



**City of Ann Arbor**  
**Formal Minutes**  
**Planning Commission, City**

301 E. Huron St.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
[http://a2gov.legistar.com/  
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Tuesday, May 19, 2015

7:00 PM

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

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**10-a 15-0645**

410 First Site Plan for City Council Approval - A proposal to demolish two residential buildings and construct a four-story, 25-unit, 47,140-square foot residential building on a 0.44 acre site located at 408-412 North First Street. Parking for 36 vehicles will be provided in a lower-level parking garage, as will access to 5 parking spaces on the property to the south. The proposed building is to be elevated above the 100-year floodplain, which covers the site. (Ward 1) Staff Recommendation: Postponement

*Jill Thacher presented the staff report.*

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

*David Crouse, 509 N. Ashley, Ann Arbor, said he lives across from the proposed development. He asked if there had been any traffic studies done for this project, given the other residential project in the area. He noted that the combined projects have a potential to increase traffic congestion.*

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

**Moved by Clein, seconded by Adenekan, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the 410 First Site Plan, subject to obtaining an MDEQ floodplain permit and combining the parcels prior to the issuance of any grading or construction permits.**

**COMMISSION DISCUSSION:**

*Adenekan asked about the traffic study.*

*Thacher said the project is too small to require a traffic study, but the traffic engineer has looked very closely at the traffic conditions in the area due to the location of this site on a curve.*

*Clein asked if there is no rear yard setback requirement in the D2 zoning district.*

*Thacher said there is not.*

*Clein asked for details about the proposed rain screen brick cladding.*

*Tom Fitzsimmons, developer, said it would be a full depth brick veneer.*

*Clein said this is the second project in this area, noting that there is lots of change in the area as well as the traffic issues, as noted by the public speaker. He said now that Council has allocated money to study the Allen Creek Greenway, part of the study area would include this site. He asked if the timing issue of the study in relation to on-going projects is something the Commission should have a discussion about, specifically on how they approach it. He said it would be a shame to do such a study and later find the nearby properties that just got approved for construction would or could be affected.*

*Rampson commented that Clein had made an excellent observation and that in the Allen Creek Greenway the assumptions so far have been to minimize any private property use and instead use existing right-of-way, including the railway right-of-way, if possible, and even potentially the floodway. She said she didn't believe this parcel would be one of their first choices to be included in that future discussion, even if it is in the floodplain.*

*Clein said he was not suggesting that this particular project should be held up, because we are planning to do something, but rather he was trying to think in the bigger picture by looking at this area more proactively.*

*Bona said the original task force talked about having eyes on the Greenway in the sense of vitality and activity and a project like this would be a positive, being directly adjacent to the Greenway.*

*Bona said she noticed in the Design Review Board comments, accommodating solar access or a green roof were mentioned. She asked if there had been any interest in making the roof solar ready or making it a green roof.*

*Fitzsimmons said they are not sure of the direction they will take with that, noting that this will be a condominium project. He said on both of their other projects less than a block away they ended up pre-selling before they even broke ground and on those projects they ended up discussing*

*a number of issues with future residents about energy efficiency, solar, and the cost involved. He said at this point, they have not moved forward with any type of solar plan. He said on their Kingsley project they have looked at and offered car-charging stations for each of their residents and they will do the same for their clients in this project.*

*Bona said she is not as concerned about these things being accommodated when the building opens for occupancy, but given the reality that this building will stand for 50 to 100 years, and if it isn't solar ready now, it will be very expensive to accommodate in the future. She explained ways in which they can verify that the roof is solar ready. She said vegetated roofs require more support, adding that she is personally more supportive of solar because of the limited roof area available on a 4-story structure. She said we don't have a code requirement for it, but 20 years from now the owners may be sorry this wasn't done originally, probably at no extra cost to the developer.*

*Fitzsimmons thanked Bona for her suggestion, noting that they have a wide open roof, since it was designed to have the HVAC equipment on a platform below roof height, which would allow the entire roof surface to be used for a green roof or solar in the future.*

*Bona said it would be nice to hear that the roof is solar ready, when the project returns before the Commission next time. She said she was not as concerned about shading since only the Fish Park is located to the north.*

*Fitzsimmons said they did a sun study and they will not be shading any neighbors.*

*Franciscus asked how they assign the parking spaces.*

*Fitzsimmons said they currently have floor plans for 26 units, with a mix of floor plans ranging from 800 to 2200 square feet. He said they typically assign one space per each smaller unit and two spaces for larger units.*

*Franciscus said she would love to see a solar roof, but pointed out the consideration of upfront costs associated with such when new technologies could come along in the next 20 years.*

*Peters asked if the houses are currently occupied.*

*Fitzsimmons said the yellow house has been his office for the past 9 years; the white house had been occupied by a long time resident and*

*sold two years ago to investors, and the blue house has been used as an office for many years. He said this entire area, south of Kingsley, has been in transition for many years, noting that Ashley Street is primarily a mix of residential units while First Street has been used as parking for Main Street office buildings, and they see this as a way of increasing density and housing in this area.*

*Peters said this development might lessen traffic because it will replace parking in the back.*

*Fitzsimmons said they have had 20 parking spaces on this site since he purchased the property and in speaking to the traffic engineer they do not see an increase in traffic or impact as a result of this development.*

*Milshteyn asked why there was a delay with the approval from the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner.*

*Thacher said her understanding was that they just needed more information and are working with the petitioners.*

*Fitzsimmons said he wished the timing would have worked out, explaining that they are revising their stormwater detention but that it will not impact the building, and they will be increasing their flood storage capacity as well as removing the two houses in the floodplain.*

*Milshteyn said this will be a good addition to the area, given it has been in transition for a while, with not a lot of attractive houses, so this will be an improvement. He said he will only miss the discounted parking and hoped they can continue it.*

*Mills said she really appreciated that the petitioner is providing more bicycle parking than is required, and that it is located so close and will be very convenient for the people that will live there. She asked if there is an elevator to get to the upper floors.*

*Fitzsimmons said there is.*

*Peters said with the possibility of the Greenway moving forward, this will be a good example of having bicycle a facility nearby.*

*Peters asked about the average roof elevation compared with properties on Ashley and how it plays out going up the hill. He pointed out one of the goals in the Downtown Plan is reinforcing the historic buildings. He said it*

*would be helpful to get more information on this if item ends up being postponed.*

*Thacher reviewing the plans, said in site section A-A, she believed it was one of the larger houses on Ashley, immediately behind the structure, and while one would not be able to see the new building over the houses, one would see it in between. She said the grade is advantageous in that respect.*

*Woods noted that while the houses are not considered historic, she was impressed by staff's description of their history and asked if there was any plan to recycle historic materials in the houses.*

*Fitzsimmons said whenever there is a demolition, the City asks for a process of recycling. He said it is often difficult, and materials are old and there are environmental issues to consider, but they reach out in various ways; from their own construction company that does dismantling and has managed to salvage unique features such as staircases, fireplaces and ornate woodworking throughout the house. He said it becomes tricky with many other elements that are covered in layers of lead-based paint, but they reach out and do what they can, which involves various non-profits that take what can and the remaining gets demolished.*

*Woods referenced historic markers that have been placed by Ray Detter and the Downtown Citizen Advisory Council, and asked if there are any plans to place anything similar in this area. She said it is great for residents to see what used to be there as it gives us a sense of continued history.*

*Fitzsimmons said he can talk to Ray, adding that he is willing to entertain the idea.*

**Moved by Clein, seconded by Franciscus, that the petition be postponed until the next available meeting after staff comments have been addressed. On a voice vote, the Chair declared the motion carried.**