

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of August 1, 2023

**SUBJECT: Evans Scholarship House Special Exception Use for City Planning Commission Approval (1800 Washtenaw Avenue)
File No. SEU23-001**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission finds the petition to substantially meet the standards in Chapter 55 (Zoning Ordinance), Section 5.29.5 (Special Exception Use), subject to building occupancy of no more than 85 persons; and approves the 1800 Washtenaw Avenue Special Exception Use. This approval is based on the following findings:

1. Will be consistent with the general objectives of the City Comprehensive Plan of office uses in the area;
2. The proposed use will not adversely impact traffic, pedestrians, bicyclists, circulation, or road intersections based on the location. The proposed use is consistent with other surrounding uses' traffic impact.

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby waives the Area Plan requirement Section 5.29.8 (B), as no new construction is proposed for this site and a survey of the existing improvements on the site has been provided.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the special exception use be **approved** because the proposed use is of such location, size and character as to be compatible with the zoning district in which the site is situated; and the location and size of the proposed use, its nature and intensity, the site layout and access, and effect of the proposed use on public services would not be hazardous or inconvenient to the neighborhood nor conflict with normal neighborhood traffic.

Staff also recommend that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission waive the Area Plan requirement, as no new construction is proposed for this site and a survey of the existing improvements on the site has been provided.

LOCATION

The site is located on the west of Washtenaw Avenue south of Cambridge Road (Central Area), within the Malletts Creek watershed.

DESCRIPTION OF PETITION

The site is in an R2B zoning district (Two-Family Dwelling District and Student Housing District) and is approximately .86 acres in size. The petitioner seeks Special Exception Use (SEU) approval to increase the number of occupants from 65 to 85.

This site received site plan and SEU approval in 2003 to construct an 8,000 sq ft fraternity house with 20 parking spaces. The parking spaces are located on the west side of the site with access from Cambridge Road. The existing curb cut on Ferdon Road will be used for trash pick-up only. A survey was submitted with the application and a site plan waiver is requested as no changes are proposed to the site.

Per Chapter 55 (Zoning Ordinance), Section 5.17, fraternities are permitted as a special exception use. The parcel must have a minimum of 350 sq ft per occupant, so this 37,461 sq ft parcel could support up to 107 occupants. The petitioner is requesting to increase the current density of 65 students up to 85 occupants by adding bedrooms to the attic area. No changes are proposed to the exterior of the house. The current floor area of the building is 8,000-sq ft and proposed to be expanded by 4,000 sq ft to approximately 12,000 sq ft total. The addition in the loft/attic area contains four bedrooms and bathrooms with a study area. Each room accommodates four occupants.

A conflicting land use buffer is required along the vehicular use area abutting the west property line. The buffer strip is required to be an average of 15 feet in width (but no less than 8 feet in width); the proposed buffer is 2 feet in width. A variance was granted by the ZBA for this CLUB reduction.

One-hundred year storm water detention has been provided in pipes below the parking lot. There are 20 parking spaces provided with parking no longer required. A bicycle room accommodating 44 spaces with an additional 6 Class C spaces are provided. A conflicting land use buffer runs along the west and south ends of the parking lot to screen adjacent neighbors. A variance from the buffer width was granted in 2003 by the ZBA.

A Resident Participation Meeting was held on Thursday, March 30, 2023. At the time of this report being written, there were no objections to this proposal.

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

	LAND USE	ZONING
NORTH	Park	PL (Public Land)
EAST	Residential Dwelling Units	R1B (Single-Family Dwelling District) and R2B (Two-Family Dwelling District)
SOUTH	Residential Dwelling Units	R1B
WEST	Residential Dwelling Units	R2A (Two-Family Dwelling District)

COMPARISON CHART

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/ PERMITTED
Zoning	R2B (Two-Family Dwelling District and Student Dwelling District)	R2B (Two-Family Dwelling District and Student Dwelling District)	R2B (Two-Family Dwelling District and Student Dwelling District)
Gross Lot Area	37,601 sq ft	37,601 sq ft	8,500 sq ft MIN
Min. Net Lot Area per Occupant	696	442	350 sq ft MIN
Occupants	65 MAX	85 MAX	107 MAX
Minimum Building Size	8,000 sq ft	12,000 sq ft	5,000 sq ft MIN
Building Height	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft MAX
Setback – Front 1 (Washtenaw Ave.)	37.5 ft	37.5 ft	25 ft MIN
Setback – Front 2 (Cambridge Road)	61.6 ft	61.6 ft	25 ft MIN
Setback – Front 3 – Ferdon Street	25.8 ft	25.8 ft	25 ft MIN
Setback - Side	16 ft	16 ft	8 ft
Setback – Rear	78 ft	78 ft	30 ft MIN
Parking – Automobile	20 spaces	20 spaces	None
Parking – Bicycle	34 Class A 6 Class C	42 Class A 6 Class C	21 Class A 21 Class B

HISTORY

The original house was constructed in 1946 as a single-family home. An addition to this house was built in 1957-58 for the Delta Gamma Sorority. The Evans Scholarship House has occupied this site since 1976. A site plan and special exception use were approved in 2003 for a new house and the original house was demolished and rebuilt in 2004. An Administrative Amendment was approved in 2005 to add a fence along the western property line, revise the east wall of the dumpster enclosure to line-up with the Ferdon entrance drive, and to revise the Cambridge Road vehicular use screening from a wall to a 30-inch tall hedge, and add seven Red Oak trees along the southwestern property line.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

The Master Plan’s Land Use Element recommends single and two-family housing and group housing for this parcel.

SPECIAL EXCEPTION USE STANDARDS

General Standards - The Planning Commission, in arriving at its decision on any application for a special exception, shall apply the following standards (petitioner's response in regular type, staff comments in *italics*):

(a) The proposed use or uses shall be of such location, size and character as to be compatible with the appropriate and orderly development of the zoning district and adjacent zoning districts in which the site is situated. In applying this standard, the Planning Commission shall consider whether the proposed use:

1. Will be consistent with the general objectives of the City Master Plan;

Same as existing building, just with up to 20 more occupants.

2. Will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained in a manner that is compatible with the existing and planned character of the general vicinity;

There is no change to the building size or site. The construction will be interior only.

3. Will be consistent with the general character of the neighborhood considering population density, design, scale and bulk; and the intensity and character of activity;

Same as the existing building, with more occupants.

4. Will not be detrimental to the use, peaceful enjoyment, economic value or development of neighboring property, or the neighborhood area in general;

There will be no impact.

As noted above, this property is not being changed or expanded in floor area, and its use is remaining the same.

5. Will not have a detrimental effect on the natural environment.

There be no effect.

The property is not being altered, so its effect on the natural environment is not changing.

6. The location of and access to off-street parking and the safe provisions for pedestrian traffic;

There will be no effect.

The location and access to off-street parking is unchanged.

7. The relationship of the proposed use to main traffic thoroughfares and to streets and road intersections;

No change to the current relationship. Access to the buildings parking area is from Cambridge Road, near the intersection of Washtenaw Ave.

The vehicular traffic, off street parking, and traffic flow are expected to be the same as the existing use.

8. Vehicular turning movements in relationship to traffic flow routes;

These will be unchanged.

9. The intensity and character of traffic and parking conditions on the site, and in the general area;

These will be unchanged.

10. The requirements for additional public services and facilities which will be created by the proposed use will not be detrimental to the social and economic welfare of the community.

There will be no impact.

11. Does the proposed use match or exceed the standards for density and required open space for the zoning district in which it is located, if applicable, or will a variance be requested?

Yes, no variance requested.

COMMENTS PENDING, DISMISSED OR UNRESOLVED

Planning: Staff supports the proposed increase from 65 to 85 occupants as all improvements to this site are interior.

Prepared by Chris Cheng
Reviewed by Hank Kelley
7/14/23

Attachments: Zoning/Parcel Maps
Aerial Photo
[Layout Plan](#)

c: Petitioner: Gerald G. Kaplan, AIA
Kaplan Architects, Inc.

Owner/Operator: Western Golf Association/Evans Scholarship Foundation
Michael Vandemeir, Senior Director