



PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

CITY OF NOVI

Regular Meeting

APRIL 22, 2015 7:00 PM

Council Chambers | Novi Civic Center | 45175 W. Ten Mile
(248) 347-0475

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at or about 7:00 PM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Member Giacometti, Member Greco, Member Lynch, Chair Pehrson, Member Zuchlewski

Absent: Member Anthony (excused), Member Baratta (excused),

Also Present: Barbara McBeth, Community Development Deputy Director; Sri Komaragiri; Planner; Jeremy Miller, Engineer; Rick Meader, Landscape Architect; Tom Schultz, City Attorney, Doug Necci, Façade Consultant.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Member Zuchlewski led the meeting attendees in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Member Giacometti and seconded by Member Lynch:

VOICE VOTE ON THE AGENDA APPROVAL MOTION MADE BY MEMBER GIACOPETTI AND SECONDED BY MEMBER LYNCH:

Motion to approve the April 22, 2015 Planning Commission Agenda. Motion carried 5-0.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

No one in the audience wished to participate and the audience participation was closed.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no committee reports.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPUTY DIRECTOR REPORT

Community Development Deputy Director Barbara McBeth stated that the City Council recently approved the Text Amendment that the Planning Commission had reviewed related to the residential dwellings in the Town Center District being consistent in terms of size with other multiple family districts.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. HOMWOOD SUITES, JSP14-0031

Consideration at the request of Stellar Hospitality, LLC for approval of the Preliminary Site Plan and Stormwater Management Plan. The subject property is located in Section 14, north of 11 Mile Road and east of Town Center Drive in the OSC, Office Service Commercial District. The current submittal, Homewood Suites, includes a five story extended stay hotel with 88 rooms along with associated parking, loading and landscape on 1.87 acres of the total site.

Planner Sri Komaragiri stated that the subject property is the located in the north east side of Eleven Mile Road and Town Center intersection in Section 14, behind the Walmart in Town Center area. There are office and commercials uses in the vicinity. It was studied as part of Hotel-Office area during Town center Area study. With visibility from I-96, the hotel office area is intended to promote the Towne Center area's regional appeal.

The subject property is zoned OSC, Office Service Commercial and is surrounded by the same on all sides with Town Center district on the West. Transient Residential Uses such as hotels are a permitted use in such districts.

The Future Land Use map indicates Office Commercial for this property and surrounding properties and Town Center Commercial on the West. The proposed use, an extended stay hotel is compatible with our Future Land use Map and is also a preferred land use for this property in Town Center Area Study recommendations. There are no regulated wetlands and woodlands areas on the property.

The applicant is proposing a five story extended stay hotel with 88 rooms along with associated parking, loading and landscape on 1.87 acres of the total site. During the first round of review, Planning has identified multiple variances that would be required especially for proposing parking in the front yard, among other minor deviations. The applicant has since worked with the staff to come up with an amicable solution to eliminate parking in the front yard and propose landscape buffers and pedestrian amenities such as benches. The current plan is in alignment with the Town Center Area study recommendations. There are still some variances required for reducing parking setbacks, absence of loading space, and dumpster encroachment into parking setbacks. Planning recommends approval pending Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the variances. The revised submittal has addressed all the comments for storm water management from the first review and Engineering recommends approval.

The current landscape plan is more complete and addresses most of the concerns from the original site plan. Due to the proposed site layout and the existing easements along Town Center Drive, the landscape plan is not meeting the minimum required for right of way trees, perimeter parking trees and for exceeding the maximum allowed such as parking spaces between islands. It would require Planning Commission waivers. Staff supports the requested waivers due to limited space available for additional planting. The applicant is also requesting a waiver for proposing a brick wall instead of the required berm along Town Center Drive. The Town Center Area is intended is to serve as a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented focal point for the City of Novi. The proposed wall along with shrubs and amenities enhances the streetscape along Town Center drive and creates an inviting environment for pedestrians. The Landscape review letter supports this waiver and recommends approval.

Traffic also recommends approval with additional comments to be addressed during Final Site Plan. The building façade is in full compliance with the Façade Ordinance. It significantly uses stone and brick, the samples of which are provided by the applicant. Façade recommends approval.

Fire was concerned with single access to and from the site, but the applicant has addressed the concern by proposing a secondary emergency access to the site to the west. The applicant also agreed to expand the width of the emergency access to 20 feet from what is currently shown and Fire recommends approval.

The Planning Commission is asked today to approve the Preliminary Site Plan and the storm water management plan. Planner Komaragiri is available to answer any questions and so is the applicant Jimmy Asmar from Stellar Hospitality, LLC and the engineer Andy Andre from Bud design.

Chair Pehrson asked the applicant if they wished to address the board.

Andy Andre from Bud Design and Engineering stated that he is the Architect and Engineer working on the project and Jimmy Asmar is the applicant. Sri did a good job describing the project as a whole. They have been working very closely with staff on this project. They initially came up with a different type of layout but have been diligently working with the staff members and other departments to try and come up with something better which is what is being presented tonight. Along Town Center Drive there is an existing walkway on the east side that is onto the property; this is one of their several constraints. There is also an existing 20 foot water main that runs along that portion of the property. When they took it into consideration, from a landscape perspective, working with Engineering, they were not in agreements with building a berm over top of this water main. They are proposing tonight a street scape, an enhanced version with a wall. The brick will match the building and it will be a great looking corner. This is the concept they will be bringing to this project. When you look at this property, there is cross access. They are not proposing any new drives on the Town Center. They will utilize the cross access and there are cross access easements in place that will provide them full access. They worked very closely with the Fire Department to address their needs as well.

Jimmy Asmar with Stellar Hospitality, 32825 Northwestern Highway, Farmington Hills, stated that they are happy to be part of this project and hope to get approval and be part of the community.

Chair Pehrson turned the discussion over to the Commission for consideration.

Member Giacometti stated that he does not have any questions but is curious about the encroachment of the dumpsters on the parking setback. They had a similar issue with an applicant at the last meeting and would like the applicant to share how they plan to address this.

Mr. Andre stated that they have a drive that provides cross access to the other hotel development along the southern portion of their property. This gives them a more reduced site. Along the eastern portion of the property is a shared drive along with the parking which creates a constraint. When they looked at the location of the dumpster, they wanted to position it in a location that would provide direct access for the trash vehicles to be able to access it but not block any cross access that they have in place. They put it in the corner where they felt it would be the most effective. They had an issue when it came to that setback, however with the location of where it is at in the north east portion of the property, it is out of sight and at the low elevation portion of the property and has heavy landscaping around it. This makes it not visible and unaffected to the entire development.

Member Greco stated that he feels it is a good project and is happy that the applicant has

worked with the staff to deal with different issues including the site as he had described.

Moved by Member Greco and seconded by Member Lynch:

ROLL CALL VOTE ON THE PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN APPROVAL MADE BY MEMBER GRECO AND SECONDED BY MEMBER LYNCH:

In the matter of Homewood Suites, JSP14-31, motion to approve the Preliminary Site Plan based on the following findings:

- a. Landscape waiver to permit the absence of the Right of Way trees (7 required, 0 provided) between the existing sidewalk and the curb along Town Center Drive as listed in Section 5.5.3.B.ii due to limited space available for planting, which is hereby granted;
- b. Landscape waiver to permit a decorative wall instead of the required berm adjacent to Public Right of Way as listed in Section 5.5.3.A.(5) due to space limitations, grading and utility easement, decorative wall with landscaping is proposed, which is hereby granted;
- c. Landscape waiver to exceed the minimum allowed parking spaces between planting islands by 1 space (15 spaces allowed, 16 proposed) as listed in Section 5.5.3.C.ii due to proposed site layout, which is hereby granted;
- d. Landscape waiver to permit the reduction in minimum requirements for Perimeter Parking Lot Landscape Calculations (21 required, 7 provided) as listed in Section 5.5.3.C.iii due to limited space available for planting, which is hereby granted;
- e. Zoning Board of Appeals variance from Section 3.1.23.D of City Zoning Ordinance to reduce the minimum parking setbacks; (Side setback on North: required 20 ft., provided approximately 10 ft. and rear setback on East: required 20 ft., provided approximately 6 ft.)
- f. Zoning Board of Appeals variance from Section 5.4.1 of City Zoning Ordinance to not provide a loading space;
- g. Zoning Board of Appeals variance from Section 4.19.2.F.iv of City Zoning Ordinance to allow a corner of the dumpster to be located within parking setbacks;
- h. Increase the width of the Emergency access to twenty feet as indicated in the response letter; and
- i. The findings of compliance with Ordinance standards in the staff and consultant review letters and the conditions and the items listed in those letters being addressed on the Final Site Plan.

This motion is made because the plan is otherwise in compliance with Article 3, Article 4 and Article 5 of the Zoning Ordinance and all other applicable provisions of the Ordinance. *Motion carried 5-0.*

Moved by Member Greco and seconded by Member Lynch:

ROLL CALL VOTE ON THE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN APPROVAL MADE BY MEMBER GRECO AND SECONDED BY MEMBER LYNCH:

In the matter of Homewood Suites, JSP14-31, motion to approve the Stormwater Management Plan based on and subject to the findings of compliance with Ordinance standards in the staff and consultant review letters, and the conditions and items listed in

those letters being addressed on the Final Site Plan. This motion is made because the plan is otherwise in compliance with Chapter 11 of the Code of Ordinances and all other applicable provisions of the Ordinance. *Motion carried 5-0.*

2. APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 25, 2015 PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Moved by Member Giacometti and seconded by Member Greco:

VOICE VOTE ON THE MARCH 25, 2015 PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES APPROVAL MOTION MADE BY MEMBER GIACOPETTI AND SECONDED BY MEMBER GRECO:

Motion to approve the March 25, 2015 Planning Commission minutes. *Motion carried 5-0.*

3. APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 8, 2015 PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Moved by Member Giacometti and seconded by Member Lynch:

VOICE VOTE ON THE APRIL 8, 2015 PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES APPROVAL MOTION MADE BY MEMBER GIACOPETTI AND SECONDED BY MEMBER LYNCH:

Motion to approve the April 8, 2015 Planning Commission minutes. *Motion carried 5-0.*

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

Deputy Director McBeth stated we would like to continue with the training, education and discussion with our staff and consultants on various items that the Planning Commission takes a look at on a regular basis. We will work out a schedule over the next several months to do so. Doug Necci was willing to be the first to come and speak with the Planning Commission.

1. ARCHITECTURAL/FAÇADE PRESENTATION BY DOUG NECCI, DRN & ASSOCIATES

Doug Necci stated that he is a Façade Consultant and has been for quite a few years. It has been a pleasure to work with the staff on a day-to-day basis. He had a role in writing the initial façade ordinance and has knowledge on the history of it. One of the objectives was to provide a framework from the applicant's perspective so that a person could read an ordinance and have a clear idea of how to achieve compliance without a whole lot of complexity. To do that, a façade chart is included in the ordinance which contains a list of materials with a hierarchy of good to less good. Fundamentally the ordinance encourages using brick as much as possible.

In Façade Region 1 it is required that you use a minimum of 30 percent brick. Rather than follow zoning districts, the zoning ordinance consists of three façade regions based on the degree of visibility within the community. If you are within 500 feet of a major thoroughfare, you are in Façade Region 1. If you are in an industrial subdivision not within 500 feet of a major thoroughfare, you are in Façade Region 3 which is the lowest threshold. Lower quality materials are allowed in greater percentages in that region. Façade Region 2 is an in-between area between the two. Any building within 500 feet of a major thoroughfare has to have a minimum of 30 percent brick in Novi. It gives an applicant a shortcut to meeting the ordinance. At the same time, we do not want to inhibit creative design. A building that is 100 percent brick could be very boring and ugly and not be what they are looking for.

Mr. Necci stated that he knows the Commission is aware of the Section 9 Waiver. When they reformatted sections of the ordinance, this waiver stayed in Paragraph 9. The purpose of this

waiver is to allow flexibility. This façade chart is not the be-all and end-all to good architecture. It encourages good materials but does not guarantee good design. It allows the architects that have a creative approach to a building to express their creativity without worrying about the precise percentages in the ordinance.

All buildings, canopies and dumpster enclosures fall under the ordinance along with retaining walls that abut a building so that they match the building and dumpster enclosures have to match the primary materials of the building. There is a section for roof screening; any roof equipment has to be screened from view. This is looked at from all perspectives, not just on the site. For example, if there is a highway overpass nearby, the requirements for the height of the roof screening may be greater than if there is no elevated topography around the building.

The sample board shown in front of the Commission members tonight is an example of a requirement of the ordinance that the applicant must submit. The boards are retained in the records and an inspection is done before the material is installed on the building to keep on top of any changes that may be made on the design based on the availability of the materials. These inspections are done with a one day notice so there is no delay in terms of the constructability of the project.

From how the ordinance was designed to begin with, it was meant to be a user-friendly ordinance. As an architect, Mr. Necci works in other communities that have façade ordinances and many of them are hard to interpret. They are subjective and you are at the mercy of a committee that reviews it. To some extent, that is present in Novi's ordinance but he is proud of the fact that it is fairly obvious to the applicant what is being required in regards to brick, stone and the quality of materials. He gets compliments from architects that say that compared to other cities, this ordinance seems to work and not threaten their creative spirit.

Chair Pehrson inquired about the panels on the Providence Park building and how people are inquiring about the materials and the transition from brick to the materials that they see in front of them on the display boards. He understands that Mr. Necci looks at the durability specifications from the manufacturer and is aware there have been issues with Providence Park materials. It may not have been expected because it was new. Are there things they need to do to safeguard themselves?

Mr. Necci stated that the façade chart has basic, historically-accepted materials. It does not have new or trendy types of materials on it. There are some generic categories, but that product on Providence Parkway is a synthetic wood product that was very new at the time. He feels they received a batch that was not very good and recalls it was all replaced at the manufacturer's cost. The ordinance addresses that - which is the idea behind brick - because it is a permanent proven material; while it is not infallible, it is very reliable, durable and trustworthy material. This is the reason for the waiver. If a person has a new material that is not listed on the chart, they review it and compare it to other materials and find its equivalency with brick and stone being the benchmark as far as durability and longevity. Fabric awnings and EIFS are commonly used materials but the life span is a fraction of what brick and stone would be. The ordinance is designed to have our buildings be enduring as well as nice looking from the building. Painted finishes are subject to maintenance, so brick is not allowed to be painted.

Member Lynch stated that the Section 9 Waiver seems to be one of the most common waivers that they receive on site plans. He asked Mr. Necci why he thinks that is so?

Mr. Necci stated that it is because the applicants know that we are not going to be sticklers

about the percentages of the materials used as required under the ordinance. There are architects that are accustomed to the ordinance and they have learned that the intent of the ordinance is not to be precise but to encourage good materials. When they do a review, they measure the percentages precisely but then ask the Planning Commission to give a waiver if the design is consistent with the intent of the ordinance. The word waiver means that maybe the ordinance isn't concise or there is an issue. In this case, it is a way of allowing creative flexibility from the architects. We are blessed with some great architects in town. Probably two thirds of applicants have architecturally designed buildings that are thought of as an expression of architecture. There is another percentage that is economically driven to the point where architecture is not the priority. It is on those applicants where they end up getting into the give and take. Many times they get into a dialogue with an applicant saying that they need to increase the percentage of brick or do something to get it closer to the ordinance. If they do that, they might be 10 percent to 15 percent off which isn't a ground for rejection, therefore they recommend a waiver.

Member Lynch stated that it is the frequency that caused him to ask this question and he is always concerned that it seems to be value engineering because brick is expensive and a different material may not be. This is how he has looked at the waivers and is glad that this has been presented to the Commission because now he is looking at it slightly different in terms of design. On another note, the ordinance is a way for them to have some input as to how the city looks. In terms of the three façade regions, his concern is consistency. When they grant a waiver for one project and another project comes along, there is a lot of interpretation in terms of standards.

Mr. Necci stated that there is a consistency to their recommendations. There are some products that they consider equivalent to brick that are not technically generically brick. They maintain that interpretation. Eventually they will revise the ordinance; every few years they will update the terminology in the ordinance to patch those holes. There is a general consistency and they would never diminish a requirement based on region. For example if an applicant was "almost" in a region, this is not basis for a waiver. When you look at the façade and the composition of the façade, if the proportionality makes sense, they would not want them to change a window or change the composition of a building just to meet a percentage. It is in this realm that the waiver takes place.

Member Lynch asked if there are other communities that are really strict down to the exact amount of brick?

Mr. Necci stated that he thinks Novi is one of the toughest as far as brick. This was a way they gave the applicant an avenue for automatic approval; have 30 percent brick and keep the other percentage of materials within the ordinance. There is no denial of this design and this is the purpose of the ordinance. They do not get this complaint very often from applicants. They are pretty cooperative and the ordinance speaks for itself. When the ordinance was written, there was talk about having an architectural committee. There are some cities that have this committee and it is a whole separate process that is out of the realm of the Planning Commission. The architectural review committee makes a recommendation to the Planning Commission. It is another step of the process that is no more user friendly than the ordinance that Novi uses. In some respects, our ordinance is a more user friendly approach when it is all handled in one step instead of two.

Member Lynch inquired about not allowing the painting of brick.

Mr. Necci stated that you will see buildings that have painted brick and it would have occurred before the ordinance or without asking. If there is a request to paint brick, in general that would not be allowed. The idea of brick is that it needs to be natural clay colored brick.

Member Lynch asked how one would go about getting a waiver to paint brick?

Mr. Necci stated that he does not believe that they would never allow it, but it is not encouraged. There is one building in particular where they made them stain the brick because the brick was blotchy and they literally had to stain each individual brick with a small roller. There is another building in a prominent corner of the city that was previously painted and they had the applicant faux paint the brick. The literally had to paint individual bricks different colors to create the visual effect of brick. It had been painted previously so many times that the brick literally would have fallen off if they tried to remove the paint because it was so deteriorated, so there are special considerations made as needed.

Member Lynch asked if someone wants to paint a brick building, do they have to ask the Planning Commission for permission?

Mr. Necci stated that they should.

Deputy Director McBeth stated if a building owner wanted to modify the façade, usually one of the staff planners will ask what it is they want to do. They will ask for a submittal of a plan to take a look at. Occasionally applicants come in with something that is not acceptable and the planners will indicate that, or they will share it with Doug and he will say so. Planners try to work with the applicant to come with something that could be supported in front of the Planning Commission but that is not always the case.

Member Lynch stated that he is not asking about new construction but existing construction.

Deputy Director McBeth stated that they still should come to the Planning Commission if a waiver is needed. A number of years ago there was someone who came to the Planning Commission for painted brick and she recalls that it was controversial. The ordinance may be strict, but they get feedback from developers that say as long as the city is consistent in the application of the ordinance, they seem to be okay with it.

Chair Pehrson thanked Mr. Necci for his diligence with the city and for coming to speak with them tonight.

SUPPLEMENTAL ISSUES

There were no supplemental issues.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

No one in the audience wished to speak.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Member Lynch and seconded by Member Greco:

VOICE VOTE ON MOTION TO ADJOURN MADE BY MEMBER LYNCH AND SECONDED BY MEMBER GRECO:

Motion to adjourn the April 22, 2015 Planning Commission meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 PM.

Transcribed by Stephanie Ramsay
April 25, 2015
Date Approved:

Richelle Leskun, Planning Assistant
Signature on File