

SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

2121 S. Clark Street (SP #11)

SPRC Meeting #1

May 12, 2014

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Eric Gutshall, Steve Sockwell, Jane Siegel

MEETING AGENDA

The purpose of the meeting was to review the Crystal Plaza 6 site plan amendment, requesting a change in use from Office to Residential. The SPRC Chair, summarized the agenda explaining that since the applicant planned mainly an interior renovation, only three major SPRC agenda topics would be discussed. Staff and the applicant then made presentations after which there was a discussion by the SPRC with the main points discussed listed below.

SPRC DISCUSSION

Land Use and Zoning

- An overview of all the buildings on the block (Block M) was requested.
- Comment was expressed regarding the need for a block plan that shows Plaza 6 as residential with the Plaza 5 and Block M submission currently under review by LRPC.
- Comment expressed regarding the timing of the Sector Plan; it was generally felt that the 23rd Street Plaza and Clark-Bell Street realignment could be delayed as a result of the proposed amendment.
- Question was asked as to whether staff had completed any analysis of Crystal Plaza 6 redevelopment potential.
- Clarifying questions asked regarding the layout and dimensions of the proposed residential units, management of the building, and whether units meet zoning standards for apartments. Further it was asked what would happen if the “WeWork” program falls through, could the units be reconfigured to larger residential units. It was asked that a condition be considered to address this potential change.
- The concern for future changes that would provide for this building to remain beyond the interim use and further delay implementation of the Sector Plan was expressed. Generally there was an expressed need for assurance that the use would not prevent redevelopment in accordance with the Sector Plan 20 years from now.
- Question regarding whether the applicant had considered the conversion of the Crystal Plaza 5 office building for residential use and then redeveloping the Crystal Plaza 6 site instead in order to move or advance the Sector Plan forward.

- Comment regarding what to explain to neighborhood members with regard to the phenomenon of “WeWork” and what exactly it is – demographics? Dormitory? Affordable Units?
- Committee members generally liked the concept; but again wanted to know how to ensure through conditions that this is and remains an interim use and any change (i.e., number/size of the units or term of use) would be considered a major site plan amendment.

23rd Street, Retail and Open Space

- It was generally felt that while nothing was proposed, 23rd Street could use some programming.
- Members wanted to know more about outdoor space which might have been appropriate for an office building that may no longer be appropriate for a residential use.
- Question asked regarding whether “WeWork” will control the retail and whether the lack of presence on 23rd Street would be an issue with regard to the viability of the retail.
- Question asked as to how the proposed retail program being considered for “WeWork” could be related to other retail on the block and if it could be extended further north in the Interim.
- Clarifying question asked of the applicant regarding their expectations for the proposed retail.
- It was noted that with the change in use from office to residential that open space is important.
- It was suggested that temporary use of the outdoor space and programming should be flexible so that there would not be a need for County Board approval for any special events or changes in activities that might be considered.

Transportation

- Question as to whether there would be enhanced bike facilities provided.
- Question asked regarding the mode of transportation anticipated.

Building Architecture

- Question asked as to whether the windows would be operable.
- Question asked as to whether there were any plans to improve the façades of the building other than paint.
- Question asked about whether there would be roof access and plans for activities on the roof.
- Clarification requested with regard to the effect of the paint on the fins; more examples regarding the color palette and arrangement of colors at PC was deemed an important.
- Question as to whether the County’s Urban Design staff had comments on the façade improvements.
- Suggested that there be a condition for the site plan amendment with regard to maintenance of the paint on the façade.

Wrap Up

- Request that more detail be provided to the Planning Commission on the retail expected.
- Generally façade design deemed interesting, but additional information requested on color palette for exterior paint.
- Intrigue expressed of the interim use; Encourage limits that would provide staff and the County Board the opportunity to look at any changes before the 20 year term ends. Consensus on this point that a condition be written to ensure that any further changes come back to the County Board after 20 years, or if the WeLive project were to fail, that it would come back to the Board.
- Consensus on writing for a condition that would to allow WeLive liberal programming to enliven and activate the outdoor space.
- Suggested that staff look at whether a polling place is needed at this location.
- Fascination expressed about the conversion; Reservations remained regarding the specific site selected and the timing because of the potential delays that might result in implementing the Sector Plan.
- Suggested the applicant look at how the building addresses the street and make amends with the block for the next 20 years; Expressed that the applicant must do something in this regard with the site plan amendment.
- Reiteration of ensuring the understanding of the definition of “interim” and that this is a one-time deal and not a trend; an accurate showing of the change in use on the current block plan submission.
- A little discomfort expressed with the fact that there is generally too little information about where and how this program operates in other places.
- Be mindful in recognizing the long-term relation of the proposal to the Sector Plan.
- For Planning Commission more information will be needed on the three main issues and how the building and proposed use relates:
 - Retail
 - Open Space
 - 23rd Street

NEXT STEPS

- A request to advertise public hearings at the July 2014 Planning Commission and County Board hearings will be considered by the County Board at its meeting in June 2014.