



Oberlin Planning Commission
July 17, 2013, 4:30 p.m.
City Hall Conference Room #2
85 South Main Street, Oberlin, Ohio

Members Present: David Gibson, Tony Scott, Matt Adelman, Marilyn Fedelchak-Harley and Peter Crowley.

Members Absent:

Others Present: Gary Boyle; Wendie Fleming, Secretary to the Planning Commission; Sharon Soucy, Council Liaison; Steve Varelmann; Tita Reed; Chris Noble; Jim Curtin; Brett Boaz; Daniel Neff; Ted Barr; Scott Buehler; Terry Miller; James Young; Richard Gallagher and Elizabeth Rumics.

Chair Gibson called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

1. Application for Amendment to Approved Planned Development District Plan, Proposed Patio Enclosure, Apartment Unit 128, Kendal at Oberlin, 600 Kendal Drive.

Boyle advised that this application seeks approval to construct an addition in the form of a patio enclosure to the rear of Apartment Unit #128 that would have overall dimensions of approximately 10 ft. by 12.3 ft. He indicated that this proposed patio enclosure would feature white aluminum framing with a sliding glass door and fixed glass on the west elevation and a sliding glass door on the north elevation and fixed glass panels on the south elevation.

Boyle indicated that the Design Review Subcommittee and the Planning Commission have approved similar patio enclosure/sunroom additions to cottage and apartment units located throughout Kendal's campus in the past.

Boyle noted that there is no objection to this request subject to the Commission's determination of conformance with the form, nature and intent of the approved Final Development Plan for Kendal, and subject to the applicant obtaining a building permit prior to the commencement of construction.

Terry Miller of American Patio Rooms, Inc. was present to represent this application.

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Crowley advised that the proposed patio enclosure is similar to those that have been previously approved. Scott asked if there was anything different about this patio enclosure. Boyle noted that there is only a slight difference due to the different configuration of this area. Miller agreed and advised that this patio enclosure is the “opposite half” of the one that was just recently approved by the Commission.

Scott made a motion to find that this application is consistent with the approved Final Plan for Kendal and to accept the recommendation of the Design Review Subcommittee and to approve the request as submitted. Adelman seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Application for Site Plan/Design Review Approval and Conditional Use Permit, Landscape Plan, Proposed Outdoor Storage/Sales Area, Ace Hardware, Station Partners, LP, 291 South Main Street.

Boyle explained that this application seeks the approval of an outdoor storage/ display/ sales area to be used in conjunction with the Ace Hardware store in the Station Square Plaza. He noted that this request was most recently considered by the Commission at its meeting on June 26, 2013. Boyle stated that at that meeting, the Commission moved to approve the location of the outdoor storage/ display/ sales area along a portion of the building’s north elevation subject to compliance with conditions. He indicated that those conditions require among other matters that the applicant install fencing with brick columns to screen the proposed outdoor storage/ display/ sales area, and the submission of a landscape plan for the review and approval of the Planning Commission.

Boyle stated that the applicant has submitted a landscape plan that has been reviewed by City staff as well as the City’s consultants for architectural and landscape architectural services for the nearby Gasholder Building and future Underground Railroad Center. He indicated that the Commission had asked that the City’s consultants review the landscape plan since the outdoor storage/display/sales area has been of concern to the Commission in the past. Boyle noted that the City’s consulting landscape architectural firm submitted a revised landscape plan for consideration which was included in the staff report.

Scott Buehler and Ted Barr were present to represent this application. Buehler advised that they received a copy of the revised landscape plan from the City’s consulting landscape architect and they find the revisions to be acceptable except for the inclusion of the three (3) pin oak trees to the east of the proposed storage area. He indicated that, in his opinion, the pin oak trees screen the wall of the building and not the proposed storage area which he thought was what the Commission was requiring to be screened. Buehler advised that he did not think that they should be required to screen the building in addition to the proposed storage area. Crowley noted that it appears that the pin oak trees depicted on the revised plan would help to blend the landscaping that is proposed for the Gasholder Building site and the landscaping for the applicant’s proposed outdoor storage area. Boyle stated that the Commission had only discussed screening for required for the storage area. Gibson noted that the pin oak trees would get very tall and are not in a location that would actually screen the proposed storage area. Scott stated that in his

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opinion, the additional pin oak trees would benefit the Gasholder Building site and asked how the pin oak trees came to be in the landscape plan? Boyle advised that the landscape architect apparently added them when they reviewed the applicant's landscape plan submission. He further noted that the landscape architect likely felt that these pin oak trees would help blend the landscaping between the two sites, however, the screening of the storage area is really what is being considered.

Gibson indicated that the landscaping plan submitted by the applicant showed four (4) white cedars and three (3) fir trees. He asked if the additional plantings shown on the revised landscape plan are being proposed by the City. Boyle advised that the revised landscape plan is that was suggested by the landscape architect includes other plantings. Fedelchak-Harley indicated that she prefers the applicant's landscape plan because all of the plantings would be evergreen and would provide year round screening unlike deciduous trees. She further advised that she would, however, like to see the number of plantings reduced. Boyle stated that the applicant's landscape plan would seem to address the Planning Commission's requirements. Fedelchak-Harley suggested that the number of trees be reduced to three (3) white cedars and two (2) firs. Buehler indicated that he found that to be acceptable. Scott suggested it would be best to keep the number of trees and four (4) and three (3) until they became more mature and then some could be removed. Buehler advised that he would prefer not to plant trees only to have to cut them down in the future. He asked what the timeline was for the development of the Gasholder Building site?

Fedelchak-Harley suggested that the landscaping would be best along the storage area if there were three (3) white cedars planted to the north and two (firs) planted on the west side because what is being proposed would be too crowded in appearance. Crowley indicated that the species outlined in the landscape architect's revised plan are different from what is being proposed in landscape plan submitted by the applicant and noted that the reasoning behind the landscape architect's recommendation on plant materials must be these plantings would be more compatible with what is proposed for the Gasholder Building site. He noted that the landscape architect's revised plan is much more elaborate than the applicant's submission. Gibson generally agreed with Crowley's observation.

Crowley indicated that the Commission could chose between the applicant's landscape plan or the landscape architect's revised plan. Fedelchak-Harley stated that the applicant should not be held up because of the landscaping. Boyle suggested that the applicant be able to proceed with occupancy and further indicated that the City's consulting landscape architect had indicated that the applicant's landscape plan would be acceptable but that the additional plantings that were included in the revised plan would help to blend the two sites as the plantings would be compatible. He noted that both landscape plans accomplish what the Commission asked for in terms of screening the outdoor storage area.

Scott stated that the landscape architect proposed the changes to the applicant's landscape plan for a reason. He advised that he understands that the applicant does not like the addition of the pin oaks, however, he prefers the landscape architect's plan.

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Crowley made a motion to approve the revised landscape plan that was submitted by the City's consulting architectural and landscape architectural firm. Scott seconded. Motion carried 4 – 1 (Fedelchak-Harley dissenting).

Buehler advised the Commission that he did not attend the other meetings when this matter was considered but rather one of his staff members did. He indicated that it was his impression that landscaping was only required to screen the outdoor storage area so the plan they submitted addressed that. Buehler stated that, in his opinion, they should not be responsible for landscaping along the rest of the building. He indicated that they have just installed a \$10,000.00 fence that the Commission required and now they are being asked to install a considerable amount of landscaping that will completely obscure this fence. Buehler advised that the red cedars that the landscape architect recommended on the revised landscape plan get very tall at maturity and the chokeberry bushes mature to 6 to 8 feet in height and 3 to 4 feet in width so they will have to be pruned regularly. He further indicated that in addition to these plantings, the revised landscape plan calls for sedge grasses to be installed. Buehler advised that in his opinion, this is a tremendous amount of landscaping for such a small area and it is definitely overkill. He reiterated that he does not feel that they should have to install the pin oak trees because they would be landscaping for the building, not the outdoor storage area, and therefore would be a building owner issue.

Gibson indicated that possibly the outstanding issues with respect to the landscaping can be readdressed at a later time, but advised that he would like to see this matter move forward so that the applicant can open this new business. He further stated that he understands the applicant's concerns over the number of times that this application has been considered by the Commission as well as the expense of the fence and the additional landscaping. Gibson advised that he also understands the Commission's concern over the proposed storage area being located so close to the Gasholder Building site, however, he reiterated that he would like to see this matter move forward and further noted that the amount of landscaping shown in the revised landscape plan is, in his opinion, much more than is needed to screen the fence/outdoor storage area.

Adelman stated that he voted for the revised landscape plan so that the applicant can move forward with opening his business and he agreed with Gibson that the revised landscape plan proposes the installation of a considerable amount of landscaping.

The Commission discussed whether it can rescind the motion that was just made on this matter and make another motion should it chose to do so. Boyle thought that they could. Fedelchak-Harley made a motion to rescind the motion to approve the revised landscape plan. There was no second, therefore, the motion failed.

Scott noted that approval of revised landscape plan was based on the fact that the City's consulting landscape architect felt that these plantings would provide the proper screening with the Gasholder Building site in mind. He asked if the applicant had received a copy of the landscape architect's revised plan that was provided to the Commission. Boyle advised that the plan was forwarded to the applicant. Buehler stated that they just received a copy of it. Boyle

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stated that Planning staff only received a copy of the revised landscape plan on Monday and forwarded it immediately to the applicant.

Scott suggested that the matter be tabled and the revised plan sent back to the landscape architect to rework. Gibson advised that he would prefer to go ahead with the revised plan or rescind that motion altogether.

Boyle stated that a motion to rescind the motion to approve the revised landscape plan was made but it was not seconded, so that motion failed. He then advised the Commission that until the remaining issues regarding the landscaping are resolved the Commission's approval of the revised landscape plan at this meeting allows the applicant to use the outdoor storage area. Boyle also asked the Commission to concur that the applicant can proceed to open its business and use the outdoor storage area pending further discussion on landscaping design. The Commission concurred with that approach.

3. Application for Site Plan/Design Review Approval, Proposed Wall-Mounted Sign, Ottica Eyecare, 32 South Main Street.

Boyle indicated that this application seeks approval of a sign permit for this business. He stated that the proposed "eye-shaped" sign would be approximately 10 ft. long (at center line) and 3 ft. in height (at widest point) and would be approximately 23 sq. ft. Boyle advised that the proposed "eye-shaped" sign would be fabricated using 16 gauge metal with the letters "Ottica Eyecare" cut out of the face of the sign. He noted that the building façade behind and around the proposed sign would be painted "bright white" and the metal sign would be "Regal Red" or dark red/burgundy in color.

Boyle stated that the proposed sign would be mounted above the storefront window of this building, and would be located in space previously used for a sign for a different business in this building (the Copy Shop).

Boyle advised that the Design Review Subcommittee considered this application at its meeting on July 17, 2013 and unanimously moved to recommend approval of the sign to the Planning Commission subject to the "eye-shaped" portion of the sign being a dark red color similar to the awning on the Main Street Barber shop.

Crowley made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Design Review Subcommittee and to approve the sign with the condition that the "eye-shaped" portion of the sign be dark red/burgundy in color. Scott seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Application for Site Plan/Design Review Approval, Proposed Wall-Mounted Sign, Treehuggers Café, 55 East College Street.

Boyle advised that this application seeks approval to install a wall-mounted, non-illuminated sign on the north or East College Street façade of the subject mixed use, commercial/residential

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building. He indicated that the proposed sign would feature individual metal letters to be mounted on the building's decorative metal louver system. Boyle stated that this sign would be placed in the same location as the former "Sprouts" sign and the letters are to have a dark gray finish. He noted that the sign letters would be 12.0 inches in height, and that the sign would be approximately 11 ft. 1 in. in length with a total sign surface area would be about 11.083 sq. ft.

Boyle stated that the proposed sign would be at the same height as "The Slow Train Café" and "Ohio Education Credit Union" signs (~ 9 feet above grade) and would be on a similar plane as the previously approved wall-mounted signs on this building which would be appropriate. In addition, the sign would be placed near the outer edge of that architectural feature and would, therefore, be more than 12 inches from the building's front wall.

Boyle indicated that the proposed sign would be significantly smaller than the area of signage permitted under this section of the Code. In addition, the Design Review Subcommittee considered this application at its meeting on July 17, 2013 and unanimously moved to recommend approval of the sign to the Planning Commission as submitted.

Adelman made a motion to approve the location of the sign more than 12.0 inches from the front wall of the building and to accept the recommendation of the Design Review Subcommittee and approve the sign design as submitted. Crowley seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Preliminary Project Review, Proposed Gateway Hotel, Oberlin College, 7 North Main Street.

Boyle stated that this application is for preliminary site plan and conditional use permit review and is related to the proposed construction of Oberlin College's "Gateway Hotel Project" to be located at 7 North Main Street, the site of the present Oberlin Inn.

Boyle advised that this project includes 68 guest rooms, a restaurant and bar, about 8,800 sq. ft. of retail space and a bank with a drive-through, conference or meeting space for 300 to 320 people, 14,293 sq. ft. of College administrative offices and a future basement level "Jazz Club." In addition to site plan approval, the proposed drive-through for the bank would require the issuance of a Conditional Use Permit after a "Public Hearing" on the same.

Boyle indicated that the applicant has requested the Commission's preliminary review of the site plan for the proposed Gateway Hotel Project before final site and building development plans are submitted for formal approval.

Boyle stated that the property which is the site of the proposed hotel project is zoned "C-1"/ Central Business District by the Oberlin Zoning Map and Zoning Code and is also identified for "Commercial" use in the City's Comprehensive Plan. He further advised that some of the parking areas identified on the plans submitted for preliminary review are located in "R-1"/Single-Family Dwelling District. That zoning would not permit such use for commercial parking purposes.

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Boyle indicated that there are a number of issues and concerns identified by many City departments that the applicant will need to address prior to filing a formal application for site plan approval including, among other matters, parking, setback of the building, on/off-site bicycle, pedestrian and motor vehicle traffic circulation, urban design, building materials, the relationship to the overall Green Arts District and downtown, etc. and these are outlined in more detail in the staff report.

Boyle advised that the applicant is seeking feedback from the Commission regarding this proposed project. He noted that there are two (2) Design Review Subcommittee members, Gallagher and Young, in attendance for the applicant's presentation and could offer comments and ask questions. Gibson agreed that they could participate since this is only a preliminary review.

Steve Varelmann of Oberlin College's Facilities Planning and Construction Office was present. He introduced the College's design team for this project, Brett Boaz, Jim Curtin, Chris Noble and Daniel Neff. He also noted that Tita Reed of the College was also present.

Curtin advised the Commission that College staff and the design team have met with City staff a few times to review this project. He stated that the Gateway Hotel is a very important project for the College and the community. Curtin indicated that the project would consist of a hotel, conference space, a restaurant, offices, retail, etc. and would be considered the "gateway" to the College's Green Arts District. He noted that the scope and details for the Green Arts District are not completed at this time.

Curtin began his presentation. He indicated that the staff report indicates that the zoning district where the proposed building is to be located requires that buildings have a zero ft. setback from the public right-of-way. The proposed building would be setback 6 ft. 7 in. from East College Street. Curtin advised that the Fire Chief previously commented on the setback of the building and requires that there be emergency access to the building. He noted that all of the existing buildings on East College Street in this block are setback a similar distance from the street. Curtin advised that the building would be setback 60 to 70 ft. or so from North Main Street, and the College refers to this setback as the "Cass Gilbert Line." Cass Gilbert was architect who designed Allen Art Museum building. Curtin indicated that the proposed building would match the setback of the existing buildings on this block, although there would be some infringement on the "Cass Gilbert Line" where a section of the building would extend west across that "line." He advised the College feels that it is important to maintain this visual setback line for this block. Crowley noted that the plans show an outdoor dining area located on the west side of the building along Main Street. Curtin advised that outdoor dining area could help energize this intersection since there would be no building mass in the setback area along North Main Street. He further indicated that at this time, there is no detailed information regarding how the rest of this Green Arts District block will be developed/redeveloped. He further indicated that there are no plans for the rest of the block at this time nor are any anticipated for the foreseeable future. Curtin did, however, state that likely there will continue to be student housing and consolidated parking as well as the existing Hall Auditorium and Allen Art Museum in this block. He advised

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that this project will be an effort to create a low-carbon, sustainable development. Curtin stated that with the Gateway Inn project, they want to help energize downtown and that currently there is a loss of "energy" in this area at night because of the darkness of Tappan Square.

Curtin then gave an overview of the design elements and materials that would be used on the building. The materials include glass with zinc colored aluminum framing, recycled wood elements and a composite sheathing. The building would also feature a shutter system for the windows in the residential area of the building. Curtin also explained the layout of the building on the site and indicated where the entry points to the building would be as well as the service/loading areas. He advised that the portion of the building fronting Main Street would contain a restaurant on the first floor, an open balcony and ballroom/meeting room on the second floor and the College's admissions and development offices in the north part of the site. The East College Street section of the building would house retail on the first floor and would have the hotel rooms on the upper floors along with an exercise room.

Curtin indicated that with respect to the retail space on the ground floor fronting East College Street it is now known at this time what the mix of retail will be at this time.

Curtin advised that the east portion of the building on East College Street would house a bank and drive through. He noted that City staff of several departments had expressed concerns regarding stacking of vehicular traffic for the drive through. Boaz advised that they would be incorporating two (2) teller lanes to hopefully eliminate traffic stacking issues.

Crowley asked if two (2) trucks could be accommodated in the hotel loading/delivery area at the same time. Curtin advised that this area is 44 ft. in width and would accommodate two (2) trucks. Crowley asked where loading/deliveries for the retail businesses would take place? Curtin stated that likely deliveries would be made to those retail spaces via East College Street.

Boyle indicated that the drive through as well as other traffic circulation issues still need to be worked out as does the parking for this project. He advised that the hotel parking will need to be convenient and functional and should not create parking issues elsewhere or in downtown. Boyle stated that the plans show additional parking off-site for this project, however, there are issues with this parking because it is either already being utilized for other uses, is not owned by the College, is too far from the hotel site, is in a zoning district that does not permit commercial parking lot uses, etc. Crowley noted that if the College's admissions and development offices are moved to this site, additional parking will be needed for those functions in addition to the hotel guests and visitors. Curtin stated that they do not want to have to provide more parking than they need and that there will be certain times of the day when less parking is needed. He described their estimates of parking utilization for the components of the project over different time periods. He indicated that they will coordinate with Planning staff to develop a reasonable approach to the parking. Curtin advised that there are four (4) parking areas in this location and that there will not be any more cars in those lots than there are now.

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Gallagher stated that from a Design Review Subcommittee perspective, he has concerns regarding the types of materials that are being proposed for the building. He asked for clarification as to where on the building each type of material would be used. Curtin outlined where each type of material would be used. Gallagher expressed some concern over the use of wood since it would be somewhat exposed to the elements. Boaz indicated that the reclaimed wood would be properly protected from the elements.

Gallagher asked if the proposed exterior blinds would be operated from inside of the building. Curtin stated that they would be. He indicated that they would operate automatically depending on the amount of sunlight but they can be manually controlled as well. Gallagher asked if the shutters would be made of aluminum? Curtin stated that they would be. Gallagher asked if the second floor balcony on the west elevation would have a roof over it? Curtin advised that it would be more like a trellis system as opposed to a solid roof. That would provide some protection of this area. Gallagher suggested that wood materials in that location will be exposed to sun, rain and snow, and really would not be protected by the pergola structure.

Scott asked if the height of the drop off area would be tall enough to accommodate vans or shuttle busses? Curtin indicated that it would be. Boyle added that the Building Code requires that this type of drop off area meet certain height requirements and that will be verified at the time of the review of the building permit application.

Soucy asked if the bank would continue to operate during construction? Boyle indicated that likely the applicant will phase its construction in an effort to maintain operation of the bank. Details have not been provided at this time on this matter.

Scott asked about the durability of the materials that are being proposed for this building? Curtin indicated that the composite board they propose to use is very durable but can be easily replaced if necessary. Boyle indicated that it is applied to the building like a veneer. Scott noted that the exterior of Hall Auditorium is becoming deteriorated and advised that maintenance of this proposed building is very important, specifically around the loading/delivery areas. Curtin stated that there would be raised curbs that will help to protect the exterior of the building from damage.

Gallagher advised that it appears that there will be a considerable amount of metal and glass on the exterior of this building and indicated that these types of materials will not be very compatible or consistent with the surrounding buildings and downtown. The Code's design standards call for that. He stated that if the exterior of the building will look similar to that of the Kohl Jazz Studies Building, it will not be very aesthetically appealing or compatible, in his opinion. Curtin stated that there really would not be much metal on the exterior of this building as most of it would be constructed of glass and composite board. He noted that they have also minimized the use of metal on the street facades.

Boyle advised that the applicant that staff appreciates that they submitted information for a preliminary review on this project so that the Design Review Subcommittee and Planning

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Commission members could offer feedback. Boyle reiterated that there are still a number of important technical issues that should be addressed with City departments before a formal application is filed.

Gibson also thanked the applicant for the opportunity to conduct a preliminary review of this important project.


Fedelchak-Harley indicated that she feels that the parking calculations outlined by the applicant are not correct and are much lower than they need to be. Boyle advised that staff has relayed concerns over parking and the possible impact on downtown, and that sufficient parking for this project will be critical to its future success.

6. Other Business.

Boyle indicated that the Commission's next meeting may likely be scheduled for either July 31st or August 7th, depending on when applications are submitted.

7. Adjournment.

There being no further business at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.



David Gibson, Chair



Wendie Fleming, Secretary