

MINUTES OF THE
ROCK ISLAND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting August 3, 2010 5:15 P.M.

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

Staff Present: Alan Carmen, Alan Fries 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 June 1, 2010.

Commissioner Peterson moved to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Meegan seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Commissioner Tyler-Jamison announced that she is a member of the board for Rock Island Economic Growth and would have to recuse herself from the vote on the case.

Case #2010-6- Request for approval for final site plan in a PUD (Planned Unit Development) district for 321 and 327 24th Street.

Alan Fries presented the staff report. The Rock Island Economic Growth Corporation has filed an application as the developer to for a final 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 City approved an amended preliminary site plan in April 2010 for 30 apartments and an approximate 3,706 square foot commercial space located at the southwest corner of the site. New construction will include a covered entrance and common room space on the south façade (see site plan and building elevation). The applicant also received a parking variance of 31 parking spaces of the 76 parking space requirement. The final site plan includes a reduced parking variance (29 spaces of the 76 space requirement as two additional parking spaces have been added to the southeast corner of the proposed development. The site plan also includes detailed information on lighting, parking lot landscaping and a proposed freestanding sign facing 4th Avenue.

As previously indicated 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 Illinois Oil Company structures and oil tanks and a parking lot. To the north is a currently undeveloped site that 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 is office, service and parking uses, zoned B-3. To the west is commercial, office and service uses, zoned B-3. The Comprehensive Plan identifies the 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 approved in the preliminary plan, 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 First Floor final 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-cochere 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 four employees. A total of 76 spaces should be provided and 47 surface parking spaces are identified on the site plan. As previously indicated, a variance of 31 parking spaces was approved with the preliminary plan. The site plan now identifies a total of 47 surface spaces, reducing the variance to 29 parking spaces.

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.

There is an existing approximate ten-foot wide landscaped area along the south perimeter of the surface parking lot, which according to the site plan will be maintained as existing bushes. Additional landscaping is proposed along the east and west ends of the parking lot and also adjacent to the structure. A Red Oak canopy tree will be located in a perimeter "island area" adjacent to the two access points from 4th Avenue. Three Spring Snow Crab canopy trees will also be located on the east and west edges of the south facing parking spaces. Two Red Splendor Snow Crab trees will be located along the east parking lot edge facing 25th Street. Two additional Red Splendor Snow Crab trees and an additional Red Oak tree will be located adjacent to the structure. Existing planters with Sea Green Juniper bushes will remain adjacent to the access points off of 4th Avenue and a Holmstrup Arborvitae hedge will be located along the perimeter of the parking lot adjacent to 25th Street.

A 4' x 8' unlit freestanding sign will be located in the previously mentioned perimeter "island area" adjacent to the 4th Avenue access points. The proposed sign will be parallel with 4th Avenue and will be a total of 6'4" in height from grade to top of sign. The sign will be located approximately ten feet from the south property line. Additional attached signage may also be proposed, but is not identified on building elevations (e.g. attached sign for proposed commercial space).

The lighting plan identifies the light illumination from four 20-foot tall light poles in the parking area. The illumination level at property lines meets the Zoning Ordinance requirement of not greater than one foot-candle light illumination level at the property line.

The proposed development will be an approximate \$8.5 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). It should also be attractive as a housing option to 1st Army personnel who are moving from Georgia to the Quad Cities next year. 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 and east sides of the site). The Commission met on July 28th and approved a motion to pass along a favorable comment on the final development plan.

Staff recommends approval of the final PUD and Riverfront Corridor Overlay Site Plan with the requested parking variance and the proposed new freestanding sign because the adaptive reuse of the structure and proposed freestanding sign are attractive, unique and well planned for the proposed residential development that will have adequate access and landscaping that meets the standards for the Planned Unit Development district and supports City goals and objectives.

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

Commissioner Levin asked if the western entrance would be in use and if the parking lot across the street, owned by the City, would be available as additional parking for the development.

Mr. Fries replied that the applicant would need to answer the question about the entrance.

As there were no additional questions for Mr. Fries, Chairman Levin invited the applicant to come forward to answer questions from the commissioners.

Mr. Brian Hollenback, 2702 30th Avenue, representing Rock Island Economic Growth Corporation introduced himself. He stated that the western entrance would be used for some apartment units. He also said that the area on the north edge of the property may have to be paved in the future, if environmental remediation efforts were not successful, so that could provide addition parking for the development.

Mr. Carmen said that the City-owned lot on the west side of 24th Street adjacent to the liquor store is an unrestricted lot and available for use.

Commissioner Oestreich stated that the designation 'red oak' was a general variety and that pin oak trees should not be used for landscaping due to several problems with the species.

Mr. Hollenback thanked her for the information.

Commissioner Meegan wanted to know how the number of parking spaces was calculated.

Mr. Hollenback replied that they manage 120 rental units in the downtown area and that the parking requirement for downtown residential apartments has proven to be substantially less than the required number of spaces called out in the Zoning Ordinance. He cited the sparse use of the parking lot reserved for the tenants of the Sala Apartments.

Commissioner Meegan asked if and when the Commission had ever approved such a large variance from the recommended number of spaces for a residential development and why the proposed parking for this development was so much less than the Ordinance requirement.

Mr. Carmen replied that the Ordinance is a "one size fits all" requirement and that the Commission needed to review each development on its own merits and requirements. He stated that the only deviation from the "two-

space per residence” parking requirement is for “senior residential properties” at only 1.5 spaces per unit and that history has shown the downtown residences use less spaces than the Ordinance requires for a residential development.

Commissioner Meegan stated that Rock Island’s downtown residential development is a new idea and that the success or failure of such residential projects could be a lack of parking spaces. He said that the City parking lot across the street might not be ideal because many people would not want to cross such busy streets on foot. He also stated that it appeared the parking plan was based on the convenience of simply having to resurface the area that was being demolished and not based on the best service to tenants. He again asked if there had ever been such a large variance on parking requirements anywhere within the City.

Mr. Carmen pointed out that many downtown residential uses – such as the Sala Apartments - do not have a parking requirement at all due to being located in the downtown central business district. He stated that residents in downtown areas do not follow the tradition demographic for residential areas and that there is a waiting list for all the rental units in the downtown area – Goldman, Sala, Renaissance, Voss - so the parking situation is not a detriment to those projects at all.

Commissioner Levin asked about the parking at DuMarche.

Mr. Fries replied that DuMarche had two covered spaces per unit.

Commissioner Creger asked if the 120 downtown rental units were fully occupied and with a waiting list.

Mr. Hollenback replied that there is a waiting list for the units managed by Rock Island Economic Growth Corp, and that there is a shortage of available rental units in the downtown area. He stated that many residents downtown either have only one car or do not own a car at all. He stated if a commercial business came to the Jackson Square building that wanted more parking, then the area to the north could easily be paved and the additional parking created. He stated that they were reluctant to put public money into paved space at the Jackson Square site if there was not a need for it.

Commissioner Creger said that it is good that a future plan is already in place to deal with additional parking at the site as opposed to possibly having to buy and demolish another property to provide additional parking in the future. He also asked about the lot to the south of the site.

Mr. Carmen replied that the lot – site of former Johnny B’s – is currently undergoing environmental remediation and Spirit Partners, to the south of Jackson Square, has approved plans to expand to the east and possibly to their west as well.

Commissioner Meegan asked if another developer would want to utilize adjoining parking that they did not own, would the commission approve a large parking variance. He also asked how many spaces were designated as handicapped.

Mr. Fries replied that some developers have made cross-use agreements for parking with neighboring properties.

Mr. Hollenback said the handicapped spaces are identified on the site plan and meet state requirements.

Commissioner Oestreich said that she is glad that this project is not paving all available space that is the easy and inexpensive thing to do, is utilizing green space and landscaping and has plans in place for future parking needs. She commented on the seldom-used parking lots that are all over the City.

Commissioner Meegan again stated that, in his opinion, the lack of parking can be attributed to the developer simply repaving the area that is being demolished and not accounting for the number of residents and the number of vehicles that each tenant will bring to the development. He again questioned if past developments had been granted such a large variance in the number of parking spaces in the project.

Commissioner Oestreich stated that there are no previous projects that are similar enough to this development to make accurate comparisons.

Mr. Hollenback stated that the expense of environmental remediation and landscaping is greater than the expense of paving the area to the north. The green space is intended to be a compliment to the projected Children's Garden at the Botanical Center. This development has been in the planning stages for eighteen months and has included members of the community and neighborhood associations surrounding the development as well as the Botanical Center and the City.

Mr. Carmen explained (mathematically) how the number of parking spaces planned for this development are based on typical downtown apartment-dweller demographics and would be adequate.

As there were no additional questions for the applicant and no other people present at the meeting, Chairman Levin opened the floor for discussion by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Peterson moved that the request be approved as recommended by staff. Commissioner Oestreich seconded the motion.

Chairman Levin called for the motion and it passed on a vote of five in favor and one abstention.

The recommendation will be presented to City Council on Monday, August 9, 2010 at 6:45 p.m.

Other Business:

Mr. Carmen noted that the recommendation for a replacement commissioner will go to the mayor next week for approval and a new commissioner should be in attendance at the September meeting.

Commissioner Creger asked about the prevalence of sandwich-board signs around the City and their legality.

Mr. Carmen explained that as the signs are usually set on the sidewalk – which is public right-of-way, they are not regulated under the sign ordinance. If the signs are causing a public safety hazard, they would be controlled by the Public Works Department.

Adjournment:

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

The meeting adjourned at 5:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan M. Carmen, Secretary
Rock Island Planning Commission