



REPORT

To: President and Members of City Council
Council Appointees

From: Eric Norenberg, City Manager
Carrie R. Handy, Director of Planning and Development

Subject: Planning Commission Site Plan Approvals for the Gateway Hotel
Complex Project
7 North Main Street

Date: October 2, 2015

Further to City Council's request at its last meeting on September 21, 2015 for a report on the site plan approvals that have been granted by the Planning Commission for the Gateway Hotel Complex project and on the issue of what approvals may have been granted to the developer of the Gateway project for the installation of on-street parking spaces on East College Street adjacent to the project, please find below a summary of the Planning Commission and City staff activities related to this project to date.

- 1) At its meeting on October 23, 2013, the Commission granted "partial" approval of this application related to the general site layout and location of the proposed building, etc. and that approval was subject to compliance with a number of conditions including the need to address all City departmental requirements.
- 2) The Planning Commission reviewed and approved the proposed building's architectural design, building materials, colors and textures at its meeting on December 4, 2013 subject to compliance with conditions including the need for a Development Agreement.
- 3) The Commission considered a site plan and building design for a proposed stand-alone bank building on property at 52 East College Street at its meeting on March 19, 2014 and the site plan and building design of that proposed bank was approved by the Commission on that date subject to compliance with conditions.
- 4) The Commission also reviewed and granted approval of a conditional use permit for bank drive-through lanes associated with the proposed bank building on March 19, 2014.

- 5) The applicant presented a “preliminary” site plan illustrating a “revised” parking design for parking areas on either side of Willard Court at the Commission’s meeting on April 2, 2014 that included landscape areas within the parking areas and compact car spaces. This plan was presented to gain the Commission’s feedback. No action was taken at this time.
- 6) A revised site plan based on the “preliminary” site plan that was presented to the Commission at its meeting on April 2, 2014 was presented for Commission consideration on June 18th, 2014. After much discussion, the Planning Commission voted to table the application until the applicant resubmitted a further revised plan that addressed the issues and requirements indicated by City departments.
- 7) On July 2, 2014 (the date of final approval), the Planning Commission considered a further revised site plan, landscape plan and exterior lighting plan and correspondence outlining the developer’s proposed approach to addressing the previously identified requirements of City departments.

The Planning Commission took the following actions at this meeting:

- a. Approved a motion to accept the recommendation of the Design Review Subcommittee and approve the landscape plan and plant materials as submitted along with a suggestion that the developer consider using true native plant species;
- b. Approved a motion to approve the site lighting/electrical plan subject to approval of the photometric plan by OMLPS and subject to compliance with all other OMLPS requirements.
- c. Approved a motion to approve the “further revised site plan” subject to the College entering into a Development Agreement with the City, compliance with City department requirements in the staff reports related to utilities, excavation and building permits, stormwater management, public safety concerns, etc. and subject to the submittal of a “final” site plan within sixty (60) days of this approval. (Please see the minutes of the July 2, 2014 meeting which outline the entire discussion by Planning Commission, City staff and developer representatives regarding this site plan approval.) (Please see Attachment I for a copy of the “further revised site plan” which was approved by the Planning Commission with conditions.)

The City department requirements pertaining to the on-street parking on East College Street which were noted in the staff reports for this meeting and which became conditions of site plan approval are as follows:

- i. **The applicant reflects the temporary nature of the drop-off area zone on East College Street as requested on the revised plans. The**

- Police Department will evaluate the use of this drop-off area to determine whether practical or operational issues related to traffic movements occurs prior to the completion of Phase 2 construction.**
- ii. The plans continue to show a striped, no parking area along East College Street. As previously noted, there is concern that this will create a parking enforcement issue for the Police Department, and it has the potential to create traffic circulation concerns as well. It is, however, understood that the developer is being asked to work with the City on a future design for this area that would avoid that issue.**
 - iii. The plan set eliminates diagonal parking along the south side of the complex on East College Street by means of extensive diagonal striping. The Developer is missing a huge opportunity to open up nearly 30 feet of quasi-public space from the newly proposed retail building to the edge of the pavement. The curb line of East College Street should be re-established consistent with the southerly terminus of the bump-outs shown for the crosswalks at Main Street and at Eric Nord Way. Suitable amenities, including landscaping and street furnishings, should be provided for patrons and visitors. Whether or not a loading/unloading zone for hotel guests can be safely accommodated is dependent on final design and concurrence of the Police and Fire Chiefs.**

A more detailed report/timeline of the Planning Commission's approvals is attached to this memorandum as Attachment II. It is noted that this memorandum and the report in Attachment I refer to Appendices A-H (Planning staff reports) and the minutes of the various Planning Commission meetings where the Gateway project was discussed or considered. Those documents are available on-line on the City's website. A special page can be found by visiting the City homepage, www.cityofoberlin.com and clicking on the "Gateway Project Information" link under News.

Beginning in November of 2014, City staff have been meeting with Oberlin College and Gateway development/design team staff in an attempt to resolve planning and design issues related to the East College Street right-of-way adjacent to the project. Key factors include:

- Adequate lane width for traffic flowing east and west on College Street
- The desire for some street parking spaces adjacent to the building for customers of the new retail spaces and general needs on East College
- 20' between parking spaces and crosswalks is required to ensure the safety of pedestrians.
- The need to ensure pedestrian (and bicycle) traffic circulation to, through and around the site, including adequate sidewalk width for pedestrians between possible parked

cars, possible doors opening from future businesses and sidewalk amenities such as planters shown on the plan.

- The opportunity to develop private and/or public amenities in the East College St. right-of-way that would complement and enhance the Gateway Hotel complex including the retail spaces.
- Bicycle parking facilities required by the Planning Code
- Fire Department operational requirements for emergency response including:
 - Access for the Fire Department to hydrants, valves, fire operation center, etc.
 - Unobstructed access for firefighters to be able to run hoses from fire apparatus to the building and reach various entrances
 - Ability for the Fire Department to have unobstructed access to the longest side of the building with the aerial ladder truck to reach all floors and the roof.
 - Fire department ground ladders that are over 35' tall need 10 to 12 feet of clearance from the building to access upper floors
 - Current configurations of the site plan show a sidewalk of approximately 10' which is not enough room for working with ground ladders
 - With the plan for a night club occupying the basement, a secondary means of egress will be required that meets IFC Section 1028:
 - **1028.1 General.** *Exits* shall discharge directly to the exterior of the building. The *exit discharge* shall be at grade or shall provide a direct path of egress travel to grade. **The exit discharge shall not reenter a building.**

Many of the communications between the City and the developer in late-2014 and early-2015 focused on a few of these issues. However, there was a need to examine the entire area with both teams so as to get a full perspective of all issues and concerns of both parties. Accordingly, a meeting was held on September 18th with City department staff (Public Works, Engineering, Fire, Planning and Development, Police and City Manager) and representatives from Smart Hotels, Oberlin College and Neff & Associates Engineering. At that meeting, the design concept of seven (7) parallel on-street parking spaces was discussed, four (4) of which would be temporarily used for a drop-off zone for the new hotel until the hotel's main entrance at the rear of the Gateway building could be completed during Phase II of construction. Staff also suggested that some spaces on North Main Street in front of the hotel could also be signed temporarily as 15 minute drop-off spaces to further accommodate hotel guests arriving and dropping off baggage.

Since the meeting on September 18, City staff explored additional ideas to provide additional on-street and off-street parking to serve customers patronizing businesses on East College. These ideas included consideration of moving the temporary drop off zone to North Main St. to provide the (7) parallel parking spaces for permanent use sooner rather than later and the possibility of developing additional parallel parking spaces in the East College St. right-of-way between Willard Court and North Pleasant St., directly across from the East College Street Project. ***