



**City of Ann Arbor**  
**Formal Minutes - Final**  
**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-c 15-0647**

Rockbridge Hotel and Retail Planned Project Site Plan and Rezoning - A proposal to demolish two vacant buildings on this 2.48-acre site located at 3201 South State Street, rezone it from M1 (Limited Industrial) to C3 (Fringe Commercial) and construct a new 6-story, 140-room hotel and a single-story, 2,800-square foot freestanding retail building. Planned project modifications are requested to exceed the maximum height limitation and allow a front yard open space encroachment. (Ward 4) Staff Recommendation: Postponement

*Chris Cheng presented the staff report.*

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

*Brad Moore, 4844 Jackson Road, Suite 150, Ann Arbor, petitioner's representative, introduced the owner and engineer. He said they have been in negotiations with property owners to the north and south for access and feel they are very close to signing documents within the week with the owner to the south, and hope to be able to add this vehicular connection, while they already have the pedestrian connection. He said he was available to respond to questions from the Commission.*

*Nothing no further speakers, the Chair declared the public hearing closed unless the item is postponed.*

**Moved by Franciscus, seconded by Milshteyn, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Rockbridge Hotel & Retail rezoning from M1 (Limited Industrial District) to C3 (Fringe Commercial District); and**

**The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Rockbridge Hotel & Retail Planned Project Site Plan.**

**COMMISSION DISCUSSION:**

*Bona asked how the bus stop will work in relation to the location of the bus*

*shelter and if the bus stops at the curb.*

*Cheng said it is set back from State Street and referred the question to the petitioner.*

*Jamie Gorenflo, Midwestern Consulting LLC, 3815 Plaza Drive, Ann Arbor, said they are in discussions with AAATA and that the bus route does not currently go past this location; however, as part of the reconfiguration of S. State Street, they have petitioned that they revise the route to locate a bus stop at this site. He said since the area is the public right-of-way, they are not allowed to do construction unless agreed upon, and the developer is willing to construct a clear path to the back of the curb.*

*Bona asked if bus rerouting aligns with the South State Street corridor study.*

*Cheng said yes, it is part of the long-term plan to run busses along South State Street.*

*Bona confirmed that the service drive is a private road, noting that it seems wide and rarely has traffic. She asked if there were plans to use part of it for sidewalk. She said she assumes this plan has no curb cut included as part of this project.*

*Cheng said the petitioner has been trying to negotiate a possible curb cut onto the northern access drive and obtain extra land to locate the sidewalk, but they have not been successful, so they are working on alternate proposals.*

*Bona asked about trees along the north.*

*Cheng said if they put in a sidewalk, the trees would have to be removed, but staff is suggesting a reduction to the aisle width which could possibly save the trees.*

*Bona said she agrees with the desire to get a curb cut on the north, because trying to get in and out of State Street would be crazy, and if they have access off the shared drive they shouldn't have access on S. State Street. She said accommodating a sidewalk is very important for hotel and office uses in this area given the selection of nearby restaurants. She said everything else looks pretty good and she is okay with the location of the shelter in the front right-of-way, as long as it is part of the long term*

*plan with AAATA.*

*Peters, acknowledging MDOT's jurisdiction, suggested that given the traffic flow on S. State Street, there might be an opportunity for a pull off stop.*

*Gorenflo said the shelter's primary purpose is as a bicycle rest station, providing seating, bike lock-up, bike repair station, compressed air, and water drinking fountains with the ancillary purpose to provide a bus shelter if AAATA is willing to provide a bus stop in this location. He said in order to provide a pull-off bus stop, they have held lengthy discussions with the City and MDOT about who wants to have jurisdiction over this, while the right-of-way is technically owned by MDOT, they are deferring design and permitting to the City of Ann Arbor so there is no MDOT permit required to do any work or approve the curb cut or approach. He said he can extrapolate that a pull-off stop would have to be designed and approved by the City.*

*Peters said even if it is not possible immediately, it would be worth thinking about as it might help with traffic flow in the area.*

*Gorenflo said including it in their and plans would not be difficult and they could note 'future location' for bus pull-off or something similar. He agreed that the driveway access on State Street is very congested, but at this point the only access this property has to a public road is along the State Street frontage so the driveway would have to stay where it's at unless they obtain another means of access.*

*Adenekan asked if a traffic study had been done, adding that the traffic in the mornings on State Street is horrendous.*

*Gorenflo said the traffic engineer has provided comments back to them; while very late in the process, they have asked for additional information, but they have not identified any critical failure as a result of the project or access to the project.*

*Mills asked about plans for the retail space in the front.*

*James D. Schrim III, RB Hotel Development LLC, 4100 Regent Street, Suite G, Columbus, OH, said they have been looking at "dry" retail, such as jewelers, or food and beverage without drive-thru, and they want the structure to be hip and cool and to be solar ready. He said since they are a national company, they try to bring best practices from other parts of the*

country that will complement the area. He said they have not picked one specific retail use yet and are not marketing the space until they have a viable project approved by the City, but would like to provide terrace space and a patio for those interested in sitting outside.

Mills said she wants to encourage having a sidewalk along the service drive as people will want to walk there on their lunch breaks. She said while she is a big fan of trees, since the existing trees don't look like old growth, she felt whatever they could do to get a sidewalk in this area would benefit the area to make it a more walkable place. She said it will be great to finally get a sidewalk along the S. State Street frontage. She commented that the elevation plans look like a really interesting building that was to her liking.

Clein said the elements are in tune with what we have been trying to achieve in the South Street Corridor Study. He said he had a major concern with having one sole access on S. State, noting that they need a second access that's not on State Street in order to function well. He said while it is a good to have retail in an outbuilding, he felt it was preferable from an urban design perspective to have the retail and hotel buildings together and both pushed toward the street instead of having people walk across a parking lot to get to the retail building. He said having them together would be a much better solution and seeing that the petitioner is asking for a zoning change and two extra stories, he felt it was worth sharing with the group and would hope they will look at this.

Clein asked what LEED Certified level design means.

Moore said it would be in regards to the energy performance they will be incorporating, conserving components of the building as well as many of the sustainability requirements such as LED lighting and compact florescent and low energy usage for the lighting and high HVAC efficiency units. He said the hotel will also be solar ready to accommodate the future installation of solar panels, and plumbing fixtures will be low volume fixtures as well as having electric charging stations on site. He said when they count up the points they could get LEED certified or SILVER but they haven't decided yet if they want to go through the process to get certified.

Clein clarified that they would design the building to be LEED "certifiable", and while he appreciates the efforts of energy efficiency that were outlined, he would like to know if they intend to go through the process of certification when the project comes back before the Commission, so they

*know what they are approving.*

*Moore said they will submit supplemental documentation to staff.*

*Franciscus asked Commissioner Clein about his comments on the placement of the hotel.*

*Clein said he suggested moving the hotel room building up to the street and be connected to the retail building in order to be more complete and have more of a street presence.*

*Franciscus asked if Clein was suggesting the retail on the ground floor with the hotel above.*

*Clein said while it would be up to the developer, they could just be connected, or integrated into one structure, which would be more in keeping with the State Street Corridor Plan.*

*Franciscus said she agrees that it would be consistent with what we are looking for in the Plan, but bringing the hotel rooms forward to the loud street would increase noise and she was wondering if there was a way to temper the issue.*

*Clein said he believed the noise is comes mainly from the I-94 freeway.*

*Bona said the result of our Area Height and Placement amendments is requiring the building to be up by the street, and not have parking in front of it. We knew we would end up with odd results, such as this and this was not the intent of our current Area Height and Placement, which was to move THE building up to the street, not a little piece of a building to meet the ordinance. She said traffic is quieter during game day because it is moving more slowly so she didn't see a difference in the noise levels by moving the building forward slightly. She said she was open to suggestions on how they could tighten up the requirement of having the whole building up by the street.*

*Woods said they should have put "the whole building" in the code language.*

*Milshiteyn said the building is very attractive for the area, and brought concerns about parking, noting there are 140 rooms and 2,800 square feet of retail. He said on game day, with only 159 parking spaces on the property, where is the overflow going to park. He said although he is not a*

*fan of having too many parking spaces, where are people going to park, once the available spaces are full.*

*Moore said not every guest comes in a car, since they arrive via transportation from the airport or in groups on busses. He said all other hotels in the area have 20 to 25% of the parking lot that does not get used.*

*Clein said part of the strategy for having a Buckeye store was to reduce the parking need.*

*Schrim said they do over 100 hotels across the country and they are very in tune with parking since they live and die by their guest experience, adding that this metric works from a guest experience standpoint and it seems counterintuitive to change it.*

*Mills asked if there will be a shuttle for this hotel to get to the downtown.*

*Schrim said they have an interest in the Sheraton, and the Sheraton has a shuttle they could use. He said they are currently slated to be Hyatt Place, with the Generation Y, that is more into the shared economy.*

*Peters said Zip Car is available in the area, which may reduce parking need. He said as a bike commuter, seeing the proposed bike amenity is something needed throughout the area.*

*Peters asked about Project Management staff comments about wet weather events.*

*Cheng read from the staff report, adding that he could get more information.*

*Gorenflo said staff was stating that sanitary flow mitigation needs to take place as part of the project and where the mitigation needs to take place.*

*Adenekan asked if the project were to be approved, when would construction begin.*

*Gorenflo said groundbreaking would be in the Spring of 2016.*

*Adenekan said, I love it!*

*Woods said she noticed the comment about parking in the Citizen*

*Participation meeting report.*

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