

MINUTES OF THE
ROCK ISLAND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting May 4, 2010 5:15 P.M.

(x) Mike Creger	(x) Jason Lopez	(x) Bruce Peterson
() Ted Johnson	(x) Tim Meegan	(x) Lorian Swanson
(x) David Levin	(x) Norm Moline	() Berlinda Tyler-Jamison
	(x) Diane Oestreich	

Staff Present: Alan Carmen and Doris Quigley

Chairman Levin called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

Procedural Explanation

Chairman Levin explained the procedures for conducting the public hearing.

Approval of Minutes: Approval of Minutes of the regular meeting of April 6, 2010.

Commissioner Oestreich noted a correction to the minutes. A comment attributed to her was actually made by Commissioner Tyler-Jamison. Commissioner Moline moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Commissioner Oestreich seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Case #2010-5- Request for amendment to approved preliminary site plan in a PUD (Planned Unit Development) district for 321 and 327 24th Street..

Alan Carmen presented the staff report. Sixteen notices were mailed to neighboring property owners and no comments were received. The Rock Island Economic Growth Corporation has filed an application as the developer to amend the preliminary PUD and Riverfront Corridor Overlay District site plan at 321 and 327 24th Street. The development site consists of a city block surrounded by four streets.

The original site plan approved in January 2009 proposed 72 apartments in the former industrial structure by demolishing some segments of the existing structure and constructing several new additions to the remaining structure (covered parking area with second and third floor apartments on the north, a personal storage building also on the north and a new one story covered main entrance and three-story tall apartment expansion on the south). The original request included three variances (variance to allow residential space on the first floor, variance of 18 parking spaces of the 144-space requirement and a variance of two feet of the 20-foot front yard setback requirement along 25th Street and variances of 20 feet of the 20-foot front yard setback requirement along 24th Street and 4th Avenue).

The applicant seeks to amend the approved site plan to now have 30 apartments and an approximate 3,706 square foot commercial space located at the southwest corner of the site. Proposed new construction of residential rear and side "wings" and a rear parking structure have been eliminated. New construction will now include a covered entrance and common room space on the south façade (see site plan and building elevation). Changes have been made to the parking lot and traffic flow, which will result in the applicant asking for a revised parking variance (now a variance of 31 parking spaces of the 76 parking space requirement).

The development site includes the city block between 24th and 25th Streets and 3rd and 4th Avenues. The site is 410' x 330' (135,300 square feet, or 3.10 acres). The site consists of the Illinois Oil Company structures and oil tanks and a parking lot. To the north is a currently undeveloped site which is proposed to be the future site for the Children's Garden for the Quad City Botanical Center, zoned B-3. To the east is the Quad City Botanical Center, zoned B-3. To the south are office, service and parking uses, zoned B-3. To the west are commercial, office and service uses, zoned B-3.

Zoning History includes: Planning Commission Case #2009-01 - Original PUD and Riverfront Corridor Overlay District preliminary site plan was approved. Board of Zoning Appeals Case #88-23 - Request for variance from separation requirements from adjacent non-industrial zoning for locating a tank farm on the site was approved. The Comprehensive Plan identifies general commercial land use for the site.

The site has access to all four surrounding streets. There will be two access points to the site from 4th Avenue and two from 3rd Avenue. There will be a new access point for 25th Street about 60 feet north of the intersection. The site is flat and slightly above street level.

Staff is using the setbacks in the B-3 (community commercial) zoning district for the proposed development. There should be both a 20-foot front and rear yard setback and a 10-foot rear yard setback on the site. As previously indicated some segments of the existing building will be demolished and a new covered entrance and common room addition off the south facade will be constructed. The triangular-shaped northeast wing that is bounded by the smokestack on the southeast and the curved railroad spur on the north may remain.

The First Floor Preliminary Plan locates the perimeters of the buildings and wings to be demolished. The existing office building (southwest wing), will have first, second and third story units. The southernmost section of the first floor will be reserved for the retail/commercial space. The middle of the center wing will have an addition on the south for drive-up access and community space. The addition is one-story and will have a flat roof (approximately 2,943 square feet in area).

A porte-cochère will be built on the south side that is bracketed by terra cotta columns mimicking details on the office building. This is unchanged from the previous PUD request. The addition will be brick-faced. The entire structure (existing and new additions) will cover approximately 14 per cent of the site.

The Zoning Ordinance requires two off-street parking spaces per dwelling (60 spaces required for the 30 proposed dwelling units). The commercial space will require 16 spaces based on estimate of 2,779 net square feet of floor area and 4 employees. A total of 76 spaces should be provided and 45 surface parking spaces are identified on the site plan. As previously indicated, a variance of 31 parking spaces is requested for the development.

The site is served by water lines from 3rd and 4th Avenues (there is also a force main along 24th Street from the water intake facility to the north of the site. Sanitary sewer service is located along combination lines along 24th Street and 3rd and 4th Avenues. Storm water detention areas will be located adjacent to the surface parking areas off 3rd Avenue. Specific calculations to meet the City's Stormwater Ordinance will need to be provided to the Public Works Department.

Details regarding the lighting and landscaping plan will be provided in the Final PUD application. However, it should be noted that there is an existing area along the south perimeter of the surface parking lot, which according to the site plan will be maintained as landscaping. Additional landscaping should be provided along the parking lot expansion adjacent to 25th Street.

According to the 2009 preliminary PUD site plan, no freestanding signs are proposed except for small

directional signs for traffic flow (these type of signs are exempt from Sign Ordinance regulations if they are not illuminated and less than ten square feet in area. Signs identifying the development (and proposed commercial space) will be attached to the building.

The proposed development will be an approximate \$6 million investment to provide a mixed-use development (commercial space with additional residential options for people choosing to live/work near downtown). The establishment of downtown housing is consistent with the Downtown Strategic Plan (2007), RiverVision Plan (2004), the City of Rock Island Consolidated Plan, and the Illinois Comprehensive Housing Plan. Documents from the Rock Island Economic Growth Corporation also say the plans are compatible with the Botanical Center Children's Garden, Live/Work policies from Renaissance Rock Island and Greenbush Neighborhood Priorities. The conversion will create three one-bedroom units, 17 two-bedroom units and 10 three-bedroom units. Rents will range from \$432 to \$660 for one-bedroom units, \$529 to \$785 for two-bedroom units and \$875 for three-bedroom units. Out of the 30 units, eight are targeted to households equal to or less than of 50% of the area median income, and 22 units will be available to households at or below 120% of the area median income.

The proposed adaptive reuse development will change the use from the historic industrial corridor along the riverfront to mixed use (residential and commercial). Historic adaptive reuse projects have accomplished similar changes successfully, including many in Rock Island. This project will serve as an important "gateway" into the city from Iowa and the Rock Island Arsenal (which has many year round visitors). The development will have approximately ten dwelling units per acre, which identifies it as a medium-density land use category in the Comprehensive Plan.

The site will have adequate parking (even with variance) based on projected number of tenants and commercial space. Access is adequate and there is room to meet the landscaping standards for the area surrounding the parking lots and site. This meets the standards of the Planned Unit Development district in terms of property size, compatibility, site planning, open space, and traffic.

Preservation Commission Comments:

The Illinois Oil Company building was designated a Rock Island Landmark in 1990 (the landmark designation only contains the office building that fronts on 24th Street, and never contained the industrial portion of the building on the north side of the site). The Commission met on April 28th and unanimously approved of the request to amend the preliminary PUD and Riverfront Corridor Overlay District site plan request per the staff recommendation.

Staff recommends approval of the amended preliminary PUD and Riverfront Corridor Overlay Site Plan with the requested parking variance because the adaptive reuse is an attractive, unique and well-planned residential development that will have adequate access and landscaping that meets the standards for the Planned Unit Development district.

Chairman Levin asked for questions from the Commissioners for Mr. Carmen.

Commissioner Peterson asked if the area to the north of this was scheduled for additional development.

Mr. Carmen replied that there are no plans at this time for developing that area and that any future plans would return to the commission for approval.

Commissioner Moline asked what the façade would look like for the commercial space, specifically if the large windows would be replaced.

Mr. Carmen said the commercial space plans were still evolving and that the commercial windows would be replaced with large windows.

Commissioner Meegan expressed his concern over the parking space reduction. He stated that most rental units have multiple vehicles and the commercial space would also require parking. He wanted to know what statistics were used to justify the variance request.

Mr. Carmen replied that experience with downtown rental units has shown that there are fewer vehicles possessed by residents in the downtown area.

As there were no additional questions for Mr. Carmen, Chairman Levin invited the applicant to come forward.

Brian Hollenback of Rock Island Economic Growth Corporation, 120 16½ Street, addressed the commission. He stated that the development budget would be about 8.5 million dollars. He responded to the parking question by stating that for the Sala Apartments the parking lot across the street from the apartments had been leased, but that there were very few vehicles registered to park there. He stated that this was a costly lesson in how little parking downtown apartments really needed or used. For the façade of the first floor of the renovation, the first floor commercial area is presently being land-banked for future development. He said that the plans being presented to the Historic Preservation Commission will show open views from the windows on the first floor space in keeping with the historic design of the building. The area to the north of the building is lead-contaminated and may require a hard-surface covering, so that may result in an additional area for parking.

Chairman Levin asked for questions from the Commissioners for the applicant.

Commissioner Oestreich said that she is in favor of the request for fewer parking spaces and mentioned the possibility of leasing additional parking from the neighboring Botanical Center if needed.

Mr. Hollenback said that there are ideas in the works to contain and control the water runoff from the site and the neighboring Botanical Center and Expo Center as well into a storage system that would provide watering for the new Children's Garden at the Botanical Center. He also said that plans exist to incorporate a "tot-lot" and family area into the overall development in the future.

Commissioner Creger asked if the funding was already in-hand or just promised. He also asked about the future of Illinois Oil.

Mr. Hollenback replied that the signed grant agreement is in hand, and with the increased Federal grant, he would be addressing the City Council to reduce the funding that they had previously committed to the project. He said the plan is for Illinois Oil to relocate.

Commissioner Swanson asked if the commercial occupant would be a family-friendly organization.

Mr. Hollenback replied that there are prohibitions for 'sin' businesses such as liquor stores as occupants of the premises.

Commissioner Moline asked if the landscaped lot across 24th Street, owned by the City, would remain as it is. He also asked about repairs and resurfacing of 25th Street between 3rd and 5th Avenues.

Mr. Hollenback said that the City lot would remain as it is. He also stated that the development hoped to attract First Army soldiers from the arsenal.

Mr. Carmen stated that 25th Street between 4th and 5th Avenues is TIF eligible and scheduled for work either this or next year. He also said that the railroad spur and track at the corner of the property was scheduled for removal.

As there were no other questions for the applicant, Chairman Levin asked for proponents.

As there were no proponents, Chairman Levin asked for opponents.

As there were no people wishing to address the commission, Chairman Levin opened the floor for discussion by the Commissioners.

The Commissioners discussed the parking issues, with several saying they felt more parking would be needed. It was noted that there are options available to increase the number of spaces if needed.

Commissioner Moline moved to recommend to City Council that the request be approved as presented by staff. Commissioner Oestreich seconded the motion.

Chairman Levin called for the motion and it passed on a vote of six in favor and two opposed. The Commissioners Meegan and Lopez voted Nay.

The recommendation will be presented to City Council on Monday, May 10, 2010 at 6:45 p.m.

Other Business:

A request was made for a loose timeline of construction on this project. Mr. Carmen said the plan would go to City Council on Monday, May 10, a Certificate of Appropriateness case would be heard by the Preservation Commission on May 26, the closing on the sale of the property would occur in June, and completion should occur by the end of 2011. Mr. Hollenback said the plan is to be accepting rental applications by July 2011.

Adjournment:

Commissioner Oestreich made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Meegan seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan M. Carmen, Secretary
Rock Island Planning Commission