



MEMORANDUM

City of Watertown Planning Office

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TO: Norman J. Wayte II, Chairman, Planning Board

FROM: Kenneth A. Mix, Planning and Community Development Coordinator

SUBJECT: Zone Change Request – 1290 Arsenal Street

DATE: March 12, 2010

Request: To amend the approved plan and allowed signage schedule for Planned Development District # 23, Parcels Number 8-53-102.001, 8-53-103.100, 8-53-106.100, 8-53-107, 8-53-108.100, 8-53-110, and 8-53-114.

Applicant: Ryan Churchill, Project Engineer of GYMO, P.C. on behalf of Patrick Donegan of Millennium Development.

Property Owner: Vision Development – 8-53-102.001, 8-53-103.100, 8-53-106.100, and 8-53-114
James Donegan – 8-53-107
81 Land Co., LLC – 8-53-108.100
Hotel 45 Inc. – 8-53-110

SEQRA: Type I Action

County Planning Board review required: Yes

Comments: This request is to amend the approved plan and allowed signage schedule for Planned Development District #23 which is comprised of Parcels Number 8-53-102.001, 8-53-103.100, 8-53-106.100, 8-53-107, 8-53-108.100, 8-53-110, and 8-53-114. PDD # 23 was created in 2005 with the allowed uses being restaurants, hotels, retail, commercial and the construction of billboards. As part of the approval, a preliminary site plan was submitted for the PDD which established the overall layout for the site.

The applicant is now proposing the construction of a second hotel on the site and additional retail and restaurant sites that were not considered or approved previously. Since the changes to the approved plan are significant, an amendment to that plan has to be reviewed by the Planning Board and approved by the City Council. Additionally, the applicant is requesting an amendment to the allowed signage schedule for the PDD to accommodate the proposed buildings.

At the March 2, 2010 meeting, the Planning Board reviewed the PDD plan and requested that the applicant make several changes including modifications to the vehicular and pedestrian

circulation system and improvements to the landscaping plan. Several City departments have reviewed the PDD plan again and have the following comments:

Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation: One of the main comments regarding vehicular and pedestrian circulation was that the Planning Board wanted to see a defined and separate north to south vehicular route through the entire site located on the eastern side of the property. The applicant has modified their plans accordingly and the north-south route has been provided. The route is a limited access route and each of the proposed structures is served by an independent parking lot that is separated from the main drive. One exception is a small area of parking located along the drive in between Restaurants 2 and 3. Since this is an existing parking area, it can remain for now but for visibility and safety concerns it should be considered for elimination as future phases are constructed and traffic increases.

The proposed east to west vehicular routes were also discussed by the Board with an emphasis placed on providing limited access routes. The applicant has also modified their plans to show the limited access routes with each of the proposed structures being served by an independent parking lot. One exception to this is the drive aisle located to the north of Restaurant 4. This drive aisle, which is off of the main north-south route, will become a major connector from the north-south drive to the hotel as future build out occurs. The parking for Restaurant 4 will back directly into this route which will create limited visibility for motorists traveling through the site. The layout of Restaurant 4 should be shifted to the south to provide a separation between the parking area and the drive.

When the big box facility is constructed, the northernmost parking spaces to be constructed as part of the Hilton Garden Inn will have to be eliminated. The grass islands abutting these parking spaces should be extended toward the Hilton Garden Inn when the big box parking lot is constructed.

It was noted in the previous report and discussed at the Planning Board meeting that the pedestrian circulation system should follow the north-south and east-west routes and provide clear and direct connections from the hotels to the rest of the site, including connections to the existing and proposed sections of Western Boulevard. The revised plan shows that a sidewalk has been added along a portion of the north-south drive on the big box portion of the site and along Retail 2 and Restaurant 4. However, the north-south pedestrian route ends there. This route should be continued to the south, past Restaurant 3 and the Proposed Bank and terminate at the southernmost east-west drive. Or, the path could be put on the east side of the north-south drive where there is more space, fewer driveway crossings and the stormwater pond could be used as a recreational amenity.

The other north-south pedestrian route that was discussed was the sidewalk that runs in front of the Holiday Inn Express and extends in front of the Hilton Garden Inn. The hotels will be large pedestrian traffic generators and continuing this pedestrian route to the north across the Hilton parking lot and across the big box parking lot was recommended. This could be accomplished by moving the sidewalk that currently connects Restaurant 4 with the big box to the west to line up with the sidewalk coming from the hotels.

The addition of east-west pedestrian routes along the access drives was also discussed. The applicant has added a new sidewalk section on the plans that connects the existing development on the southern part of the site with Western Boulevard. However, no other direct east-west pedestrian connections have been proposed. A sidewalk along the Retail 1 and Bank sites that connects the Holiday Inn with Western Boulevard would be advisable as it would provide a safe pedestrian connection from both of the hotels to 4 future building sites. This sidewalk should have connections to the parking lot and/or drive aisles of the adjacent building lots similar to the one depicted between proposed Restaurant 2 and the North-South connector road. The sidewalk already proposed to extend out from the Hilton and across the parking lot will provide access from the hotels to 2 other building sites.

As is noted above, a proposed sidewalk has been added to the PDD plan along the existing entrance drive located on the southern side of the site. This sidewalk will connect all of the existing development and the proposed hotel with Western Boulevard and Arsenal Street. This is a key pedestrian connection for the site and the Board should consider requiring the installation of it as part of the site plan for the hotel.

As was noted in the previous report, a traffic study may be required for later phases of the overall project. The proposed hotel will not trigger one, but the accumulative effect of the small retail pads may and the big box retail site most likely will require one.

Parking: Parking calculations for the various buildings were completed. The number of parking spaces provided for each building exceeds the amount required by the Zoning Ordinance. As site plan submissions are developed for the various buildings, the parking calculations will be verified.

Drainage, Grading and Utilities: The Engineering and Water Department have reviewed the plans and have no major concerns regarding these items, relative to the PDD amendment.

Landscaping: The applicant has shown additional landscaped areas in the proposed PDD plan as requested by the Planning Board. Additional landscaped islands in the big box parking lot have been added along with landscaping along the various access drives. Park like areas are shown in some of the larger islands in the big box parking lot. Details regarding these items will be worked out as site plans for each of the facilities are submitted for approval. Overall, the amount of impervious area throughout the site has been decreased.

Signage: Sign regulations can be adopted as part of a PDD. This was done when PDD #23 was originally created in 2005 to provide the overall site with more signage than is typically allowed in a Commercial zoning district. In addition to seeking an amendment to the proposed site layout of the PDD, the applicant is proposing to modify the approved signage schedule as noted in their letter. They are proposing 2,100 sq. ft. in addition to the 3,500 square feet and billboards that were previously approved.

Other Comments: As part of the SEQR review process, Part I of the Full Environmental Assessment Form has been forwarded to the NYSDOH, NYSDEC, and NYSDOT. The NYSDOT has requested that the applicant forward a copy of their final plans to them so that they can evaluate the need for permits and identify the requirements necessary for construction. The DOT contacts are Martin C. Percy, Regional Traffic Engineer and Tim Vreath, Regional Utilities Engineer.

Summary: The following lists several key issues that should be addressed:

1. Restaurant 4 should be shifted to the south to provide a separation between the parking area and the future drive aisle.
2. The sidewalk along the easternmost north-south drive should be extended to the south, past Restaurant 3 and the Proposed Bank.
3. The north-south pedestrian route that runs in front of the Holiday Inn Express and extends in front of the Hilton Garden Inn should be extended to the north across the big box parking lot.
4. An east-west sidewalk along the Proposed Bank and Retail 1 sites that connects the Holiday Inn with Western Boulevard should be considered to provide a safe pedestrian connection from both of the hotels to 4 future building sites.
5. The Planning Board should consider requiring the installation of the sidewalk along the existing entrance drive located on the southern side of the site as part of the site plan approval for the hotel.

cc: Planning Board and City Council Members
Robert J. Slye, City Attorney
Justin Wood, Civil Engineer II
Ryan Churchill, GYMO, P.C.