

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of October 3, 2023

**SUBJECT: 900 Briarwood Site Plan and Rezoning for City Council Approval
File Nos. SP23-0005, REZ23-0003**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the 900 Briarwood Site Plan and Development Agreement, conditioned upon:

1. Approval of Land Transfer with the adjacent Macy's parcel (700 Briarwood).
2. Approval of Landscaping issues identified in review dated: 09/18/2023
3. Approval of Solid Waste issues identified in review dated: 09/20/2023
4. Approval from the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the 900 Briarwood Rezoning from P(Parking) to C2B(Commercial).

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission approves the 900 Briarwood Site Plan Landscape Modification that removes the infiltration landscape island requirement because the soils at the subject location will not infiltrate.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **approval** of the **site plan** because the project complies with all applicable local, state, and federal ordinances, standards, and regulations, will not cause a public or private nuisance, and will not have a detrimental effect on public health, safety, and welfare. The recommendation is subject to the following conditions:

Staff recommends **approval** of the proposed **C2B zoning** because it is consistent with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan: Land Use Element and is compatible with zoning in the surrounding area.

Staff recommends **approval** of the **landscape modification** because the modifications are consistent with the intent of the ordinance and the soils do not permit infiltration.

LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

This site is located west of State Street, north of Interstate 94 in the Malletts Creek Watershed. The original site plan for Briarwood Mall was approved in 1972. In 2013 a site plan was approved to add the two existing restaurant buildings in the parking lot adjacent to the Macy's location.

The South State Street Corridor Plan was completed in 2013 and includes recommendations for this area. The plan envisioned the area that as Interconnected, Diverse, Sustainable, Attractive and Invigorated. The plan details recommendations and actions for achieving those goals. The Briarwood Area was identified as Area 2 in the plan and has a site-specific recommendation:

Site 2-A – This 169 acre area consists of the Briarwood regional shopping mall (6 parcels) and residual properties on the periphery of the mall (22 parcels) that primarily front on Briarwood Circle and Hilton Boulevard. Briarwood Mall is the largest shopping center in Washtenaw County. Current uses along the outer edge of Briarwood Circle and Hilton Boulevard include hotels, office, and limited restaurant and retail uses, as well as a string of regional detention ponds in the Mallett's Creek watershed. These parcels are zoned O (Office), R5 (Hotel), PL (Public Land) and PUD (Planned Unit Development). Continuation of this mix of low traffic-generating uses is appropriate for these residual parcels. Improved pedestrian and transit access should be incorporated into any redevelopment of these parcels. The Briarwood Mall buildings are zoned C2B (Business Service) and the surface parking lots surrounding the mall are zoned P (Parking). The mall, which was built in the early 1970's, has a low floor area to lot area ratio (FAR). Rezoning of the P districts to C2B is recommended in coordination with redevelopment of the mall to increase its FAR. Redevelopment should incorporate non-motorized and transit facilities to expand access to the site and temper increased traffic and parking demand that may result from expanding the commercial uses on site. Converting surface parking to structured parking would allow portions of the existing parking lots to be used as additional retail, restaurant, and hospitality uses. More intense uses will help use land more efficiently and can promote greater vitality at the mall.

SUMMARY

The proposal includes 354 multi-family residential units in a four-story building next to a two-level grocery store, two level retail store and adjacent sporting field.

Residential Building Features:

- All-electric (except emergency backup generator).
- Sustainability features detailed in the attached applicant's memo.
- Replaces a current parking lot.
- Unit breakdown: 73 studios, 173 one-bedroom, 96 two-bedroom, 12 three-bedroom.
- Four-level parking garage with 301 spaces, encircled by residential units.
- Redesigned surface parking with added landscaping.
- Enclosed bicycle storage for 36 bikes on the parking garage's first level.

Infrastructure and Transportation:

- New sidewalks connecting the parking lot, residential, and retail areas.
- Internal connector roadway proposed, intersecting with Briarwood Circle east of Mall Drive.

- Landscaped drive with sidewalks between the two developments.
- Collaboration with AAATA for a bus route through the new drive; AAATA supports the concept.
- Existing AAATA bus stops around the site perimeter; accessible via new sidewalks.
- Eight-foot-wide ADA-compatible sidewalks and crosswalks planned for Briarwood Circle.
- Briarwood Circle traffic lane reduction from five to four lanes in front of the project.
- Addition of a 5-foot-wide bike lane on Briarwood Circle, separated by a 2.5-foot painted stripe.

Rezoning:

- Proposal to rezone 8.29 acres from P (Parking) to C2B (Commercial) for site plan approval.
- C2B aligns with the zoning of the remaining development and the mall's footprint.
- Most land around the mall is zoned P (Parking).
- Rezoning is consistent with recommendation in the State Street Corridor Plan.

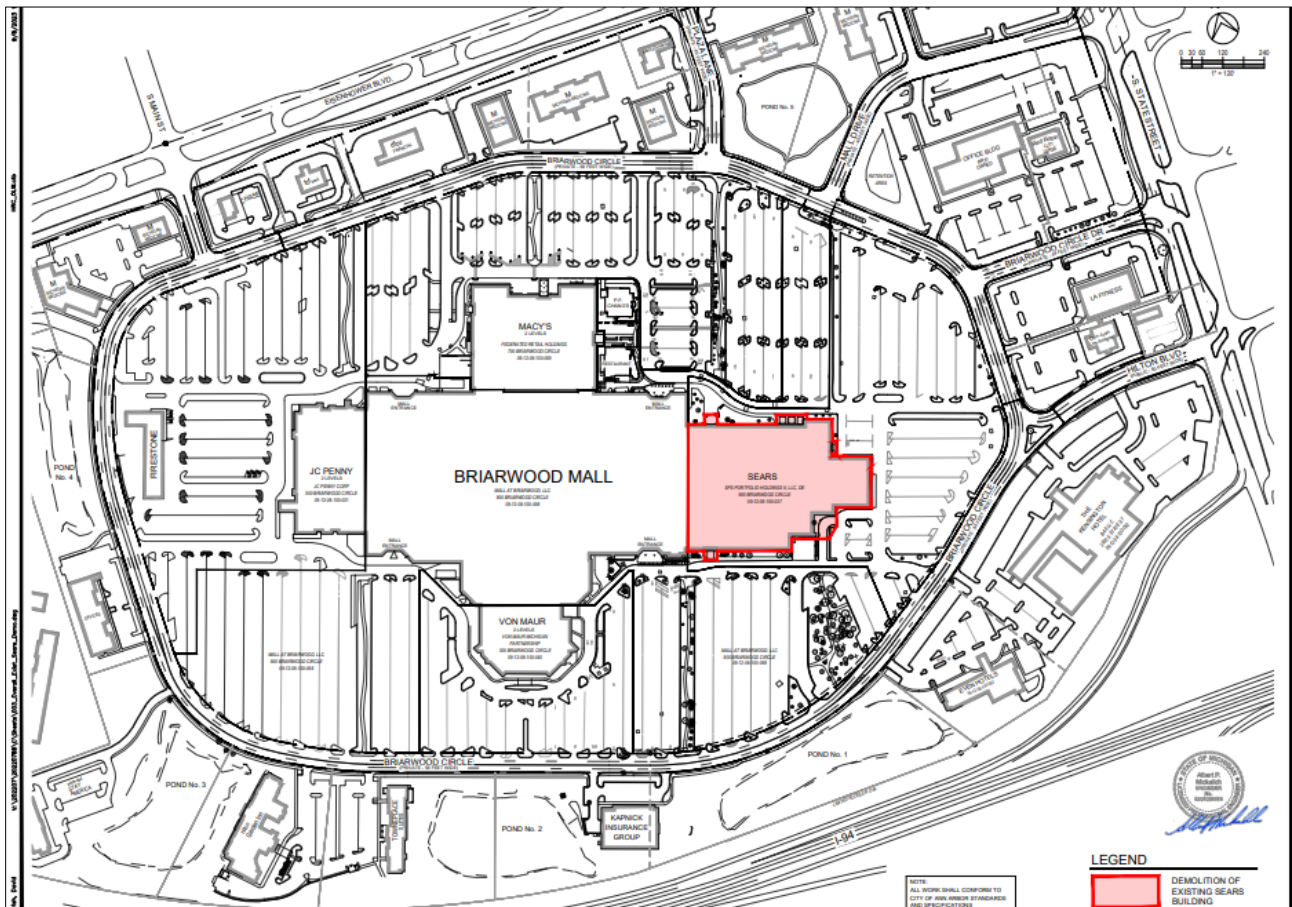


Figure 1 Existing Condition

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PETITION

The developer is proposing to raze the existing Sears store (166,277 square feet) and construct a grocery (57,649 square feet: two levels) and a sporting goods store (100,000 square feet; two levels and an adjacent playing field). The retail development footprint will be similar to the existing Sears store. The retail store will include a large attached fenced in playing field. In addition to the retail, the proposal includes 354 units of multi-family residential to be constructed in a separate four story building adjacent to the grocery store. The building will be all electric, with no natural gas connection except for the emergency backup generator. Additional sustainability features are highlighted in the attached memo submitted by the applicant. The surface area of the proposed residential building is currently a parking lot with limited landscape elements. The residential building will provide a mix of studio (73 units), one bedroom (173), two bedroom (96), and three bedroom (12) units. A four-level parking garage will provide 301 parking spaces and will be surrounded by the residential units on all sides. Surface parking spaces will be redesigned on the site with landscaping added. An enclosed bicycle storage room for 36 bicycles will be provided on the first level of the parking garage.

Sidewalks will be added to the redesigned parking lot connecting with the new residential development and new retail. A new internal connector roadway is proposed to be constructed creating a new intersection with Briarwood Circle east of Mall Drive.

A landscaped drive with sidewalks will be constructed between the two developments. The petitioner is currently working with the AAATA to provide a bus route through this new internal drive. While the details are still being finalized the AAATA does support the concept. Several existing AAATA bus stops exist around the perimeter of the site. This will be accessed by new sidewalks connecting to the proposed retail and residential projects. There will also be new eight-foot-wide sidewalks installed along Briarwood Circle with new crosswalks that are ADA compatible.

As part of the transportation improvements Briarwood Circle will be reduced from five lanes to four lanes for the frontage of the project. A dedicated striped bike lane will be added to the surface of Briarwood Circle. The bike lane will be 5 feet wide with a 2 and half foot wide painted stripe separating the bike lane from motorized vehicle traffic.

The development will be constructed in one continual process with Residential portion (Redevelopment B) beginning first and then the Commercial portion (Redevelopment A) beginning during active construction of the residential and finishing just before the Residential portion is completed.

A proposed rezoning of 8.29 acres from P (Parking) to C2B(Commercial), is required for site plan approval. The map below illustrates the areas that are proposed for rezoning. C2B is consistent with the Zoning of the remaining development area and the footprint of the mall itself. Much of the remaining land around the mall is zoned P (Parking).

Due to the arrangement of several regional detention ponds for storm water treatment of the Briarwood Mall complex, the proposed storm water treatment system is under the jurisdiction of the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioners (WCWRC) Office. The WCWRC is requiring a landscape modification request because the soils on the site are proven to not allow infiltration. This project is currently under review and must receive approval from the WCWRC before Council action.

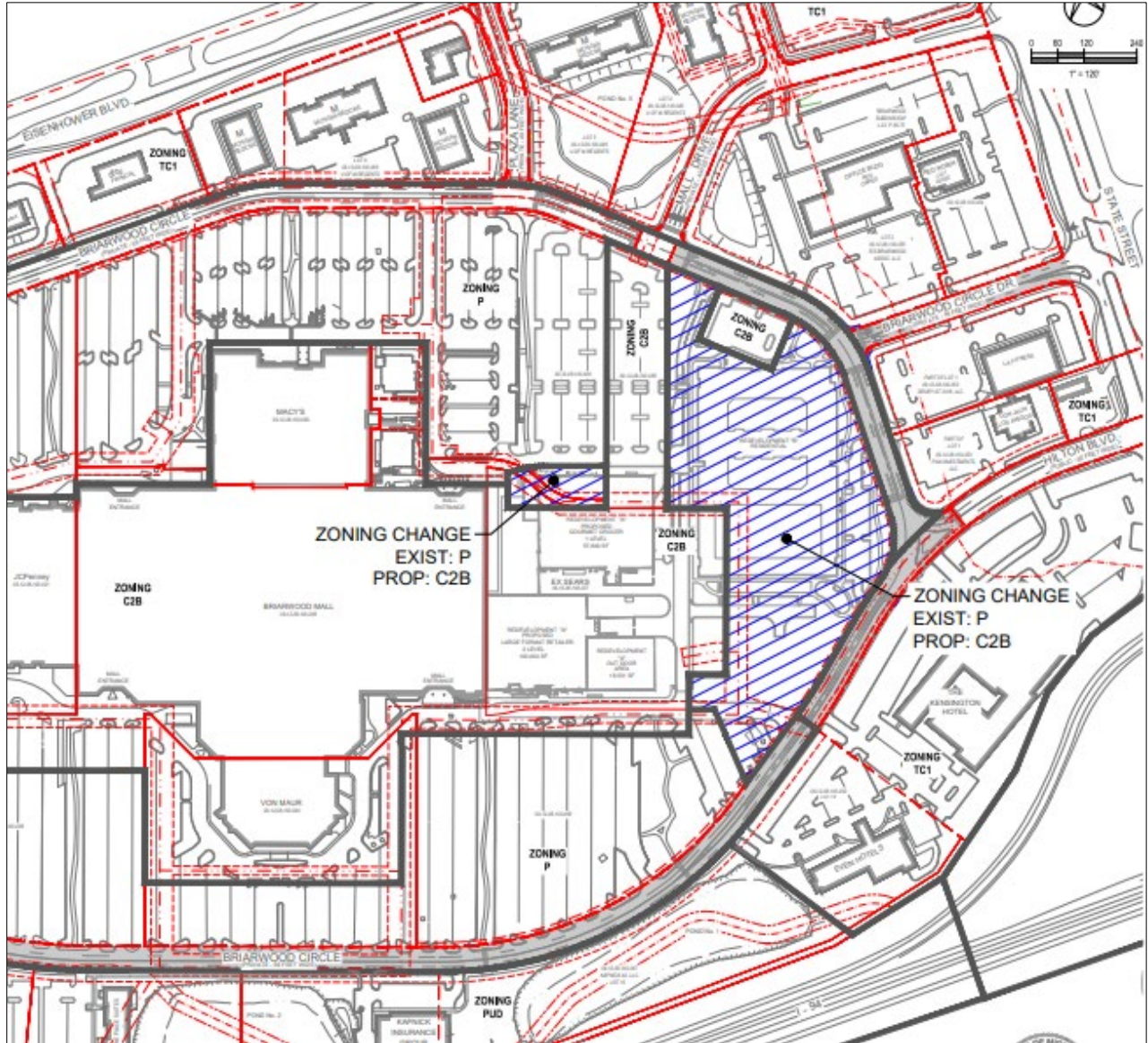


Figure 2 Areas to be Rezoned

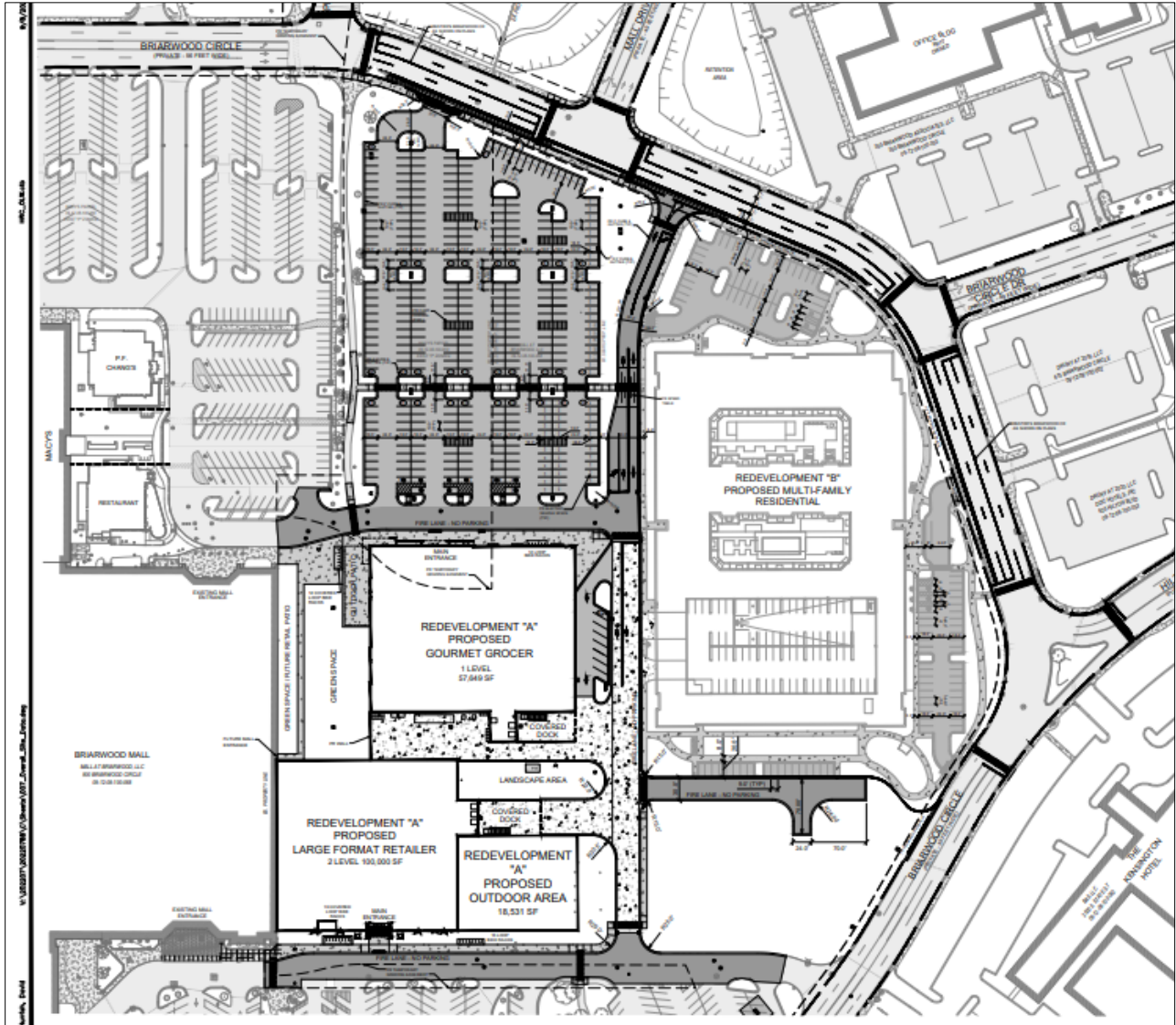


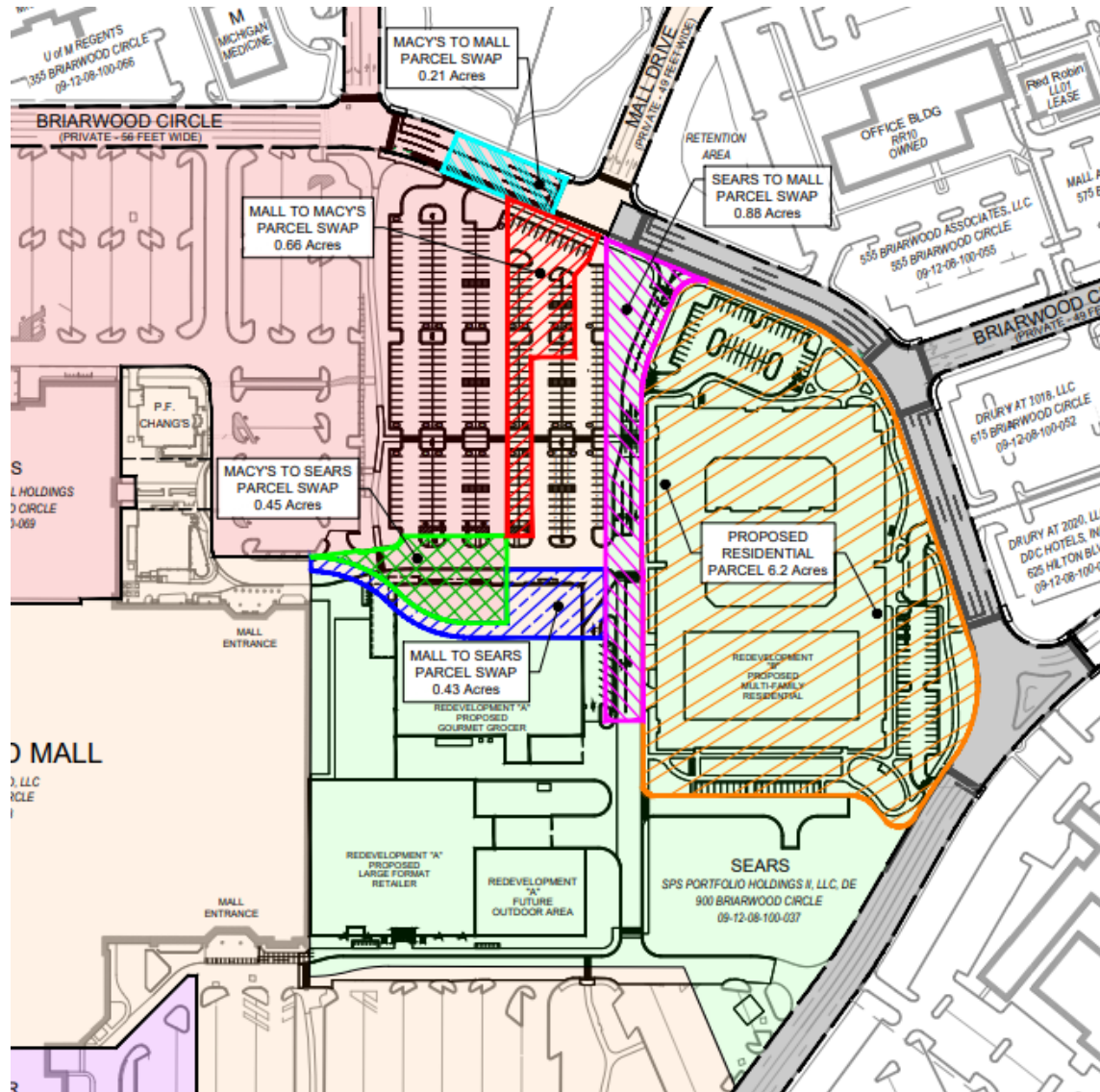
Figure 3 Proposed Layout

There will be one landmark tree (Crabapple) on the north side of the existing Sears store that will be removed for installation of utilities and will be mitigated by planting required mitigation trees onsite. As indicated, a Landscape Modification is required due to the lack of soil infiltration. As a result, the petitioner is unable to provide the required biofiltration islands in the parking lot. This modification is required by the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioners (WCWRC) Office.

The Briarwood Mall development contains many owners. A series of Land Transfers internal to the Mall ownership pool is proposed by the petitioner to accomplish a unified land assembly. The project Site Plan approval is conditioned on these associated Land Transfers, which must be approved before any construction commences. Staff reviewed the transfer areas for required easements and similar due diligence items and have no concerns.

A post card was sent to residents within 1,000 feet of this site notifying them of this project. A neighborhood meeting was held on February 16, 2023 (meeting minutes attached).

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LEGEND



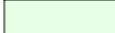





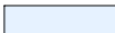



	EXIST. BRIARWOOD MALL PARCEL - 09-12-08-100-068		PROPOSED MALL TO MACY'S PARCEL SWAP - 0.66 Acres
	EXISTING SEARS PARCEL - 09-12-08-100-037		PROPOSED MACY'S TO SEARS PARCEL SWAP - 0.45 Acres
	EXISTING MACY'S PARCEL - 09-12-08-100-069		PROPOSED MALL TO SEARS PARCEL SWAP - 0.43 Acres
	EXISTING VON MAUR PARCEL - 09-12-08-100-040		PROPOSED SEARS TO MALL PARCEL SWAP - 0.88 Acres
	EXISTING JC PENNY PARCEL - 09-12-08-100-040		PROPOSED MACY'S TO MALL PARCEL SWAP - 0.21 Acres
	EXISTING SHARED PRIVATE AREA		PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL PARCEL - 6.20 Acres

Figure 4 Land Transfers

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

	LAND USE	ZONING
NORTH	Commercial/Office	TC1 (Transit Corridor District)
EAST	Commercial	TC1 (Transit Corridor District)
SOUTH	Commercial/Hotel	C2B (Business Service District)
WEST	Commercial (Briarwood Mall)	C2B (Multiple-Family Residential District)

**Redevelopment A – Retail
Comparison Chart of Requirements**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
Zoning	C2B (Business Service District)	C2B	C2B
Gross Lot Area	12.1 acres (527,076 sq ft)	12.1 acres (527,076 sq ft)	4,000 sq ft MIN
Floor Area in Percentage of Lot Area Redevelopment A	164,621 sq ft 30%	164,849 sq ft 31%	200% MAX
Height	2 stories – 32 ft	2 Stories - 50 ft.	4 stories MAX 55 ft MAX
Parking – Automobile	1033 spaces	360 spaces	671 spaces MAX
Parking – EV	0 spaces	18 – EV I (5%) 54 – EV C (15%)	5% EV I 15% EV C
Parking – Bicycle	0 spaces	28 spaces– Class B 28 spaces-Class C	54 spaces MI 50% Class B 50% Class C

**Redevelopment B – Residential
Comparison Chart of Requirements**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
Zoning	P (Parking)	C2B (Business Service District)	C2B (Business Service District)
Gross Lot Area	6.1 acres (265,716 sq ft)	6.1 acres (265,716 sq ft)	4,000 sq ft MIN
Total Floor Area in Percentage of Lot Area Redevelopment A	0 %	508,842 sq ft 192%	200% MAX
Height	0	4 Stories - 50 ft.	4 stories MAX 50 ft MAX
Parking – Automobile	514 spaces	407 Total – 106 exterior spaces 301 garage spaces	0 spaces
Parking EV	0 spaces	10% EV I 90% EV C	10% EV I 90% EV C
Parking – Bicycle	0 spaces	72 Total – 36 spaces– Class A 36 spaces-Class C	71 spaces MIN 50% Class A 50% Class C

STAFF COMMENTS

Traffic – The Transportation Impact Study (TIS) has shown that the vehicular impact from the new development will be minimal on the adjacent road network. No modifications will be required to the public road network. As noted, Briarwood Circle (private drive) will be reduced from five lanes to four to provide a dedicated striped bike lane along the frontage of the project.

Parks – The petitioners have been working with Parks staff regarding various public amenities to be provided on the site. The Petitioner has offered several options including improving the existing grove of trees by adding benches some picnic tables. The petitioner is also providing a green open space between the new grocery and the existing mall. The intent is to provide an activity area for the public including seating areas and food trucks. Parks staff has requested petitioner add a splash pad that would provide a unique amenity for visitors not available in the City and provide a public attraction. The petitioner is considering this option. Parks staff has concerns that this area will not act as a true public space by design and will appear to be a private space only useable by customers of adjacent businesses.

Systems Planning – Storm Water – Due to the arrangement of several regional detention ponds for storm water treatment of the Briarwood Mall complex, the storm water system is under the jurisdiction of the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioners (WCWRC) Office. The WCWRC supports the landscape modification request as the soils on the site are proven to not allow biofiltration islands. This project is currently under review and must receive approval from the WCWRC before Council action.

Solid Waste – Revisions are needed to the Solid Waste program. Staff has discussed required revisions with the petitioner. The petitioner has submitted a letter and plans indicated issues have been addressed, however this still needs to be reviewed and approved by City Staff.

Forestry – Revisions are still needed to several landscape issues within the parking lot area. The issues are minor however they are required to be resolved. The petitioner has submitted a letter and plans indicated issues have been addressed, however this still needs to be reviewed and approved by City Staff. A Landscape Modification is required and supported by staff. The Landscape Modification is a direct result of a requirement from the WCWRC.

Planning – Staff endorses the proposed development and rezoning, aligning with the South State Corridor Plan's recommendation for intensified land use around Briarwood Mall. This plan specifically suggests rezoning parking zones around the mall. The project complements nearby uses, improves pedestrian pathways and makes other non-motorized enhancements, and aligns with the City's Comprehensive Plan by introducing residential spaces near retail, office, and transit areas.

City Planning collaborated with the petitioner, envisioning this as a precursor to a broader Briarwood Mall redevelopment. Staff consistently advised enhancements ensuring future projects align with city objectives. However, desired improvements like bicycle lanes around the entirety of Briarwood Circle are limited as the petitioner does not have site control over all parcels.

Prepared by Matt Kowalski
Reviewed by Hank Kelley and Brett Lenart

Attachments: [Site Plan](#)
[Zoning/Parcel Maps](#)
[Aerial Photo](#)
[Draft Development Agreement](#)
[2/16/23 Neighborhood meeting minutes](#)
[Sustainability narrative from petitioners](#)
[Additional Project Files \(STREAM\)](#)

c:

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Project Management
Systems Planning
File Nos. SP23-0005, REZ23-0003