandem parking also saves space. He noted that many places in the neighborhood have only one-car garages.

Bona asked about the size of units and number of bedrooms.

Williams said each unit is about 2000 square feet with 2 bedrooms and a den and optional attic space.

Bona noted that this size unit is below the average for an American house.

Williams said this may be bigger than some houses in the neighborhood, but down the street there is a single-family house with a large addition and there are apartment buildings across the street. He said there is a blend of housing stock in the neighborhood.

Bona said she appreciates the neighbor's concern, but this is how the

district is zoned. She noted this building is not a box, like the other buildings produced by the R4C zoning.

Briere noted there was concern about the amount of greenery between the wall and the adjacent property. She asked the petitioner to explain the plan for the retaining wall and whether there was an opportunity to improve the foliage in this area.

William said he has offered to plant on the neighbors' property, similar to what he did on the 544 Detroit Street property. He said he has been talking to property owners to the south.

Briere commended the architect's efforts to disguise the garage as much as possible. She said that the big block buildings Commissioner Bona mentioned have turned backyards into parking lots. She asked the petitioner how much private space would be available for each unit.

Williams said all units will have a front porch, and active open space decks in the rear. He said there are many options for materials.

Briere asked if decisions about materials will be made by each property owner.

Williams said this would be determined in the master deed.

Franciscus asked about the width of the garage.

Williams said the garages are 10 feet for each side.

Franciscus asked about the 96 gallon notation on the plan.

Williams said this indicates where trash and recycling will be stored.

Mills asked about the comparison chart and whether it indicates a setback variance will be required.

Kowalski clarified the asterisk notations at the bottom on the chart and said that no rear setback variance is needed.

Mills asked about the R4C recommendations related to maximum lot size and rezoning.

Kowalski said there were recommendations from the R4C study that

echoed the earlier Central Area Plan recommendation to rezone this area from R4C to R2A. He said this is not currently an active proposal.

Milshteyn asked if one footing drain disconnect would be needed.

Kowalski said yes.

Milshteyn asked if the houses' footing drains are currently connected.

Williams said City staff made a site visit to determine this.

Bona noted there was an earlier reference to "active open space" and provided some background on the requirement, which was added to the code several years ago.

Bona asked about whether the rezoning recommendation would be implemented site by site.

Kowalski said it would not typically be done that way. He said the rezoning would cover the recommended area, similar to the approach taken a number of years ago along Golden Avenue.

Bona wanted to make clear that now that the Commission have a petition before them, it is not the time to rezone. She said to rezone the entire neighborhood takes more than just a resolution from the Commission. She said if the R4C requirements get redefined, they might end up being more appropriate for the neighborhood.

Franciscus said she was impressed with the floor plan and functionality of the units. She noted that many houses in Ann Arbor are small and don't have a good internal flow.

Woods said she remembered a discussion at the earlier meeting about rain gardens and asked if these are still part of the plan.

Kathy Keineth, project engineer, said that they would be creating swales on both sides of the property, which would drain to inlets to the infiltration system in the front.

On a roll call, the vote was as follows with the Chair declaring the motion carried. Approved 6-0

Yeas: 6 - Wendy Woods, Sabra Briere, Sofia Franciscus, Sarah Mills, Bonnie Bona, and Alex Milshteyn

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 - Kenneth Clein, and Jeremy Peters

Briere asked if the petition would come back to the Commission if the Zoning Board of Appeals chooses not to approve the variances requested.

Kowalski said the plan would have to be redesigned and return to the Planning Commission for review.