



REPORT

Planning and Development Dept.

To: Chair and Members of the Oberlin Planning Commission

From: Gary Boyle, Director of Planning and Development

Subject: Application Site Plan Approval and Conditional Use Permit
Proposed Gateway Hotel Complex
Oberlin College
7 North Main Street

Date: October 21, 2013

I. BACKGROUND:

Christopher Noble of Smart Hotels, LLC, on behalf of Oberlin College, has submitted an application for site plan approval related to the proposed construction of the Gateway Hotel project to be located at 7 North Main Street. The applicant proposes to demolish the existing Oberlin Inn complex, and construct a new hotel and conference center, a restaurant, a bar, retail space, College administrative offices, and a bank with a drive-through feature. An application for a "Conditional Use Permit" to accommodate the proposed bank drive-through operation has also been filed.

The Planning Commission will recall that the applicant submitted a "preliminary" application for the Commission's review at its meeting on July 17, 2013. The applicant subsequently filed a formal site plan application and application for "Conditional Use Permit." In this regard, it is noted that the Commission conducted a "Public Hearing" on the requested "Conditional Use Permit" during the course of its meeting on September 18, 2013. After that hearing and discussion of merits of that application, the Commission moved to table that request. It is further noted that the Commission also reviewed the site plan application at its meeting on September 18th and also tabled that application.

Attached to this report as Appendix I is a copy of the site plan submittal considered at the Planning Commission's meeting on September 18, 2013.

II. REVISED SITE PLAN SUBMITTAL:

Please be advised that the applicant has recently submitted a “revised” site plan request in response to feedback received at the Commission’s meeting and department comments. That revised submittal is attached to this report as Appendix II.

Staff notes that the revised submittal indicates a number of changes to the proposed site design. Those revisions include the following:

- relocation of the bank and drive through to the east side of Willard Court.
- expansion of the retail component of the project into space previously identified for the bank.
- relocation of the “bio-retention basin” from the central courtyard area to the north of the truck loading zone.
- reconfiguration of the parking area identified as “Zone A” in the courtyard to provide additional parking spaces (61 vs. 46 spaces).
- elimination of a building along the west side of North Pleasant Street.
- reconfiguration of the parking area identified as “Zone B” to provide additional parking spaces (93 vs. 85 spaces).
- redesign of Willard Court north of the truck loading zone to accommodate truck movements mostly within Willard Court rather than into parking “Zone B.”
- elimination of the “drop-off zone” on East College Street near the hotel entrance.
- addition of 19 angled, on-street parking spaces along the north side of East College Street, and within the public street right-of-way.

Generally speaking, other aspects of the overall design remain unchanged including the location of the building, the number of hotel rooms, the capacity of the conference center, the floor area of the College offices, and the location of the loading zone.

III. STAFF COMMENTS:

Staff notes that the proposed location of the bank to the east side of Willard Court provides an opportunity for the applicant to comply with the Zoning Code’s minimum vehicle stacking requirements for a drive through lane. The proposed exit from that drive-through feature will, however, intersect with Willard Court in close proximity to the truck loading zone and one of the entrances to the parking area to the east of Willard Court (Zone B). In order reduce potential traffic conflicts on that portion of Willard Court, it is recommended that the drive through lanes be only oriented in a north-south manner and exit to the parking area to the north (Zone B). Such an approach would also accommodate the shifting of the bank building to the north thereby better aligning that building with existing and proposed buildings on this block and improving sight-line visibility at the intersection of Willard Court and East College Street.

IV. DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

This “revised” plan has been forwarded to City officials for review. To date, the following comments have been received:

(a) Chief Building Official:

The applicant will need to file the requisite building permit applications prior to the commencement of construction. Building demolition will also require a permit.

(b) Fire Chief:

The Fire Chief notes that angled parking spaces within the East College Street right-of-way are not recommended for approval.

(c) Police Chief:

The revised plans have been reviewed. The removal of the “drop-off area” on East College Street is noted and supported. The department would, however, recommend that the proposed drive-through lanes be extended to the north and not connect with Willard Court in order to avoid traffic circulation concerns on that street.

(d) Public Works Director:

1) General:

Many of the Public Works Department review comments from both the July 12, 2013 and the September 13, 2013 staff reports to the Design Review Subcommittee and the Planning Commission continue to be applicable.

2) Water:

The Developer’s civil engineer has addressed many of the Department’s previous comments. There remain minor inconsistencies and uncertainties which will need to be worked out. The most important are:

Construction sequencing – to ensure that all work in State Route 58 is completed prior to ODOT’s planned resurfacing, estimated start date is May 1, 2014.

Construction sequencing and the means by which domestic and fire protection services are provided during phased demolition.

Consideration should be given to the possibility of installing a new water main along Willard Court between East College and East Lorain Streets to provide a looped system. Such an

installation would provide the most reliable level of service. Looped water mains must be dedicated to the City including the necessary easement(s) in form acceptable to the City to operate and maintain such lines.

Details related to water service have not yet been developed to the point that they can be approved by the Department for the issuance of an Excavation/Utility Tap-In permit.

3) Sanitary Sewer:

The Developer's civil engineer has addressed many of the Department's previous comments. The most important remaining items are:

Construction sequencing – to ensure that all work in State Route 58 is completed prior to ODOT's planned resurfacing, estimated start date is May 1, 2014.

The Developer should provide flow calculations and a condition assessment of the receiving sanitary sewers to ensure adequate condition and capacity to serve the development. In the event that condition and/or capacity are insufficient, off-site improvements may be required. The plan note that "the location, size and condition...must be verified" does not meet this requirement (i.e. if the condition is "verified" as deficient, off-site improvements may be required).

Per the Department's previous comments:

The site utility plan locates a 6" SAN near the northeast corner of the proposed bio-retention cell and extended across Willard Court and the parking lot to the east. No points of connection, either to a structure or to a sewer main are shown. This service must be fully shown on the final plan set to show its point of connection to the City's sanitary sewer main and all services that are connected to it.

This line is now shown as "abandoned" on the September 6, 2013 plan set. No information about how this determination has been made has been provided by the Developer.

This line is now more fully shown on the plan set. Whether it has any active services or not, appears not to have been determined at this time. If this line has, in fact, been abandoned, its connection to the manhole in North Pleasant St. should be sealed.

Details related to sanitary sewer service have not yet been developed to the point that they can be approved by the Department for the issuance of an Excavation/Utility Tap-In permit.

4) Storm Water:

The Developer's civil engineer has addressed many of the Department's previous comments. There remain minor inconsistencies and uncertainties which will need to be worked out. The most important are:

No information related to the condition of the receiving storm sewer has been provided. Pending review and approval of storm water calculations and condition assessment of the existing receiving storm sewer, off-site improvements may be required to serve the proposed development. The plan note that “the location, size and condition...must be verified” does not meet this requirement (i.e. if the condition is “verified” as deficient, off-site improvements may be required).

5) Traffic Circulation:

The significant change in this iteration of the plan set is the relocation of the proposed bank and its drive through to the east side of Willard Court. The drive-through function would be on the east side of the new bank building, accessed via a new 40’ curb cut, tapered to 22’ at the R/W to service two lanes of traffic. Two lanes of vehicles would exit the drive through to Willard Court, immediately south of the proposed loading dock. As submitted, this iteration merely moves the traffic circulation conflicts from one side of Willard Court to the other. Staff would propose that exiting drive-through traffic enter into the parking area to the north in order to reduce that conflict.

As noted in earlier staff reports, the two-lane loading dock at the current location continues to be a concern. This will likely result in problems with north/south traffic along Willard Court, that will be forced to wait for truck traffic to back into the loading zone. The Developer’s proposal to mitigate traffic impacts by prohibiting through-truck traffic north to State Route 511 may not provide the intended benefit and rather than mitigating traffic impacts, may make traffic circulation worse on Willard Court at East College Street and at the intersection of East College and Main Streets.

6) Parking:

The most recent iteration of the plan set includes:

- 19 angled parking spaces on East College, along the south façade of the building. Notwithstanding the Fire Department’s previous expectation for access at this location for primary emergency response.
- 40 new spaces in a residentially zoned district, to the east of an existing parking lot and across from homes on North Pleasant St.
- 93 parking spaces on the east side of Willard Court. This would include razing an existing apartment building and further development of an access point to North Pleasant St.
- 61 parking spaces immediately to the NE of the new building.

In its most recent parking analysis, the Developer has indicated that it would provide 257 parking spaces. This includes all of the above spaces, plus 44 existing spaces on the east side of Willard Court behind Hall Auditorium and the Art Department. Those 44 spaces are presumably already assigned to faculty, staff and/or students.

7) Conclusion:

Water, sanitary and storm sewer service is available to serve the proposed project. Additional work is required to properly locate and evaluate existing systems and to plan for the new service installations including finalizing service locations, construction details, construction sequencing and any upgrades that may be necessary.

Notwithstanding repeated attempts to address traffic circulation concerns, the Developer has failed to fully address traffic circulation issues related to the proposed development.

(e) GMD Superintendent:

The sanitary sewer taps for this property along East College Street must be properly terminated at the sewer main in accordance with Public Works Standards.

(f) City Engineer:

The applicant's parking analysis seems reasonable although additional data concerning report assumptions would be useful. The number of ADA spaces shown would not appear to be sufficient.

V. CONCLUSION:

The applicant proposes a significant redevelopment project in the City's downtown district. The applicant's "revised" site plan submitted is intended to address the Planning Commission's concerns related to the proposed bank drive through design, parking, etc. Should this revised submittal be acceptable to the Commission, the applicant will then need to meet departmental requirements as noted above related to site utilities, etc. and will need to further discuss building design matters with the Design Review Subcommittee and the Commission.

This request is hereby respectfully submitted for your consideration.