

FARMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS
Maxfield Education Center, 32789 Ten Mile Road,
Farmington, Michigan
September 22, 2014

Chairperson Bowman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Maxfield Education Center, 32789 Ten Mile Road, Farmington, Michigan.

ROLL CALL

Present: Bowman, Buyers, Chiara, Crutcher, Gronbach, Majoros

Absent: Babcock

A quorum of the Commission was present.

OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT: Director Christiansen, Building Inspector Koncsol, City Attorney Saarela

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Crutcher, seconded by Buyer, to approve the agenda as submitted.
Motion carried, all ayes.

**PUBLIC HEARING – PUD PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT PRELIMINARY PLAN
AND PUD AGREEMENT – GRAND RIVER – HALSTED PLAZA**

Chairperson Bowman introduced this agenda item and turned it over to staff.

Director Christiansen stated that at the September 8th Planning Commission Meeting there was a pre-application conference on this item and that the matter was scheduled for a Public Hearing for tonight. He indicated the Applicants submitted a plan, a survey, elevations and attached an aerial photo of the site. He stated that attached with the Commissioners' packets was also a report from LSL Planning dated 9-17-14. He indicated Brad Strader from LSL was present and would go over the report.

Bowman thanked Christiansen for the introduction and asked Brad Strader from LSL to come forward.

Strader came to the podium and stated that he had provided a report to the Planning Commission on the submitted information from the applicant. He stated that a PUD gives flexibility for use of a particular property in return for the City getting benefit from it such as higher quality architecture, etc. He went over some of the details for the southern part of the site that Suburban Collection will occupy for new car prep. He then stated the tile store will be renovated and there will be a new three story building constructed with retail on the first floor and offices on the second and third. He pointed out a couple key areas of the proposed plan stating a driveway is being removed and the existing buffer from the multiple family on the southeastern part, they will be adding to the landscape. He stated that this initial plan, conceptual plan, if approved, will go

forward to City Council and if approved there, the site plan will come back before the Planning Commission to work out the details.

He further went on to state that he felt the standards of the ordinance had been met, that one of the benefits is that they are reusing a largely vacant site, putting in extensive landscaping in front along Grand River and other areas on the site, and the shared vehicular access and getting rid of the driveway are three recognizable benefits. He also indicated that they don't have enough details about the architecture to know that it is of higher quality for them to include that in their lists of benefits. He went on to detail the key things on this project including building design, satisfying the city wanting a welcome to Farmington gateway sign at western edge of site as you enter Grand River, adding greenery where the driveway was removed, he felt the eastern driveway should be tightened up. He also states that LSL is recommending that the three-story building should be pushed closer to Grand River and that pedestrian sidewalks be implemented into the plan. According to parking calculations, they meet the ordinance unless a restaurant is put in where they require more parking. He also addressed the timing of the project and its emphasis on the southern end of the parcel and would like to see a commitment from the Applicant as to timelines on the entire project.

Lonnie Zimmerman, architect for the project, introduced Tom Duke, property owner, the Farrar Group, and Suburban Collection representatives.

He went over the history of the site, stating K-Mart had 160,000 square feet of retail space and opened for business in the 1960's. It is a 14.04 acre site and almost totally abandoned. He explained that Mr. Duke is the owner of the Lotus Bank Building which is located across Grand River and had spent years trying to find uses for it and eventually ended up purchasing it in order to protect his own interests and to develop it as a viable site for Farmington as well. He stated they are aware of the Vision Plan of the city and knows this is a gateway to the City and want to make it a focus for the developers.

He went on to state the two front parcels will be retail/office, that the Tile Store's entrance will be turned to face Grand River and detailed the parking requirements for the retail stores. He explained the reasoning behind wanting two rows of parking in front.

Heavy landscaping will be put in throughout and they will be utilizing flowering cherry trees, similar to those at the Lotus Bank Building, so as to have a colonnade effect of trees as you enter Farmington to west.

Tom Duke stated he built the Lotus Bank Building in 1986 which has 90,000 square feet and has 90-95 percent occupancy. He stated he had watched the old Kmart site deteriorate over the years and when the owner decided to sell it, he bought it as a defensive move so he can control it and monitor its use.

He explained that dividing the site the way they have here, makes it quite productive on the front and rear of the parcel. He stated the new businesses will bring jobs to the city.

He went on to state that he had tried to purchase the Shell Station but that it cannot be bought as it is under contract to bankruptcy court.

He addressed the items pointed out in the LSL report, stating he disagrees with LSL as to the location of the new building and also the width of the truck path. He then responded to the issue of timing of the development of the site.

Zimmerman went through the Power Point presentation of the plans for the project briefly for the Commission and audience.

Gronbach questioned how many square feet the retail part of the building is and Zimmerman responded a little under 10,000 and that had no preleasing had been done.

Zimmerman also pointed out there could be space for restaurants and other interesting uses and flexibility of the first floor tenants. He went on to detail the variety of architecture intended for the building that would give a dynamic feeling to Farmington.

Bowman opened the floor to questions from the Commission; hearing none, the Public Hearing was then opened.

Motion by Gronbach, seconded by Buyers, to move to open Public Hearing.
Motion carried, all ayes.

PUBLIC HEARING

Tom Buck, 23848 Whitaker Street, stated he is excited to see development happening on this corner.

Sara Scott, who lives in downtown Farmington, and her home faces Fitness 19, addressed the issue of storefront parking.

Motion by Buyers, seconded by Crutcher, to close the public hearing.
Motion carried, all ayes.

(Public Hearing closed)

Brad Strader addressed some of the applicants' comments and indicated that perhaps a compromise would be to put in street scape along Grand River frontage.

Duke responded that it doesn't sound unreasonable, is probably doable and could be attractive.

Christiansen summarized the dialogue between LSL and the Applicants, as being an issue of timing of the development of the site and stated that repurposing The Tile Shop is of top priority as well as getting the Suburban Collection on line and by addressing the Grand River frontage by putting in a streetscape could pacify the delay of the new construction.

Crutcher expressed some concern with the Suburban Collection and the site plan showing the truck unloading area and Zimmerman indicated revised site plan had been submitted and the building will be moved further west. He then asked about the landscaping wall being replaced with concrete and Zimmerman stated that the current wall has many elevations and that they are going to put an 8 foot high wall extending the length of the Tile Shop to the driveway and all rear lighting will be removed and put on the wall side. The balance of the east property line will be maintained with a 6-foot high wall and an additional buffer of 20 feet of landscape with trees.

Crutcher raised questions about sidewalks and bus stops and Zimmerman responded that the LSL report mentioned possibly adding a sidewalk to the landscape strip along Grand River that can take you into the property which can be addressed in the final site plan.

Gronbach asked for more detail on the landscaping plan as far as the buffer zone between the auto part and the front and suggested that brick pavers could be worked into some of the crosswalks.

Zimmerman responded they do not have a landscape architect on board yet, but will have one by the next step of the plan.

MOTION by Gronbach, seconded by Crutcher, that the Planning Commission move the proposed PUD for the Grand River – Halstead Plaza forward to City Council for review. Motion carried, all ayes.

PUBLIC HEARING – PUD - PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT PRELIMINARY PLAN AND PUD AGREEMENT – DOWNTOWN FARMINGTON CENTER: FRESH THYME

Chairperson Bowman introduced this agenda item and indicated it was before the Planning Commission in April and then turned it over to staff.

Christiansen stated the item is before the Planning Commission for a Public Hearing for a proposed PUD plan for a portion of the Downtown Farmington Center, also known as the Kimco Center. A pre-application conference was held at the April 14th Planning Commission Meeting and the applicants subsequently met with members of Administration and went through various plan changes and then the Public Hearing was set and all property owners within 300 feet of the property were notified as well as a notice published in the Observer.

He indicated the preliminary plan includes a survey, a proposed site plan, proposed building floor plan and elevations and perspective of the proposed building façade. There is also an aerial photo attached with the plans.

LSL Planning did a review and sent a letter dated 9/17/14. Brad Strader was present to go through the findings of the review. He stated he had worked with the City on the Downtown plan and was excited for a new tenant, a specialty grocer, to become a part of the revitalized center. He said most comments in his report were positive, they felt it was a good use, met standards of PUD ordinance.

He stated the proposal was to take the old Office Depot space and put in a Fresh Thyme grocer. Orchard Street has an existing service drive in the back and they propose putting an inset area for unloading of trucks within the store so to take traffic off of Orchard. All angled parking would be taken out and they would be cleaning up the front and change the site with landscaping. He went over the Power Point presentation with the Commission and audience. He indicated they would like to see more improvements to the rear by adding more landscaping and improve the transition from residential to the north. And as far as the front, they would like to see more prominent streetscape with wider sidewalks. He went over the pros and cons of a video provided of the Columbus, Ohio store and discussed parking issues, signage, providing a buffer in rear and updating lighting as well as cart storage.

Chairperson Bowman opened the floor up for questions from the Commissioners.

Chiara commented that in order to utilize parking in the rear that a secondary door for customers in the back would work very well.

The applicants were invited to come to the podium

Rob Nadler of Kimco Realty, owner of shopping center, and Scott Tucker, Vice President of Kimco, as well as Joe Volpe of Herschman Architects, were introduced.

Nadler stated that this is a special opportunity having Fresh Thyme come into the downtown. He said they have three leases with Fresh Thyme at present in Kimco's portfolio, that they are a specialty grocery store, featuring fresh produce from local growers with value pricing. He cited a success story wherein Fresh Thyme was brought into a recently revitalized shopping center in Ohio and occupancy went from 50 to 90 percent with them as anchor. He indicated Kimco is ready to make a financial commitment with this multimillion dollar project but at this time is not prepared to commit to a secondary entrance.

Joe Volpe with Herschman Architects stated that some of the information provided is the same as the previous presentation with modifications of parking and building façade. He stated they plan on removing the existing building and put tenant in new building in existing footprint. He went over the details of their plans, to remove angle parking in front and islands and improve access of carts to parking lot. They widened

roof over sidewalk in front of Fresh Thyme and added planting beds to help improve streetscape. They worked with the City Engineer to get truck access to rear of building without requiring any truck access coming down Grove Street. He went into the reasoning for the signage proposed, to provide Fresh Thyme with a presence. He stated they are proposing a new façade, different than the last version the Planning Commission had seen. He indicated the rear of the store would be dressed up to improve rear exposure and the path between Fitness 19 and Fresh Thyme, they will be adding new landscape beds in that aisle way.

Chairperson Bowman opened the floor up to questions from the Commissioners.

Gronbach inquired what the red front façade was and Volpe responded vertical metal siding. He then asked if it was accurate as to what is being proposed and the Applicant responded in the affirmative. Gronbach also stated that the signage should be reviewed with the DDA and the Design Committee of the DDA.

Nadler indicated they are very cognizant of the importance of this project to downtown and respect that.

Crutcher inquired of the number of employees and Nadler indicated he would get that information and provide it at a later date. The required employee parking in the rear was discussed and there being 88 spaces as well as the need for a crosswalk.

Majoros asked of staff about the consistency of the look of Grove Street and Kimco and Christiansen responded they are separate sites and that consistency of elements is desirable but variety also is desirable. He stated the Planning Commission has latitude in the detail and material types utilized.

Buyers asked why the cut thru is described as future and Nadler responded Kimco is not prepared to offer that up at this time but would continue to evaluate it.

Buyers inquired as to ownership of the two parking lots to rear and further discussion was held as to the entire parking area surrounding the Kimco Center and how to collectively make it work.

Nadler stated that the timing of this is fairly critical and that they are successful getting through City Council by the end of year.

MOTION by Buyers, seconded by Crutcher, to open the Public Hearing.
Motion carried, all ayes.

PUBLIC HEARING

Sandra McArthur, 33264 Slocum, lives behind parking lot and will be concerned about trash.

Al Bennett, 33125 Orchard, has concern of does this truck route provide opportunity to get rid of trash, congestion and all of the un-pleasantries that come along with the back of a grocery store that has a lot of fresh produce and so forth. He cited truck traffic also being an issue with TJ Maxx trucks on Orchard Street.

Tom Buck, 23848 Whitaker, resident, and member of DDA board. He stated this is another solid project here and that we will most likely getting rid of a few trees if the parking lot is going to be restructured up front. Wants to see constructive dialogue on events and encourage more design and inviting graphics on south side of building on rear wall. He appreciated comment on recognizing downtown.

Dan Blugerman, Woodale in Farmington Hills, asks for support on this proposal as he is working on filling other buildings in downtown.

Sara Scott, 33317 Orchard Street, talked about the history of garbage collection from A & P and there not being garbage outside.

Christiansen responded that that Health Department Regulations for internal storage have changed since the center was built.

Al Bennett stated that three speakers have addressed the issue of garbage on Orchard Street.

MOTION by Majoros, seconded by Crutcher, to close the Public Hearing.
Motion carried, all ayes.

(Public Hearing closed)

Strader reiterated the items that should be addressed by the applicants, making sure there are provisions dealing with the dumpsters and garbage in rear, better screening and lighting in the rear, upgrade the rear and south façade, make it easier to walk from the rear to the front both for residents to the south but also people that may park in the western end of the rear parking lot so they could walk through the pass thru for Fitness 19 into the grocery store, to have the DDA review the signs and give input on the signs as it goes to City Council, and detail the streetscape on front and limits of where produce will be displayed and the applicant is going to provide information on the number of employees in working times to see how much parking will be utilized in the rear and continue discussions with the City on uniform control of the parking lot and dealing with events and parking for events.

Nadler stated that before it went to Council it was his understanding that two key documents would be in place, the development agreement and the operating agreement.

Christiansen replied that he had spoken to City Manager Pastue and City Attorney Schultz and that those items would be addressed this week.

MOTION by Buyers, seconded by Chiara, to move the Preliminary PUD Plan and Agreement for the Downtown Farmington Center: Fresh Thyme, forward to City Council for consideration and review.

Gronbach moved to amend the motion to include the items highlighted by LSL, the follow through by the City Administration to review with the City Council.

MOTION by Buyers, supported by Crutcher, to move the Preliminary PUD Plan and Agreement for the Downtown Farmington Center: Fresh Thyme, forward to City Council for consideration and review, with the following conditions: making sure there are provisions dealing with the dumpsters and garbage in rear, better screening and lighting in the rear, upgrade the rear and south façade, make it easier to walk from the rear to the front both for residents to the south but also people that may park in the western end of the rear parking lot so they could walk through the pass thru for Fitness 19 into the grocery store, to have the DDA review the signs and give input on the signs as it goes to City Council, and detail the streetscape in the front and limit where produce will be displayed and the applicant is going to provide information on the number of employees in working times to see how much parking will be utilized in the rear and continue discussions with the City on uniform control of the parking lot and dealing with events and parking for events.

Motion carried, all ayes.

PUBLIC HEARING – GRAND RIVER CORRIDOR OVERLAY DISTRICT

Chairperson Bowman introduced this agenda item and indicated that included in the Commissioners' packets there was a proposed text amendment relating to the Grand River Corridor and it had been reviewed and recommended to the Planning Commission by the Grand River Corridor Authority at their last meeting on August 11 and then turned it over to staff.

Christiansen stated the Planning Commission had reviewed a draft of the proposed text amendment prepared by LSL back at the August 11th meeting and scheduled a Public Hearing for this evening on this item. He indicated the action required tonight would be to hold the Public Hearing on the text amendment and then forward it to City Council for their review.

MOTION by Buyers, seconded by Crutcher, to open the Public Hearing.
Motion carried, all ayes.

(No one heard)

MOTION by Chiara, seconded by Majoros, to close the Public Hearing.
Motion carried, all ayes.

MOTION by Gronbach, seconded by Crutcher, to forward the proposed text amendment to City Council for their review.

Motion carried, all ayes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None heard.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS

Chiara inquired about the fruit store behind Dress Barn and whether there were any Code Enforcement issues related to the property.

STAFF COMMENTS

Christiansen stated there will be full agendas in the coming Planning Commission Meetings and likely will have continued review for Exxon Mobil on October 13th as well as the Flanders site.

Buyers commented on the parking on the south side of Fresh Thyme and the possibility of expanding same by eliminating the park.

Crutcher asked if the potential new tenants were aware of the Farmer's Market and Christiansen responded in the affirmative.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Crutcher, seconded by Chiara, to adjourn the meeting.
Motion carried, all ayes.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary