

PLANNING SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of June 17, 2025

**SUBJECT: SP24-0011 (2845 S State St)
Arbor South Site Plan for Planning Commission Approval**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby approves the Site Plan SP24-0011 (2845 S State St) dated May 22, 2025, known as Arbor South, with Landscape Modifications as proposed to Section 5.20.3 Vehicular Use Area, subject to entering into and satisfying all terms of a Development Agreement, with the condition that revised plans are submitted within 30 days that document completion of the following items:

- 1) All outstanding comments are resolved and documented pursuant to Engineering Review #4 to the satisfaction of the Engineering Division of Public Services.
- 2) All outstanding comments are resolved and documented pursuant to Solid Waste Review 3 to the satisfaction of the Solid Waste Manager.
- 3) All outstanding comments are resolved and documented pursuant to Planning Review #4 to the satisfaction of the Planning Manager.
- 4) Revisions to the Multimodal Transportation Impact Analysis (MMTIA) will be submitted and plans modified to reflect outcomes to the satisfaction of the Transportation Manager.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the **landscape modification** be **approved** as part of the site plan because the request meets the criteria for approval provided in Section 5.30.1, including achieving the intent and purposes of interior landscape islands within vehicular use areas to minimize heat island effects, enhance stormwater runoff and improve appearance.

Staff recommends that the **site plan** be **approved with conditions** because upon satisfaction of the conditions the contemplated development will meet the criteria for site plan approval provided in the Unified Development Code, complying with all applicable law, ordinances, standards and regulations and limiting disturbance of natural features to the minimum necessary for reasonable use of the land.

LOCATION:

The site is 23.5 acres at the northeast quadrant of the South State Street and East Eisenhower Parkway intersection in the southern part of the city. Addresses include: 2803, 2845, and 2991 S State St; 777 and 789 E Eisenhower Pkwy; and 2800 Boardwalk Dr. Ward 4.

SUMMARY:

The proposed project is a site plan to develop 14 new buildings in a downtown-style development around two existing buildings at 777 and 789 E Eisenhower Pkwy. New buildings include a 150-room hotel,

seven residential buildings with approximately 230 affordable and 840 market-rate homes, three restaurant buildings, and three parking structures with capacity for approximately 2,475 vehicles. Approximately 93,500 square feet of commercial space will be available at the ground floor level.

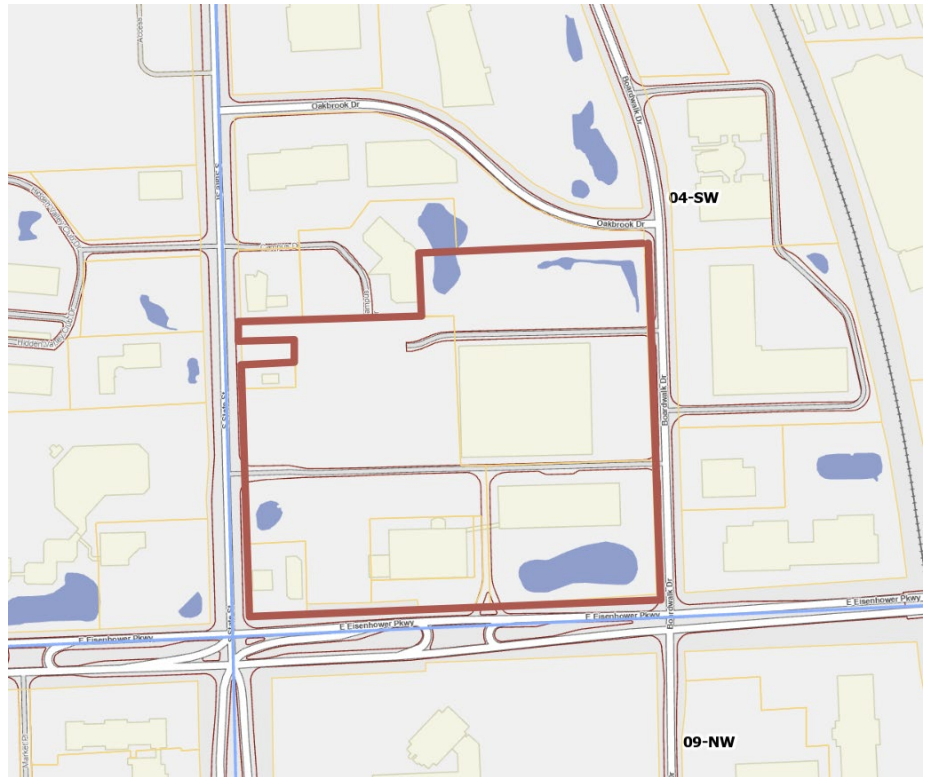


Figure 1: Location Map

STAFF REPORT:

Following a public hearing on April 15, 2025, the Planning Commission postponed action on this site plan until June 17 for additional time to complete staff reviews and address outstanding items as well receive and incorporate feedback from the Planning Commission.

Revised plans were submitted on May 23, 2025 and reviewed by staff for land development (soil erosion and sedimentation controls), planner, fire, public works (solid waste), engineering, urban forest natural resources (landscaping), and transportation engineering. Revised multimodal transportation impact analysis materials were submitted on June 3, 2025 and under review by transportation engineering staff.

Results of these seven reviews are:

Land Development (SESC) Review – Site plan passes review.

Planner Review – Site plan passes with conditions. Clarification and confirmation on the inventory, protections, and mitigation of natural features present on the site and proposed to be impacted is required for the approved site plan. The proposed site plan contains this information but it must be presented in a more coherent and concise manner and better coordinated between the overall sheets and phased sheets to document its compliance with Section 5.23 Natural Features with particular emphasis to separate mitigation information from landscaping, screening and buffering information.

Fire Review – Site plan passes with conditions. If design or layout changes, further review is required.

Public Works Review – Site plan passes with conditions. The approved site plan must show each solid waste staging location has the space necessary to service the required number of trash and recycling containers individually and separately on any given collection day. The approved site plan must also demonstrate verifiable generation rates for all proposed uses, including entertainment restaurant.

Engineering Review – Site plan passes with conditions. A detailed list of corrections and changes has been provided which must be incorporated into the approved site plan or must be addressed on civil construction drawings as noted.

Urban Forest Natural Resource Review – Site plan fails review. The plans dated 5/22/25 do not comply with Section 5.20 Landscaping, Screening and Buffering. Revised plans demonstrating compliance must be submitted for review. Alternatively, a landscape modification as provided in and meeting the standards of Section 5.30.1 can be approved by the Planning Commission as part of the site plan approval.

Transportation Engineering Review – Subject to completion of the ongoing multimodal transportation impact analysis, site plan passes with condition that the design and layout are consistent with the results of the MMTIA. Preliminary comments on the MMTIA finds trip generation is underestimated, then overly discounted. Projected impacts may be correspondingly more than stated. With the data provided, the level of service at site exits will be well below the acceptable threshold for delays. This is partially because no traffic control measures have been proposed although the applicant has indicated agreement to consider and partner with the City on warranted controls. Levels of service at some public street intersections in the vicinity of the project are also reported to degrade below acceptable thresholds. The criteria for review of a multimodal transportation impact analysis provided in Section 5.29.6.E state that proposed plans that will result in a multimodal level of service D, E or F may be denied until such time as necessary improvements are scheduled for construction. Final comments are pending.

LANDSCAPE MODIFICATION:

As provided in Section 5.30.1 of the Unified Development Code, modifications to the requirements of certain parts of Section 5.20 Landscaping, Screening and Buffering may be approved as part of the site plan approval.

A landscape modification request has been added to the application to address the Urban Forest Natural Resource review.

A summation of the request, its justification and analysis are provided by staff below. The applicant's original and follow-up June 10, 2025 letters are attached.

Landscape Modification Request, Justification and Analysis	
1. Request	
A landscape modification is requested to the Vehicular Use Area Landscaping and Screening normal requirements, in particular subsection 5.20.3.B, interior landscape islands in vehicular use areas.	
2. Intent and Normal Requirements	
<p>The requirements for interior landscape islands in vehicular use areas between 50,000 and 149,999 square feet call for a 1:15 ratio of interior landscape area to vehicular use area, provided as islands within the vehicular use area each about 9' x 18' in dimension, with one tree planted in each island, and half of the islands also be bioretention areas utilized for stormwater management.</p> <p>These requirements are intended, in part, to reduce pollution and thermal heating of the environment and reduce the negative impacts of stormwater runoff.</p> <p>As the proposed site plan includes more than 77,000 square feet of vehicular use area, it requires at least 5,000 square feet of interior landscape islands (1:15 ratio) or at least 30 separate islands measuring approximately 9' x 18', half of which are also bioretention areas utilized for and connected to the stormwater management system and all of which contain a tree.</p>	
3. Proposed Modification	
The proposed site plan has 4,159 square feet of interior landscape islands, all located at the corners of the "streets and avenues." A total of 238 trees are proposed to be planted throughout the site for both interior landscape islands, landmark tree mitigation, and general landscaping (data separated by category pending).	

The applicants request that the proposed site plan be approved as a modification to the normal standards of Section 5.20.3.

4. Justification

Because of the style of development proposed, the 77,000-square foot vehicular use area are designed to mimic a grid of streets (providing access to 135 surface parking spaces and 17 new or existing buildings, including 3 parking decks) rather than a traditional parking lot for 2,678 stalls, applying the normal requirements is challenging. A modified landscape plan can achieve the intents of interior landscape islands within vehicular use area – to reduce pollution and thermal heating, and to reduce negative stormwater runoff impacts.

The proposed landscape plan was developed based on a combination of applying the UDC regulations to the extent possible, the Downtown Street Design Manual, the best practices for streetscape and tree planting design per the American Society of Landscape Architects and the two decades of experience of the project's landscape architects.

It has proven impossible to create a Section 5.20.3-compliant design that both works within the physical constraints of the existing conditions while also avoiding the large and widespread utility easement parameters required outside of a public right-of-way grid. Despite best efforts, the landscape plan could not fit trees or tree wells in many areas due to pervasive underground utility conflicts and widespread easements across this site.

Instead, the proposed plan maximizes tree cover in every space possible across the project, helping to mitigate heat island effects. The proposed stormwater management system maximizes infiltration through underground systems, a primary goal of bioretention areas. Although the size of the vehicular use area in square feet is significant, its widest points are in line with the width of a single row of parking stalls or the width of a street. A “sea of asphalt” is not proposed, and therefore, does not need regularly spaced islands to break up its expanse.

The proposed plan meets the intent of Section 5.20.3 Vehicular Use Areas and achieves the same purpose and goals of the requirements.

5. Standards of Approval, Analysis

As provided in Section 5.30.1.C, landscape modifications may be approved if:

- (1) the modifications are consistent with the purpose of Section 5.20 Landscaping, Screening, and Buffering,
- (2) the eligibility and required conditions are met, and
- (3) justification is provided for consideration.

All of these standards have been met.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo, Principal Planner
Reviewed by Brett Lenart, Planning Manager

Attachments: April 15, 2025 Planning Staff Report
Landscape Modification Request (June 12, 2025 letters combined)

c: Applicant/Owner – Oxford Companies (Jeff Hauptman)
Developer – Crawford Hoving (Todd Johnson)
Engineer –Midwestern Consulting (Tom Covert)
Architect – Lord Aeck Sargent (Matt Cherry)