

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE  
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
July 25, 2011**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Great Falls Design Review Board was called to order by Mr. Jule Stuver at 3:03 p.m. in the Rainbow Conference room of the Civic Center.

**ROLL CALL & ATTENDANCE**

Design Review Board Members present:

Ms. Jean Price, Chair  
Mr. Bruce Forde  
Ms. Mary Klette  
Mr. Todd Humble

Design Review Board Members absent:

Mr. Jule Stuver

City Staff Members present:

Mr. Michael Haynes, Director, Planning & Community Development  
Mr. Charlie Sheets, Development Review Coordinator  
Ms. Jana Cooper, Planner II  
Mr. Dave Dobbs, City Engineers Representative  
Ms. Phyllis Tryon, Administrative Assistant

Others present:

Mr. Mike Elliott, Owner QAM RENTALS, LLC  
Mr. Nick Oswood, Oswood Construction  
Mr. Anthony Houtz, A.I.A., CTA Architects Engineers  
Ms. Jo Dee Black, Great Falls Tribune

**MINUTES**

Ms. Price asked if there were any comments on the minutes of the July 11, 2011 meeting. Mr. Humble moved to approve the minutes as stated. Ms. Klette seconded. All being in favor, the minutes were approved.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

## **NEW BUSINESS** **Elliott Office Building** **408 9<sup>th</sup> Street South**

Mr. Sheets, Development Review Coordinator for the City, reviewed the City staff report on the proposed construction of a new commercial office building on the vacant property addressed as 408 9<sup>th</sup> Street South. The application and plans were submitted by Oswood Construction on behalf of Mike Elliott, owner. A landscape plan and an architect board showing exterior finishes and features were available at the meeting.

The property is an area of 7,500 square feet with frontages on both 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and 9<sup>th</sup> Street South. The proposed new building size is 2,390 square feet and is a single story with cathedral ceiling over the reception area and a peak height of 15'-0". The property is zoned C-1 Neighborhood commercial district. Businesses in this zone are typically businesses which complement the neighborhoods in which they are located.

The building will have eight offices and support facilities, and plans provide for off-street parking, landscaping, and concrete walks to serve the building. Seven parking spaces are provided. Clients will be able to exit the parking lot without backing up into the street, but will have to back into the alley if using that exit. Staff determined that eight parking spaces are required for this size building; bicycle parking will be included to make up for the one parking space.

Landscaping plans include 2000 square feet of lawn with trees and shrubs, and an additional 2000 square feet of lawn and trees in the boulevard area, exceeding the requirements. The existing mature hedge will serve as a buffer between the business and the adjacent residential property. Existing City sidewalk is in need of some repair.

Signage plans will be submitted at a later date. A maximum of 50 square feet of signage, either wall or free-standing, is permitted. Wall packs will be placed at the entrance of the building for lighting, and staff notes that the builder will need to insure that lighting does not interfere with the residence next door.

Mr. Sheets stated that the owner will be submitting a Design Review Waiver to waive the 15-foot buffer zone between residence and business property required by City code.

He explained that a Design Review Waiver is a mechanism provided by City Code which allows the Planning & Community Development Director to consider a change in code requirements on a case-by-case basis. Without the waiver, the owner would need to petition the Board of Adjustments as a variance. In this instance, the required 15-foot buffer zone is not feasible on the west side of the property. The natural hedge in existence will provide a buffer for the residential building. The applicant owns both the residential property to the west and the new building site.

Mr. Forde asked how that might impact a new owner of the residence if the residential property was sold. Mr. Haynes stated that staff would request the waiver be recorded.

Mr. Oswood explained that he had thought City code required a parking space for every 300 square feet of building, but not a portion thereof, and so had designed seven parking spaces instead of eight. However, he agreed that bicycle parking was a good compromise.

He stated that initial proposed plans included a masonry wall in place of the mature hedge, but he preferred the existing hedge. He said the hedge will be filled in where it has died back.

Mr. Oswood gave an overview of the project materials. The mechanical units on the roof will be screened by a parapet wall in front and will be open in back to allow for air circulation.

There was open discussion on the landscaping plans. Mr. Forde suggested taller plants on the outer perimeters of the plant areas and corners of the building, even though there will be a window wrapping the corner. He also suggested a taller plant such as Hetz Midget Arborvitae beneath windows instead of Princess Spirea. Mr. Oswood said code required 50 percent of the frontage to be planting beds, although he didn't particularly like plantings next to the foundation due to water issues. He said a geotechnical report on the soil will be performed.

City Engineer, Dave Dobbs, said the City will mark defective sidewalk slabs for replacement. He said there is an existing narrow driveway that will need to be removed and landscaped. He noted that there is an existing water service on 9<sup>th</sup> Street South, which might be better than coming off 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. Mr. Dobbs also pointed out that the parking lot curbing needs to be pushed back to the property and off the boulevard. Mr. Dobbs asked if there was a fire sprinkler system, and Mr. Oswood stated a fire sprinkler system was not in the budget and code did not require it.

MOTION: Ms. Klette moved to conditionally approve the project with the applicant agreeing and fulfilling the following recommendations:

1. The proposed project shall be developed consistent with the conditions in the staff report, all codes and ordinances of the City of Great Falls, the State of Montana, and all other applicable regulatory agencies.
2. If, after the approval of the concept development plan as amended by this board, the owner proposes to expand or modify the conceptual development plans, the Director of the Planning and Community Development Department shall determine in writing if such proposed change would alter the concept for one or more review criteria. If such proposed change would alter the plan, the proposal shall be resubmitted for review as a new application.
3. The applicant shall install a bicycle parking rack as a part of the project.
4. The applicant is required to replace all portions of public sidewalk determined by the City Engineer as deemed necessary for public safety.
5. The applicant will submit a Design Review Waiver for the hedge buffer on the west boundary line.
6. Gaps in the hedge on the west boundary shall be filled in with plantings.
7. The existing driveway shall be removed.
8. The applicant will follow the suggested changes in species of plants for landscaping.
9. Landscape curbing shall be within the property lines of the project.
10. The planting beds will have taller plants on the outside ends with shorter plants in the center.

Second: Mr. Humble  
All being in favor, the motion passed.

Mr. Sheets explained the next steps for the project to move forward. He will draft a letter outlining the above conditions, and the developer may submit plans to the builder.

**Grandview at Benefis, Senior Living Complex**  
**18<sup>th</sup> Avenue South & 29<sup>th</sup> Street South**  
**Lots 1A1 & 1B2, Mount Olivet Addition, Section 17, T20N, Range 4E**

Mr. Sheets reviewed the City staff report on the Grandview at Benefis Senior Living Complex. He stated the project has been evolving over the past nine months, and the project has been presented to the community and the City Commission. The City Commission approved rezoning the property from PLI to PUD, a Planned Unit Development, in which unique design criteria are part of the plan. A landscape plan and project renderings were available at this meeting.

The project consists of 42 acres on the southern boundary of the medical district next to Central High School and Mount Olivet Cemetery. To the north is the Great Falls Clinic and to the east is Park Place, being Mountain View Addition.

The developers have presented the project to Neighborhood Councils 5 and 6, and comments received by the City Commission as a result of those presentations have been brought into the plans.

All internal streets will be private. The plan includes three styles of homes, each with unique landscaping. The southern portion of the plan has a mix of cottage styles. Mr. Sheets noted the staff report was derived from the PUD approved by the City Commission. The project includes on-site parking with 305 stalls, which exceeds the required 148 stalls.

Landscaping is a major component of the site. The one difference between concept plans submitted to the community and the current plan is that the buffer on the east boundary is no longer showing on the plans. Originally, plans showed a concentration of plantings along that boundary.

Sidewalks are proposed in the cottage areas as well as along the access to the parking lots, and walking trails are included. Signage was addressed in the PUD and a monument sign is proposed at the intersection of the complex center and 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue South.

A conceptual lighting plan was also submitted earlier and the project will meet the outdoor lighting requirements of Title 17, Chapter 40 of the code. Mr. Sheets summarized that other than the landscaping along the eastern boundary, the developers are following the project plans. The project is consistent with the goals of the Medical District Master Plan except for one element not addressed in the PUD, which is the Public Art portion. The project should incorporate public and private art in both indoor and outdoor spaces, including sculptures, outdoor paintings and murals. The art is to be rotated to allow for multiple artists to exhibit their work. Staff recommends the developer include a component promoting public and private art.

Mr. Houtz, architect for the project, stated that landscaping was an important aspect of the project. He clarified that the different style cottages will have fiber cement siding with some customization. Building will be done in phases. The first phase is the independent living and special care area, followed by the commons area. There was open discussion about possible locations for public and private art. Mr. Sheets clarified that the art portion was not a part of City Code; however, it was a recommendation for the project as part of the Medical District Master Plan.

There was discussion regarding the landscaping plans and Mr. Houtz explained various details of the project. Mr. Forde was also familiar with the landscaping plans and offered information about gazebos, walking trails, and berms.

Mr. Sheets reiterated that originally there had been a buffer of trees included in the landscaping along the eastern boundary to provide a separation from Mountain View to the cottages all the way up to the City park. He suggested a recommendation from the

board that the landscape plan must include canopy trees planted and maintained as the buffer setback along the eastern property boundary. Trees shall be spaced more or less evenly along the length of the buffer and may be staggered, as shown on the conceptual plan and as represented to the Neighborhood Councils. Mr. Sheets stated the developer will have to resubmit a landscape plan accordingly.

Mr. Haynes asked if the buffer trees were intentionally removed from the plan. Mr. Forde stated that Forde Nursery developed the landscape plans but that portion was not conveyed to the nursery. He explained that the developer exceeded landscaping requirements on the portion of the plan that is considered residential, so they thought they had met all requirements.

Ms. Cooper stated that many neighbors expressed concern about the view from taller buildings overlooking their yards and that a buffer was an important element of the project. Mr. Sheets stated the park area would be open to provide transition. Mr. Forde suggested fast growing poplars as an option. It was agreed that since trees require substantial growth time, the buffer should be addressed in the early stages of the project.

Mr. Forde explained that landscaping will be adjusted according to whether units face north or south. He also stated the developer may do more landscaping than is currently on the plans. He said grass would be mowed along the trail but native grasses and wildflowers are planned away from the trail. A number of gazebos are planned.

Ms. Price suggested that within each phase of the project, three sculptural sites be considered and a prospectus sent out to Montana or regional artists. Mr. Sheets summarized that recommendation.

MOTION: Mr. Humble moved to conditionally approve the project with the applicant agreeing and fulfilling the following recommendations:

1. The proposed project shall be developed consistent with the conditions in the staff agenda report, all codes and ordinances of the City of Great Falls, the State of Montana, and all other applicable regulatory agencies.
2. If after the approval of the concept development plan as amended by the board, the owner proposes to expand or modify the conceptual development plans, the Director of the Planning and Community Development Department shall determine in writing if such proposed change would alter the concept for one or more review criteria. If such proposed change would alter the plan, the proposal shall be resubmitted for review as a new application.
3. The landscape must include canopy trees planted and maintained in a buffer setback along the eastern property boundary. Trees shall be spaced more or less evenly along the length of the buffer and staggered as shown on the conceptual renderings provided by the Owner's representatives at the Neighborhood Council

Meetings. The Landscape plan must be resubmitted and the buffer planted in the early stages of the project.

4. The developer shall introduce a public and private art element into the entire development with fountains, sculptures, and murals made by Montana artists.

Second: Ms. Klette

Due to his involvement in the landscaping portion of the project, Mr. Forde recused himself from the vote. The motion passed 3-0.

Mr. Sheets explained the next steps for the project to move forward. Staff will anticipate receiving the new landscape plan for review.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Sheets stated there will be two applications for a meeting on August 8. The meeting was adjourned at 4:23 p.m.