PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of November 20, 2018

SUBJECT: ITC Phoenix Utility Substation Planned Project Site Plan (2001 Dhu Varren Road) Project No. SP18-030

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION
The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the ITC Phoenix Utility Substation Planned Project Site Plan to allow a 100 foot tall monopole, a 70 foot tall lightning mast, and a 65 foot tall H frame structure. Consistent with the Planned Project standards for approval, the petitioner is providing setbacks in excess of what code requires.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **approval** of the planned project site plan because it complies with all applicable, local, state, and federal ordinances, standards and regulations; it will not cause a public or private nuisance; and it will not have a detrimental effect on public health, safety or welfare.

Staff further recommends **approval** of the planned project modifications because the project is consistent with the standards of approval for planned project in the Unified Development Code, Section 5.30.1.C.

LOCATION

This site is located on the north side of Dhu Varren Road, east of Pontiac Trail in the Traver Creek watershed.

DESCRIPTION OF PETITION

The site is currently used as a DTE substation on a 12.87 acre site. ITC Holdings Corporation, an electric transmission line company, would like to increase reliability of a transmission line between the “Phoenix” substation at 2001 Dhu Varren and the “Apex” substation located at the intersection of Huron Parkway and Hubbard Road by constructing two new underground transmission lines. The modifications will include the addition of two new line positions at the Phoenix substation to accommodate lines from the “Apex” substation. ITC intends to construct a new, 100 foot tall monopole near the southwest corner of the site and expand the footprint of the existing substation at the southwest corner. The monopole will be located approximately 135 feet from the Dhu Varren right-of-way. A new four foot tall retaining wall will be constructed to accommodate the expansion of the substation along the south edge of the substation. The topography of the site falls from the substation to Dhu Varren Road so the retaining wall is necessary to create a flat surface for the substation expansion. Access will remain on the south side of the site via an existing private drive that connects to Dhu Varren Road. A sidewalk is proposed to be constructed along the Dhu Varren Road frontage. The Petitioner has agreed to provide 17 additional feet of frontage along Dhu Varren Road as right-of-way.

The petitioner is proposing to remove a woodland on the Southwest corner of the site, containing 112 trees, consisting primarily of the invasive species Norway Maple and Black Locust. Additionally, the petitioner is proposing to remove 10 other trees from the Southern edge of the existing station site, including 2 landmark trees. To mitigate for these removals, the petitioner is proposing to plant 164 native species of trees entirely on-site, exceeding the city's minimum requirements. Three other landmark trees will remain on site undisturbed. A total of 304 caliper inches of trees is required to mitigate the loss of woodland and landmark trees. A total of 326 caliper inches will be provided. The petitioner is proposing to provide a temporary timber bridge over Traver Creek to provide access for construction equipment and has received a Drain Use Permit from Washtenaw County. The City does not require a wetland use permit for temporary encroachment into the wetland.

Extensive landscaping is proposed to be installed along the south and east side of the site to improve the screening of the substation. The landscaping proposed on the east side of the site includes a required conflicting land use buffer that will buffer the Foxfire neighborhood to the east. Foxfire West Park is a densely wooded City Park located immediately north of the substation and provides excellent screening.

Proposed landscaping along the south side of the site will help to mitigate visual impacts over time. The site currently includes two primary structures that are 50 feet tall. The petitioner is proposing setbacks in excess of required setbacks for all four property lines to meet one of the standards for approval of the planned project site plan.

A planned project site plan modification is proposed to address the height of the proposed monopole and substation equipment. The maximum height in the M1 zoning district is 35 feet. The petitioner is proposing one 100 foot tall monopole, one 70 foot tall lightning mast, and one 65 foot tall H frame structure (55 feet in height plus two 15 foot tall lightning rods). The site currently includes lightning masts that are 50 feet tall.

A stormwater system is being proposed to mitigate a 100 year storm. Stormwater that does not infiltrate through the existing gravel pad, will migrate to the new retaining wall at the southwest corner of the substation. All runoff will filter down the back of the wall through crushed gravel. Excess runoff that does not infiltrate behind the retaining wall will discharge through weep holes in the retaining wall that are spaced 20 feet apart. The storm water that flows through the weep holes will be captured by an infiltration trench below the retaining wall. The infiltration trench has capacity to infiltrate a 100 year, six hour storm.

The petitioner hosted a Citizen Participation meeting on July 24, 2018. Three citizens attended.

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

	LAND USE	ZONING
NORTH	Park and Single Family Neighborhood	PL (Public Land) and R1C (Single Family Dwelling)
EAST	Single Family Residential	R1C
SOUTH	Single Family	R4A (Multiple Family Dwelling)
WEST	Food Gatherers	PUD (Food Gatherers)

COMPARISION CHART

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
Zoning	M1	M1	M1
Gross Lot Area	560,791 sq ft	560,791 sq ft	13,000 MIN
Height	50 ft	100 feet*	35 ft MAX
Front Setback (south)	129 ft (to fence)	109 ft (to retaining wall)	15 ft MIN
Rear Setback (north)	133 ft	133 ft	None
Side (west) Side (east)	180 ft 87 ft	120 ft 87 ft	None
Parking	None	None	None

*requires planned project approval

HISTORY

The site has been used as a DTE substation since 1968.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan recommends bicycle lanes in Dhu Varren Road and a sidewalk of less than 8 feet in width.

PLANNED PROJECT MODIFICATION

The petitioner is requesting planned project approval to allow one 100 foot tall monopole, one 70 foot tall H frame structure, and one 65 foot tall H frame structure. (Petitioner statements are in plain type)

Modification Request

The petitioner is requesting permission to construct a 100 foot tall monopole which exceeds the height limitation of the M1 zoning district by 65 feet.

Based upon compliance with the following standards, the Planning Commission may recommend approval, and City Council may approve modifications of the area, height and placement regulations of the Zoning Chapter in the form of a planned project site plan:

1. **The lot(s) included in the planned project must meet the minimum gross lot size requirement of the zoning district in which they are located.**

   N/A

The project meets the minimum gross lot size of the M1 zoning district

2. The proposed modifications of zoning requirements must provide one or more of the following:

a) Usable open space in excess of the minimum requirement for the zoning district.

NA

b) Building or parking setback(s) in excess of the minimum requirement for the zoning district.

The setbacks as shown exceed the minimum requirements for the M1 zoning district

The required minimum setback along Dhu Varren Road is 15 feet. The proposed setback is 109 feet, which will be landscaped to soften the visual impact of the substation. All other proposed setbacks exceed the required setbacks.

c) Preservation of natural features that exceeds ordinance requirements, especially for those existing features prioritized in the land development regulations as being of highest and mid-level concern.

The project's on-site stormwater detention area will reduce stormwater run-off.

d) Preservation of historical or architectural features.

NA

e) Solar orientation or energy conserving design.

NA

f) An arrangement of buildings which provides a public benefit, such as transit access, pedestrian orientation, or a reduced need for infrastructure or impervious surface.

NA

g) Affordable housing for lower income households.

N/A

h) Permanent open spaces of 20 percent or more in any low-density residential district.

N/A

3. **The planned project shall be designed in such a manner that traffic to and from the site will not be hazardous to adjacent properties.**

   No regular traffic is expected to be generated from the site.

4. **The proposed modifications shall be consistent with the proper development and use of adjacent land and buildings.**

   The proposed modifications are consistent with the proper development and use of adjacent land and buildings.

5. **Required off-street parking and landscaping must be provided in accordance with the provisions of Chapters 59 and 62.**

   No off street parking is proposed.

6. **The standards of density, allowable floor area and required usable open space for the zoning district(s) in which the project is located must be met.**

   NA

7. **There shall be no uses within the proposed project which are not permitted uses in the zoning district(s) in which the proposed project is to be located.**

   The proposed use is consistent with permitted principal uses in the M1 zoning district.

SERVICE UNIT COMMENTS

Planning – The proposed project is consistent with M1 zoning requirements and master plan documents. Reasonable attempts have been made to screen the site from Dhu Varren Road and surrounding neighborhood. Staff supports the proposed site plan and planned project application. The project is an important infrastructure improvement.

Public Services (Sanitary Capacity) – The Petitioner has agreed to provide 17 feet of frontage along Dhu Varren Road as right-of-way.

Prepared by Jeff Kahan
Reviewed by Brett Lenart
11/14/18

Attachments: Parcel and Zoning Map
Aerial Photo
Site Plan

c: Petitioner: ITC Holdings Corp
27175 Energy Way
Novi, Michigan 48377

Systems Planning
Project Management
Project No. SP18-030