



Agenda Item #: 5

Project Title: 448 S Gammon Road - Exterior Renovations to an Existing Building in a Planned Multi-Use Site. 19th Alder Dist.

Legistar File ID #: 79257

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Jessica Klehr, Shane Bernau, Christian Harper, Marsha Rummel, Rafeeq Asad, and Russell Knudson

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of September 6, 2023, the Urban Design Commission made an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission to grant **INITIAL APPROVAL** of exterior renovations to an existing building in a Planned Multi-Use Site located at 448 S Gammon Road. Registered and speaking in support was Eric Ohlfs.

Johnson Financial Group is looking to move into this vacant bank building at main entrance of West Towne Mall at the end of Odana Road. The plans will renovate the building to match their new prototype with a mix of stone, brick and siding. Site work includes maintaining as much of the existing as possible, adding a dumpster enclosure where it is currently is attached to the building. They will remove the existing overhang, apply new finishes to the exterior, increase the amount of glazing, and maintain the existing drive-thru. Landscaping around the building will be replaced, with additional landscaping around the new monument sign. Existing lighting will remain, with new lighting around the exterior drive-thru canopy and main entrance. Some existing rooftop units on the building would be shielded with some prefabricated roof screens.

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- Is it the intent to completely strip off all the brick veneer?
 - The existing brick never would remain, and we would install a thin set veneer over top of that.
- Adhering a thin brick over an existing brick?
 - Correct, providing a new drainage plane in front of the existing brick.
- So your units then, are they an 'L' shaped unit wrapped around the corner?
 - Correct.
- I would repeat the comments I had on the previous agenda item and also respond to the staff report, which talks about concern that there's not an economy of materials. You have wood, stone, and masonry. There's something nice and understated about having a nice, simple soldier course at the base instead of stratifying with another material of stone. It could be a little bit more simple and understated and a little more elegant without that adhered stone at the base, which to me is kind of residential in character. Even Chick-fil-A doesn't have that many materials on their building. Other than that it's a pretty handsome expression and a nice improvement, but again I just think one more material than is necessary.
- The most dramatic change for me is the removal of overhangs of the existing building. They're quite heavy on the existing building, you're going for a much more contemporary building style. You do have some projection over some of the fenestration windows but not all of them; can you speak to why you have them where you have them and why not a consistency or seeing more of them?

- Yes, we're calling them eyebrow overhangs over the clerestory windows as a design feature to accentuate that window.
- And the entrance as well?
 - Yes, that one would be a four-foot deep overhang to provide shelter.
- I'm curious if you studied the option to apply it more? I like it, it's an aesthetic enhancement, you have modulation going for you, it's not just a square box but at the same time it's relatively flat and I like the depth those add, so I'm curious if you might consider applying that more consistently, or more of them.
 - Yes, we can look at the option of adding them to more locations.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Overall this is an improvement to what's there. It looks like the building where plants died and were never replaced. I'd recommend you not follow the previous tenant's use of dyed red mulch, that stuff is pretty hideous. This updated planting plan looks pretty good. I don't know how I feel about the comments about the materials being one too many with the stone base, but a lot of that would be covered up with these plantings if that makes a difference. I would note that you are using boxwoods in various places around building, I like those nice use of evergreen plants that looks good through winter. The ones behind the expanse of lawn behind entrance will be fine, but adjacent to sidewalks, how those are maintained and the use of salt can be super hard on boxwoods. It requires somebody paying attention to that, which isn't always the case. You might want to have your landscape architect consider something more salt tolerant, it's easy to find lists of evergreens rated for their tolerance for road salt. Nice flowering shrubs, appreciate you're trying to keep the existing trees that are there. I would echo the comments about the eyebrow canopies, I like those, I don't need them over every single window, but the northeast corner in particular where one had it and one didn't seemed like a perfect place for both to have it.
- The masonry on the bottom might deserve a revisit. Soldier course is really nice but existing windows go all the way to the ground, you're proposing other windows with a higher sill to them. So how you treat that in the brick would not be a repeated soldier course but a row lock, and you got rid of the stone veneer, you could still have interest and make building look sharp.
- We had some requests for the reduction in the number of materials and revisiting the number of eyebrows/window sun shading, a prohibition of orange mulch.
- (Secretary) There are a couple of items in the staff report relative to landscaping in parking lot areas and pedestrian circulation being consistent with the large format retail ordinance. The commission should make findings with regard to these items.

A motion was made by Bernau, for Initial Approval, noting that the massing and site plan are there, and the comments on the quantity of materials, eyebrows above windows, salt tolerant plant substitutes, and mulch as conditions.

Discussion on the motion:

- Are you looking for a finding that the landscape plan is consistent with the large retail development requirements?
- (Secretary) Yes, in particular they made some site changes where they're shifting around some parking for a refuse enclosure and it speaks to providing landscape buffers, adequate screening, fences, benches, screening around some of those amenities. This is a drive-thru use and we're not considering that because it's existing, but that ordinance does also talk about enhanced pedestrian connectivity through the site. There is currently nothing to take anybody from the outlying parking areas where there are no visual cues through to the site to provide that safe pedestrian circulation through the site. And the lighting does not currently meet code requirements.
- Would you consider an amendment to the motion to establish a public path from the entrance, and compliant lighting?

- Yes, just looking at where that pedestrian path might fall.
- It's an existing condition here. We don't have the benefit of understanding the grade implications of running a sidewalk here or there that may or may not be accessible.
- I think we'd want some reasoning, I'm not sure how someone from the public would be approaching if they're not just parking in the parking lot itself. Some justification for why you would provide it where you're going to provide it. Lighting obviously has to be code compliant. The trash and refuse seems to be mirroring Chick-fil-A, the general location is probably okay, but all the screening requirements around that space are necessary.

Action

On a motion by Bernau, seconded by Knudson, the Urban Design Commission made an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission to grant **INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion noted that the massing and site plan are acceptable, and included the following conditions:

- The project shall return to the Urban Design Commission for Final Approval.
- Simplify the quantity of materials, including removing the stone base.
- Add additional eyebrows above windows,
- Update the landscape plan to use a salt tolerant plant substitutes, and mulch.
- Update the lighting plan to be code compliant.
- Provide a pedestrian pathway from the parking area to the building and include a justification for why it is being located as such.
- Update the refuse area to meet screening requirements (if necessary).

The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (6-0).