MEETING MINUTES
PLAN COMMISSION
Wednesday, April 18, 2018
7:00 P.M.
Evanston Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, James C. Lytle Council Chambers

Members Present: Colby Lewis (Chair), Terri Dubin, Carol Goddard, George Halik, Peter Isaac, Jolene Saul

Members Absent: Patrick Brown, Andrew Pigozzi

Staff Present: Meagan Jones, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner
Scott Mangum, Planning and Zoning Administrator
Michelle Masoncup, Interim Corporation Counsel

Presiding Member: Colby Lewis, Chairman

1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chairman Lewis called the meeting to order at 7:03 P.M.

2. NEW BUSINESS

A. PLANNED DEVELOPMENT

17PLND-0112
128 – 132 Chicago Avenue
Evanston Gateway, LLC is requesting approval of a Map Amendment to rezone the northern portion of the property from the C1 Commercial District to the B3 Business District, a special use for an open sales yard in the B3 Business District and a Planned Development in the B3 Business District to construct a 5-story mixed-use building with approximately 4,999 square feet of indoor ground floor commercial space, approximately 7,000 square feet of outdoor garden/open sales lot, 26 dwelling units and 30 parking spaces. The applicant seeks site development allowances for: number of required parking spaces (30 proposed where 37 are required), for fence location (0 feet setback from street side property line proposed where 2 feet is required), and for parking setbacks from the north and west property lines (0 feet proposed where 5 feet is required). In addition, the applicant may seek and the Plan Commission may consider additional site development allowances as may be necessary or desirable for the proposed development.

Ms. Jones presented a brief background on the proposed planned development.
She provided general development characteristics, proposed public benefits and the staff recommendations and suggested conditions for approval.

Katie Janke Dale, attorney for the developer, provided a brief overview and stated that the applicant is in disagreement with several of the proposed conditions including: movement of the metal fence surrounding the open sales area, providing for a parking pay box, and providing funding for pedestrian countdown timers. She stated that the traffic signals are within the City of Chicago jurisdiction and seeking approval for the timers may slow down project completion.

David Brown of Evanston Gateway, LLC spoke, stating that the project has been through a year-long process of dialogue with City staff and a community meeting. He then gave an overview of the site and the area then reviewed the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance requirements and what the project is proposing to provide on-site. He then stated that there are a low number of site development allowances and that the proposed on-street parking, if counted, would bring the parking requirement into compliance. He then introduced LaManda Joy who will be taking the lead on the City Grange portion of the development.

LaManda Joy, master gardener with the Peterson Garden Project provided a background on the program and gave an overview of City Grange, a for-profit social enterprise. City Grange would be the first education based garden center in the country. She reviewed items that the program will offer, including an organic plant yard, demonstration garden along the Metra embankment, rooftop garden with beekeeping, and a community event space. There will also be a ground level café with seating and a coffee window for quick takeout orders. Approximately 10 to 15 jobs will be created.

Michael Wilkinson, architect for the applicant, reviewed the building design and materials along with space usage within the building.

Chair Lewis then opened up the hearing to questions from the Commission which included:

- How will security for building residents be handled? Mr. Brown stated that this has not been fully addressed but that there will be gates and entryways that will be closed when the retail space is closed. The 2nd floor office will be a separate space and closed off.
- How will rooftop mechanical equipment be screened? Mr. Brown stated that most of the equipment is located adjacent to the Metra train tracks with a parapet but that, due to the use of the roof, additional penthouse screening will be added.
- How will remediation of the property and replacement of the current parking lot spaces be handled? There will be 9 additional on-street parking spaces as part of the development and land sale agreement so that is not seen as an issue. Also,
full remediation of the property is planned. Underground tanks will all be removed; Phase I and II have been done.

- What was Metra’s response to the proposed demonstration garden? Mr. Brown replied that Metra has been responsive to their requests. An existing beautification lease between Metra and the City will help facilitate those proposed improvements.

- How was required parking determined for the development? Mr. Mangum stated that the retail portion of the building required 14 spaces, the office use required 1 space (due to first 2,000 sq. ft. not being counted), and that the residential portion required 22 spaces for a total of 37 parking spaces.

- Clarification on the color accents on all facades. Mr. Wilkinson stated that the proposed plans presented to the Commission are the response to the DAPR Committee recommendation.

- Impetus for the proposed on-street parking. Mr. Brown stated that those spaces were part of KLOA’s recommendations and that City staff reviewed the plans and worked out the adequate tapering for the lanes.

Chair Lewis then opened the hearing to questions from the public. A total of 3 residents asked questions which included:

- Clarification on how reflections from the planting materials will be addressed to mitigate possible harm to birds. Mr. Brown stated that a LEED consultant had been hired and that this was something that had been looked into prior to DAPR review. DAPR comments have been incorporated. Also glass on balconies has been removed in place of metal railings.

- Clarification on where replacement parking will be if any and when the parking will be terminated for those leasing spaces in the lot. Ms. Mason cup stated that notice will be provided prior to the purchase and closing of the lot. Likely to be in June. The City can make possible alternatives available. Replacement parking will need to be looked into.

- Whether or not revenue from the proposed retail could be used to leverage the cost of affordable units and what options were considered to lower the affordability levels for the on-site units. Mr. Brown stated that the development team made the decision to provide on-site affordable units at 80% AMI versus a fee-in-lieu payment based on what an internal review deemed most feasible. The mission of City Grange would also provide benefits to the same population.

Chair Lewis, then opened the hearing to public testimony. A total of 2 people spoke providing the following comments:

- General support of the project and overall improvements made to Howard St. However, there are concerns with regards to the closing of the parking lot. There are long waiting lists for the lot on Chicago Ave. and Howard St. as well as for Lot 51 nearby. Providing parking would add value to the properties in the area. Parking solution should be offered.
• Support of the project as it ties the east and west ends of Howard St. together. Callan St. widening provided more parking spaces making it less of an issue. Development on Howard St. in general is helping property values increase. The public benefits of the project balance the low number of site development allowances.

Mr. Brown stated that modifications would not help alleviate concerns and the project does help with some of the parking issues with the retail parking and on-street spaces.

Commissioner Isaac asked for clarification on why the Special Use for an Open Sales Lot is being asked for, since sales of landscaping equipment is not permitted with the open sales lot use. Mr. Mangum stated that the classification was likely to be conservative in the event of the retail space selling other non-landscaping materials that are offered.

Chair Lewis asked what happens to the lot in the winter months. Ms. Joy stated that the lot is intended to be used year round and would likely have holiday landscaping.

Commissioner Goddard asked for the cost of the pay boxes. Mr. Mangum clarified that the pay boxes cost $7,000 each. Commissioner Goddard then asked what the reasoning was for including that as part of the development’s public benefits.

The Commission then began deliberation.

Commissioner Dubin stated that she does not like the idea of asking the developer to pay for parking pay boxes or pedestrian countdown timers. Commissioner Goddard agreed, stating those conditions as onerous burdens.

Commissioner Halik stated that the proposed development is a good project and commended Ms. Joy for combining The Grange programing with housing.

The Commission then reviewed the standards and staff’s recommendations and conditions. Commissioner Isaac recommended that a change be made to staff’s recommendation, removing condition 8 regarding pedestrian countdown timers and adding that the special use be limited to principal use as accessory to the City Grange gardening and landscaping use.

A brief discussion followed regarding the recommended conditions, with the Commission determining which to recommend for approval and which to update. Specifically, the Commission discussed conditions 1, 7, 8, 10 and 11 from the staff report.

• Condition 1, regarding relocation of the fence, was thought to be redundant. The Commission agreed to exclude this condition
Condition 7, regarding providing on-street parking pay boxes, may attract commuters who park on the street and leave their car all day. The cost, however, was not thought to be exorbitant. The Commission was split on keeping the item.

Condition 8, regarding installation of pedestrian countdown timers, was thought to slow down the project process as the traffic signals at all corners of the Howard Street and Chicago Avenue are under the jurisdiction of the City of Chicago.

Condition 10, regarding the transit tracker screens, was not seen as beneficial for either the public or residents, though it was thought that they could encourage TOD use and be used by customers in the café.

Condition 11, regarding the addition of accent panels on all facades, seemed to be redundant as it was a recommendation of the DAPR committee and the plans appeared to show that change,

Commissioner Goddard made a motion to recommend approval of the proposed planned development with the exclusion of conditions 1, 8 and 10. Commissioner Saul seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was approved, 5-1.

Ayes: Dubin, Goddard, Halik, Lewis, Saul.
Nays: Isaac

3. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Goddard made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Saul seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by voice call 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Meagan Jones
Neighborhood and Land Use Planner
Community Development Department