

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES – August 17, 2022

CPC ITEMS:

1. The **PKWYS** representative made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the July 20, 2022 meeting, which was seconded by the **CPA** representative and unanimously adopted.

The Committee passed a motion to adopt hearing rules for public comment. The following procedures shall be observed:

1. Each Speaker shall give their name and address prior to speaking on the proposal.
 2. The applicant or representative will speak first. The presentation shall be limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes for each applicant or representative speaker. But in no event, shall the cumulative presentation total by applicant(s) or their representative(s) exceed ten (10) minutes.
 3. Proponents (persons in favor of the proposal) will speak next and be allowed two (2) minutes per speaker.
 4. Opponents (persons in opposition of the proposal) will speak next and be allowed two (2) minutes per speaker.
 5. The applicant or representative will be allowed a rebuttal. The rebuttal shall be limited to a cumulative maximum of three (3) minutes.
2. **Consideration:** Design Review 025/22 – Proposal for a new construction, multi-family residential development. The development requires DAC review because it exceeds 40,000 square feet in floor area. (VM)

Staff provided an overview of the project and stated the request came before the DAC for conceptual review on May 18, 2022, and that no motions were made since the applicant had not submitted an official application at the time.

The Executive Director of the City Planning Commission acknowledged that a large volume of public comments was received and reviewed. He also provided guidance about the scope of the design review process and next steps for the application. He concluded that many of the residents' concerns regarding wildlife, density and permeability will be reviewed by Safety Permits and if applicable by state run agencies.

There was an abundance of public comment voiced at the meeting. A summary of the expressed comments is as follows:

- Several English Turn residents expressed concern about the eradication of trees and the displacement of wildlife. Concern was also expressed about a lack of pedestrian orientation and the lack of available sidewalks, public transportation, and bicycle parking regarding the development's design.

- Residents expressed concern that the proposed design would not fit in with the character development of the neighborhood.
- Residents expressed concern about their continuous boil water advisories and long response times from police regarding public safety concerns and that the proposed development will exacerbate the issue.
- Residents would like a traffic (specifically about Highway 406) and drainage impact study completed.
- Residents expressed concern about taking care of the families that would reside in the complex and the lack of nearby schools, grocery stores etc.
- Residents expressed concern that residents of the apartment complex would bring additional crime and traffic to the area, since they are not homeowners and would encourage economic disinvestment or flight from the area.
- Residents expressed concern that the development would be a disservice to future residents of the site, due to a lack of nearby grocery stores and schools. In addition, the applicant's representatives were asked if they would want to live next to the development

During the applicant's rebuttal, the landscape architect for the development stated they will work to preserve as many trees as possible and will conduct a study on the drainage issues. The project architect stated that the architect for the development is registered in Louisiana. The applicant asked for the residents to combine their concerns and submit it to them, so that the applicant's representatives can review and respond.

DAC COMMENTS

Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC) – states the applicant has been as responsive as they can regarding massing, density as much as they can to mirror single-family developments, but this ultimately won't be a single-family development.

Question – Is there a way to retain more forestation than currently being proposed?

Response – The applicant can provide less housing but would need to make sure the project remains viable. The representatives also argue that a large majority of the trees of the site are detrimental to the site and can also do better regarding preservation.

Question – Is there a landscape buffer that can be provided?

Answer – One isn't required by the zoning but it's a possibility to be provided.

Statement – The roof massing and window placements are odd, but overall, the development is on a high design scale. More information about roof massing and their views from the public right of way is needed.

Parks and Parkways (PKWY) – There’s space to create an evergreen buffer and to increase the front yard setback to help build the buildings into the woodland experience. The color scheme of the site is appropriate. Will work with applicant on cut through. There needs to be a mix of native species.

Question – where is the swimming pool and other amenities? The amenities need to be considered with what they have showed us, not on the adjacent parcel (which is outside the scope of this review)

Statement – Additional sidewalks that were mentioned in public comment would be out of scope with nearby properties in the surrounding neighborhood.

Capital Projects – There is too much uniformity, would like more coloring and intentional design. The lack of proposed amenities is alarming as well as the potential the environmental impact.

Department of Public Works (DPW) - Would like better connections in regard to buildings 1 & 2, and in regard to the overall walkability of the site.

PKWY – The applicant may want to consider a culvert for stormwater storage.

The **HDLC** representative made a motion for **DEFERRAL**, to allow the applicant to update the plans with the below requested changes, which was seconded by the **PKWYS** representative and unanimously adopted.

1. A full set of building elevations to determine massing, roof forms and exterior details.
2. 3-D renderings to convey the entirety of the site and address comments regarding site connectivity, circulation, landscape buffers and site context with adjacent neighborhoods.
3. **Consideration:** Design Review 038/22 – Request by Children’s Hospital for consideration of its Institutional Signage Plan. The development requires DAC review pursuant to Section 15.5.G of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. (VG)

The staff provided an overview of the case and the applicant spoke on behalf of the application. HDLC and CPA voiced concerns regarding the curved sign at the bus shelter and it was noted that that the noncompliance was an existing condition. HDLC also requested that internal illumination of signed be eliminated. CPC staff pointed out that the proposed wall signage is too large and is facing Avenger Field, rather than a street. The staff notes that this sign was previously considered under DR022-21 and the applicant was notified of the non-compliance during that review. The **CPA** representative moved to approve proposal pending revisions from the applicant. **DPW** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

4. **Consideration:** Design Review 040/22 – Proposal for a new construction commercial development. The development requires DAC review because it has over 100 feet of street frontage along a CT Corridor Transformation Design Overlay District. (CB)

Staff provided an overview of the project, stating that the applicant is proposing to create a new development on the existing vacant lot that would feature two retail buildings, 2 additional retail buildings for future development (14,381 sf), 84 parking spaces (80 standard, 4 ADA spaces), 6 temporary bike parking spaces, and permeable paving in the parking lot.

The site is a total area of 112,663 sf. The development will feature two spaces for lease of 14,381 sf, parking area of 52,469 sf, and 31,432 sf of green space, which is 27.9% of the lot area and is compliant with bulk regulations of the C-1 district. A sign is proposed along the north facing line of the property, along Chef Menteur Hwy, and there was no attached tree plan or landscaping plan.

The site is also subject to Building Design Standards found in Section 15, 15.3.B in which ground floor of newly constructed commercial buildings shall contain a minimum transparency of fifty percent (50%) on the primary street and windows shall be constructed of transparent glass, outlot buildings shall be designed with showcase windows and entrances oriented to the street, and when the center's frontage on the primary street exceeds two-hundred fifty (250) feet in width, part of the center and/or outlot buildings shall hold at least fifty percent (50%) of the front lot line.

The Applicant mentioned they were attempting to get a finalized site plan before doing the landscaping plan.

DAC COMMENTS

City Planning Commission (CPC) – Read the CT Corridor standards, mentioned the need for a primary entry facing the public street. The applicant addressed Standard 1, noting the 6 spaces for bike parking and mentioned the plans for landscaping included buffers in between the parking lot and Chef Menteur Hwy. CPC recommends connecting the sidewalks to the building and enhancing the bike parking in any way, in addition to transparency along the public facing road and modifying the structure to project to the front of the lot.

Capital Projects – Recommended deferral, as there was no landscape plan with color renderings and elevations to conduct a full review of the design. CP reiterates that the main entry needs to face Chef Menteur.

Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC) – recommends doing a corner entry to keep the number of entry points to one, and it orients towards the street.

Department of Public Works (DPW) - recommends that the sidewalks be set back further from the street, as well as designated handicapped access to the ramps. DPW also noticed the single rack for bike access would be insufficient; recommends three individual double racks. DPW also notes the distance between the grocery and the proposed dumpster location is far, recommends reviewing the placement.

The **HDLC** representative made a motion for **DEFERRAL**, to allow the applicant to update the plans with the below requested changes, which was seconded by the **PKWYS** representative and unanimously adopted.

1. Provide color renderings of landscape plan and elevations
 2. Reorient the structure to face Chef Menteur Highway and relocate the structure closer to Chef Menteur Highway, perhaps by incorporating a corner entry along Chef Menteur Highway.
 3. Update structure to include a minimum transparency of 50%, constructed of transparent glass.
 4. Improve overall pedestrian circulation from parking lot to buildings.
 5. Connect sidewalks from street to the building, increase sidewalk setback away from the street, and improve designated handicap access to the ramps.
 6. Update bike racks from single racks to 3 individual double racks and enhance the bike storage in any meaningful way.
 7. Relocate dumpster closer to the grocery store.
5. **Consideration:** Design Review 150/19 – Consideration of changes to approved plans for the construction of a new ferry terminal. The project was previously approved at the September 18, 2019 DAC meeting. (DAC only)

The applicant presented preliminary plans to create a landscaped pedestrian pathway in an existing pedestrian area that is currently paved in asphalt. The pathway provides a pedestrian connection across Canal Street from Caesar's Casino to the Four Seasons Hotel. The landscaped area was previously planned for this area, but removed due to maintenance costs. It is being brought back into the project scope due to an agreement from the Audubon Aquarium to provide maintenance.

The plans presented are conceptual and do not include a detailed landscape plan or details of the retaining seat wall. The site plan shows a cross-shaped main pathway into the site that is based on the existing triangular sidewalk layout on the other side of Canal Street. The **HDLC** representative recommended that the applicant modify the pathway layout to better tie into the curvilinear patterning at the adjacent site to unify the spaces. She questioned how the movement of green space is in rhythm with bands and how the use of hardscape could create patterns. She further explained that there should be concepts converging and creating opportunity for terrace conditions or improvements of visual of something more than just a cross walk. She also suggested that details be worked out for the retaining wall to incorporate seating. The **CPC** representative suggested reviewing detailed landscape plans with the Department of Parks and Parkways. The **CPA** representative stated that the design should provide a way to move people from the RTA transit stop and Ferry terminal to other areas with an emphasis on safety. The applicant stated that they would take the advice into consideration.

The **HDLC** representative made a motion for **APPROVAL** subject to one proviso which was seconded by the **CPA** representative and unanimously adopted.

Proviso

1. Modify pedestrian pathways to mimic the curvilinear geometry of the Four Seasons site and refine details of the seating wall.
2. Provide detailed drawings including:
 - drainage and grading plan,
 - site details, showing curb heights,
 - utility relocation plan, including drainage structures to be relocated or abandoned within the expanded plaza,
 - landscape and irrigation plans,
 - ADA-accessibility as well as internal circulation plans, and
 - material call-outs and specifications (ADA detectable warning tiles, granite curbing, paving, exterior lighting)