

SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Pierce Queen Apartments (Site Plan #425)

SPRC Meeting # 7

September 30, 2013

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Nancy Iacomini, Brian Harner, Inta Malis, Erik Gutshall, Rosemary Ciotti

MEETING AGENDA

This was the seventh SPRC meeting for the Pierce Queen Apartments Site Plan. Nancy Iacomini, who is the Planning Commission member chairing this item, provided introductory remarks.

Staff explained that while the site plan was approved by the County Board in March 2013, the applicant returned to SPRC for additional comments, per site plan condition, on their landscape plan and building façade drawings. Staff also highlighted that the proposed removal of two significant trees on site would require a site plan amendment.

The applicant team presented information about their arborist's assessment of the significant trees located at the corners of 16th Street North and N. Pierce and N. Queen streets, one of which is diseased and unlikely to survive under any condition. In light of the construction proposed in proximity to both trees, the arborist recommends removal of both. The revised landscape plan, which included replacement trees to compensate for this loss, was also presented to the committee. Finally, the applicant presented revised building façade drawings, which included minor corrections as well as changes to exterior glazing and an alternative building entrance design. Sample material boards with examples of major building elements (brick, glazing, masonry, metal features) were also presented.

SPRC DISCUSSION

Open Space and Landscaping

- Concern was expressed that the issues with the trees were not identified during the initial site plan review period.
 - Staff was asked to review the viability of saving the trees during the initial review, prior to the final design, which would locate new sidewalks and pathways nearby. The proposed construction is likely to disrupt the root system and severely inhibit the survival of both trees in the next few years.
- Are there options for treatment of the diseased tree? Could the other tree be saved?
 - No, there is no treatment available to address the tree decay
 - Yes, it's possible the other tree could be saved.

- What happens if the tree dies?
 - Applicant would have to replace based on formula requirements
 - We should plan better for the replacement of these trees
- Consider where more active (older) children will play in open space design
 - Applicant acknowledged they will likely have to add guards to keep skateboarders off some of the plaza features
 - Existing park space nearby and planned for adjacent site may be able to accommodate older kids
- Concern that vehicular traffic will still occur in this space
 - Intent is to use signage to discourage vehicular traffic here
- We have to consider how to preserve, retain, and/or bring back large, specimen trees in the future. Desire expressed by committee members to try to preserve at least one of the significant trees (N. Queen Street) by reconfiguring/redesigning the proposed sidewalk and entry path in that location. A suggestion was made to build in a contingency if it doesn't work to replant a tree that could become a specimen tree.
- Consider the caliper of the trees being used to replace the significant trees
- Be mindful of the open green space in the front, in order for it to be used as a play area, the drainage will have to work.
- Consider locating benches inside and outside the plaza area and being more creative with the use of pavers.

Building Façade Design

- Concern expressed about proposed lighting at the building entrance; overall, the proposed brick columns make the proposed alternative design less welcoming.
- Several committee members expressed a preference for the approved building entrance design over the alternative presented. Some felt the new proposal is not as residential (more commercial/institutional) in nature as the previous one.

Other

- If a similar review occurs for future projects, staff should outline the criticism from prior SPRC/PC/CB review and frame the applicant's response. Seems like changes are minor and it's hard to engage and comment on the architecture.
- The same rendering software should be used to display building features, so it feels like we are comparing "apples to apples"; hard to discern which types of changes are typical/normal.
- Hard to discern how big a community benefit the trees were and how to recapture that value
- HALRB should comment on proposed brick color

NEXT STEPS

- Staff and the applicant will work together on final review of the landscape plan and building façade through the administrative change and site plan amendment process.