

MINUTES  
ANN ARBOR CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

7:00 p.m. – November 21, 2006

Time: Chair Pratt called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber, Second Floor, 100 North Fifth Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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ROLL CALL

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Members Present: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lipson, Potts, Pratt

Members Absent: Westphal

Staff Present: Foondle, Vaughn

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INTRODUCTIONS

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None.

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MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

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a. Minutes of October 17, 2006.

**Moved by Lipson, seconded by Potts, to approve the minutes as presented.**

A vote on the motion showed:

YEAS: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lipson, Potts, Pratt  
NAYS: None  
ABSENT: Westphal

**Motion carried.**

b. Minutes of November 2, 2006.

**Moved by Carlberg, seconded by Borum, to approve the minutes as presented.**

A vote on the motion showed:

YEAS: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lipson, Potts, Pratt  
NAYS: None  
ABSENT: Westphal

**Motion carried.**

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APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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**Moved by Emaus, seconded by Borum, to approve the agenda.**

A vote on the motion showed:

YEAS: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lipson, Potts, Pratt  
NAYS: None  
ABSENT: Westphal

**Motion carried.**

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REPORTS FROM CITY ADMINISTRATION, CITY COUNCIL,  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, PLANNING COMMISSION  
OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES, WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

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Bona reported that the A2D2 Overlay Zoning Committee met last week and said the handouts from that meeting, as well as the meeting notes, were posted on the City's website. The next meeting, she said, was scheduled for December 13 at 4:30 p.m. in the Fourth Floor Conference Room, City Hall.

Potts reported that the Ordinance Revisions Committee would be meeting on December 1 and December 15 at 9:00 a.m. in City Hall. She announced that the A2D2 Historic District Committee would be having a public meeting on November 28 at 7:00 p.m. at Bach School to discuss revisions to the historic district ordinance, and then a committee meeting on November 30 at 5:00 p.m. at City Hall. The last of the design workshops would be November 29 at 6:30 p.m. at the Michigan League, she said.

Pratt stated that the A2D2 Steering Committee, which was formed to coordinate the different committees working on the Calthorpe plan recommendations and oversee the progress being made, would be meeting on November 27 at 5:30 p.m. in the Sixth Floor Conference Room, City Hall.

Carlberg reported that the Allen Creek Greenway Task Force report was still in progress and was anticipated to be presented to Council in December. She announced that there would be a City Council public hearing on November 27 at 7:00 p.m. regarding the location of the new district court/policy facility.

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AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

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Jim Mogenson, 3780 Greenbrier, stated that status report #14 on the footing drain disconnection program was provided to City Council in November. He suggested that the Planning Commission read the report. What concerned him was what was not contained in the report, he said, noting that the number of disconnections that have been occurring was linear, but the amount of new development was not. He identified many new projects that had recently been approved and said there would need to be non-linear disconnections if they all were developed at once. He said this applied to both City and University of Michigan properties, stating that the University was subject to environmental regulations. The risk was potentially big, he said.

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PUBLIC HEARINGS SCHEDULED FOR NEXT MEETING

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Pratt announced the public hearings scheduled for the December 5, 2006 meeting.

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REGULAR BUSINESS

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a. Public Hearing and Action on 200 South Ashley Street Site Plan, 0.11 acre. A proposal to construct a 29,512-square foot, eight-story, mixed-use (retail/restaurant/office/residential) building with parking below ground – Staff Recommendation: Approval

Vaughn described the proposal and showed photographs of the property.

Dax Ponce de Leon, representing Project Managers Associates (PMA), said they aspired to enrich the local community and restore the natural environment. Some of the goals from the outset, he said, were enhancing the pedestrian experience, restoring watershed health, going beyond sustainability, and minimizing the carbon footprint. He said PMA had a passion for innovation and explained the performance criteria for the proposal.

Damian Farrell, of Integrated Architecture, representing the petitioner, discussed the proposed building. He applauded the petitioner for the incredible vision and deep thinking that went into this project. He said this was a difficult site, as it was very small and was adjacent to an historic district. However, he said, it did have its benefits: located on a corner and natural light. He stated that the pedestrian experience was important, explaining that the first two levels of the building were cut away at the corner to provide visibility for pedestrians. Retail space would occupy the first two stories, he said, with a mezzanine level providing an outdoor dining area. He showed where the entrance would be to the office portion of the building and stated that the building character would change dramatically on the north to use the northern light. He described how the façade of the building had been broken up to identify some of the points contained in the Calthorpe plan. A roof pavilion would be available to both residents and office tenants, he said.

Adrian Iraola, of Washtenaw Engineering, providing civil engineering services to the petitioner, stated that an excellent team of professionals have developed the amenities that went beyond what was required by code. He said the green features of the proposal would provide for 100-year storm water management. The portion of the adjacent parking structure ramp being demolished was owned by the City and managed by the DDA, he said, which would provide an opportunity to develop sidewalks in conformance with City standards. He was available to provide further detail if requested.

Mark Hodesh, owner of Downtown Home and Garden, stated that he liked the look of the proposed building, appreciating its modern design. He did not object to the eight stories and hoped the project would move forward. He expressed concern about living through the construction period, stating that construction could have devastating effects on retail. He said he has expressed this concern to both the City and the petitioner.

Matthew Gotchiss, a resident, said he was excited about this project. It was his understanding, he said, that grey water was also generated from sinks, not only storm water.

Noting no further speakers, Pratt declared the public hearing closed.

**Moved by Carlberg, seconded by Bona, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the 200 South Ashley Street Site Plan, subject to sanitary sewer system mitigation equivalent to the disconnection of three footing drains before certificate of occupancy issuance.**

**Moved by Carlberg, seconded by Bona, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council reduce the parking requirement to one space per dwelling unit.**

Bona stated that with regard to the alley to the west of this site, one of her first concerns was the possibility of having two curb cuts right next to each other. If the alley were vacated, she said, it would result in an additional 11 feet of property below the cantilevered portion of the building. She did not know how the interior circulation would work, but if this area were used to create additional building space for the first and second floors, she said, she calculated that the total floor area would exceed the 660 percent floor area ratio.

Farrell stated that they have been operating under the assumption that the alley easement would remain. If it were vacated, he said, additional building space could be added as long as it fell within the 660 percent floor area ratio requirement.

Bona said she did not want to see that space used as empty alley space in the future.

Ponce de Leon stated that if the alley were abandoned, one option might be to turn it into a pedestrian arcade that could communicate with the retail space in their building and in the area.

Bona said her first reaction to pedestrian space where the alley currently existed was that it was probably not active enough to make it work, so she cautioned against that. She was not concerned about parking, she said, and did not oppose the parking reduction. She asked if there would be any provisions in the building lease to require the first floor windows remain transparent.

Ponce de Leon said they were serving as the tenant of the building, so they would have the opportunity to make sure that happened.

Bona said she liked the balconies and wondered if they would act as canopies, which would be positive aspect. She asked if the windows on the west and south elevations were on the property line.

Farrell replied yes, although he said the windows on south side were pushed in three to five feet to meet code requirements. He said the windows would be part of a night-time flushing program to help cool the building.

Bona said she was encouraged by all of the green components of this development, noting that they were not even required. She assumed the property owner was interested in making a profit from this building and asked about financial benefits.

Ponce de Leon stated that there would be a significant savings in the operation of the building and said they would realize an eight-to-ten-year payback from integrating the green technology.

Pratt asked for more information about the overhangs proposed for the building as they related to other buildings in the downtown.

Vaughn stated that there were a variety of design details on both older and newer buildings in the downtown where they extended into the right-of-way, such as cornices and balconies. He said recent projects that had balconies were Ashley Terrace, Metro 202, the Cornerhouse Lofts, and Washington Terrace. He said the code limited projection into the right-of-way to four feet, so some of the balconies in this proposal might need to be reduced by two feet.

Carlberg asked what would happen during the day to sun/shade as a result of this building. She also asked how the green system would operate in the winter since there likely would be no water flowing from the roof.

Farrell stated that the system's cycle would operate from falling snow and said there were many examples of similar systems that worked in all types of climate.

Carlberg stated that the petitioner was receiving the floor area premium for providing the residential units. She wondered how this would affect the building if the petitioner were unsuccessful in filling the residential units. She questioned whether the petitioner would be required to leave the residential units vacant until they were filled, or if that might be addressed in another way. Perhaps the petitioner was intending to pre-lease the residential units, she said.

Vaughn said it was true, that the premium was for the residential units. If the units were not filled, he said, it could be an issue, although the City had not yet been faced with such a situation. He said staff would have to investigate how to address this, as he did not think the City would just allow the petitioner to convert the residential units because the premium was for those units.

Ponce de Leon stated that they already had commitments on two of the six units.

Connie Rizzolo Brown, of Integrated Architecture, showed the sun/shade study results. She stated that the study concluded that shadows would not start to impact the neighboring buildings until 3:30 p.m. at the earliest.

Lipson stated that this was an exciting proposal, noting that it incorporated numerous features that Commission has hoped would be proposed. He applauded the petitioner for going beyond the code requirements. He did not expect the petitioner to provide foolproof answers on some of these technologies, but said it appeared that an enormous amount of research was done to make sure they would work. He thought wind energy was the wave of the future, but expressed concern about noise generated by the wind turbines on the roof. He asked if the petitioner had any information on this.

Ponce de Leon stated that one of the greatest things about most of the initiatives in this project was that they could point to case studies around the country that have been effective over the years. He stated that as part of their research, they learned that the wind climate in Ann Arbor was relatively turbulent and vertical access turbines provided more options for wind when coming from different directions. They were still looking at a few different options regarding the turbines, he said, and they would be sensitive to noise and flying birds, adding that the two systems they were considering promised to be very quiet.

Potts found this proposal to be very interesting, with its attractive architecture and environmental aspects, which she hoped would work because they could then set a standard for future development. She asked if the balcony space would have tables for outdoor dining. If so, she said, this would be an interesting improvement because many times outdoor dining on sidewalks was not very pedestrian-friendly.

Farrell replied that there would be outdoor dining on the balcony.

Potts stated that there was a small piece of City-owned land along Washington Street adjacent to the demolished parking structure and asked if there were a plan for that.

Carlberg said that piece of property was up for sale and would not be part of the new development at the corner of First and Washington Streets.

Emaus said he was impressed with the challenge to create a sustainable design on such a small piece of property. His main concern had to do with noise from the wind turbines, especially because of the nearby residential area, but said the petitioner addressed that. He said the energy storage on the site was impressive and would set an example for future proposals. He also said he was pleased with the street level experience from this design. He asked if the green screen would be evergreen or deciduous.

Brown said it would depend on the variety of plants chosen. She said they were looking for something that would grow best in this area, adding that the roots would be protected from the cold.

Borum said the green screen was one of the best features of this project, stating that its visibility would show the effectiveness of this technology.

Lipson asked how many bedrooms there would be in the residential units.

Farrell replied that each unit would have two bedrooms.

Lipson stated that because they are two-bedroom units, the parking did not give him pause. He said it would be helpful to see some data on the wind turbines and the green roof. With regard to the overhangs, he said they were a good way to protect pedestrians and improve the pedestrian environment. He thought the proposed architecture was interesting with many appealing features.

Pratt expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the petitioner. He noted that the proposal was being done within the existing zoning, with no real special needs, other than the residential premiums. He thought this was a good fit with the Central Area Plan and Downtown Plan, and said it also followed the recommendations of the Calthorpe plan.

Carlberg asked about the materials that would be used, stating that they would need to be shown on the site plan.

Farrell explained the materials, stating that slabs with concrete columns would be used.

Bona expressed concern for access during construction. It was her hope that the City would find a way to keep the alley open while construction took place. With regard to the Calthorpe plan, she said, it recommended an upper floor setback of 10 to 20 feet, as stated in the staff report, but the Calthorpe plan also recommended no upper floor setbacks at buildings on corners.

Pratt asked the petitioner to respond to how construction would not affect the alley access.

Ponce de Leon said they were working with the City and Mr. Hodesh, owner of the adjacent property, on this.

Potts noted that the City was currently working on recommendations in the Calthorpe plan and that nothing had been adopted yet. She asked if the windows in the building would open.

Farrell replied yes.

A vote on the motion showed:

YEAS:	Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lipson, Potts, Pratt
NAYS:	None
ABSENT:	Westphal

**Motion carried.**

b. Public Hearing and Action on Plymouth Road Plaza Planned Project Site Plan, 1 acre, north side of Plymouth Road between Nixon Road and Huron Parkway. A proposal to construct a 20,781-square foot, two-story retail/office building and 71-space parking lot – Staff Recommendation: Approval

Vaughn described the proposal and showed photographs of the property.

Louis Johnson, representing the petitioner, stated that he and the architect were present this evening to answer questions. He said the layout of this proposal originally was designed to comply with the zoning, but staff encouraged them to move the building toward Plymouth Road, which allowed for improved traffic flow and created a pedestrian opportunity.

Sam Hamilton, owner of the Carpenter Brothers hardware store located in the Plymouth Mall, said his store has been here for the past 28 years and one of his observations about parking has been that at times even his parking lot in the back would be full. He believed that some of this was due to commuters parking in the lot. He expressed concern about how this proposal would affect parking, as it would result in a parking reduction. He stated that merchants have been in this mall now for a while without an anchor store, which was important because merchants counted on customers from the anchor store. Because of this, he said, and because of the business climate in Michigan, he has seen his business decline about 15 percent and he was very concerned how the lack of parking would perpetuate that decline. He suggested that a provision be made to expand the parking if necessary, such as removing the landscape islands in the front and rear for more parking. He thought the proposed building looked fine, but expressed concern about it blocking the view of some of the stores in the mall.

Jim Mogenson, 3780 Greenbrier, stated that his main concern was traffic flow. At certain times of the day, he said, approaching Plymouth Mall and deciding where to park could be challenging. He said the problem was that the access to the mall was too close to the traffic signal at Plymouth and Nixon Roads. He was not opposed to having this new development in this location, but he wanted to make sure that it would work for everyone.

A representative of the Merchants of Vino spoke regarding parking. He stated that over 25 percent of the parking lot would be taken up by this development, resulting in a loss of 39 parking spaces, or a third of the existing parking. He thought this was a significant parking loss. He expressed concern about this new development causing potential traffic congestion both on the mall's site and around it. While it appeared that the code would allow the number of parking spaces proposed, he said it appeared that approximately 17 of the spaces would be shared. He believed a traffic study should be done for this proposal. He also expressed concern about the height of the new building, stating that its 32-foot height would greatly affect the visual exposure of the mall. Finally, he expressed concern about the overall impact this development would have on the existing businesses, both during and after construction.

Noting no further speakers, Pratt declared the public hearing closed.

**Moved by Carlberg, seconded by Lipson, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Plymouth Road Plaza Planned Project Site Plan, subject to sanitary sewer system mitigation equivalent to the disconnection of one footing drain before certificate of occupancy issuance, and subject to the recording of a formal parking easement for 17 parking spaces prior to issuance of building permits.**

Potts stated that if the Planning Commission had had the opportunity to review the land division that previously occurred on this property, that would have been the time when she would have raised concerns, such as whether an eighth bank was needed in this area. She stated that the impact on the mall was also a concern. She believed it was appropriate to move the building closer to the street for pedestrians; however, she said there were not very many pedestrians in this area. She stated that the mall entrances close to two intersections were potential problems, as well as the safety of pedestrians having to cross wide, busy streets to get to the mall. She stated that anything done related to this mall should work to solve the traffic and pedestrian problems, not create more. She said this was not an easy parking area to maneuver and she was concerned that this proposal would only aggravate the situation.

Emaus said he knew this area well and, based on his experience, much of the parking lot was unused. A parking study might help answer some questions, he said, but he believed there was excess parking here. He liked the fact that the building would be located at the street. This new design would allow people entering the easternmost curb cut to turn left into the parking area without having to drive all the way into the mall. He noted that the existing C3 zoning allowed banks and he liked the fact that there would be a shared parking easement. He thought this development would draw employees from Pfizer and thought that it would be an improvement to the view from the street.

Lipson said it was interesting that this mall had three anchor stores: Bella Vino, the hardware store and the drugstore. He said this was a neighborhood mall and he would like to do everything possible to encourage the continued health of the stores. He was not concerned that this development would obscure the view of the existing stores, noting that people would know they were there. He said the hardware store has been in the back of the mall for years, yet people continue to use it. He believed this development would increase the number of people visiting the mall. He said the parking requirements seemed to be accurate and he did not have a problem with the number of proposed spaces. He thought this property was appropriately zoned and that this proposal fit the zoning. He did not necessarily want to see another bank in this area, but said the drive-through lanes would reduce the need for as much parking. He thought the main consideration here was pedestrian access so neighbors could access the mall without having to compete with cars. He asked the petitioner how the porous pavement would be maintained.

Sahba La'al, architect representing the petitioner, stated that the porous pavement would be vacuumed every six months, as indicated on the site plan. He said they did not know yet if they would be purchasing a vacuum to do the work themselves.

Lipson said he would like a better idea of how the porous pavement would be cleaned. He also was interested in making sure the pedestrian space was clearly identified to make drivers aware.

La'al stated that they could install pavement markers for the pedestrian areas.

Pratt said he would like to see people park in one space and then walk to different stores at the mall. A raised crosswalk would be beneficial, he said, and the question was how to best define a walkway for pedestrians. He wanted to make sure that drivers and pedestrians knew which space was for cars and which was for walking. He said a three-foot wide walkway was somewhat narrow and he questioned the planned project modification request for a pedestrian-friendly development. He said there was a great opportunity with this proposal to improve the pedestrian experience.

Lipson said he was willing to take the petitioner's assurance that he would work with staff to improve pedestrian access before this went to Council.

Johnson stated that he was willing to work with staff to discuss improving pedestrian access.

Pratt said it looked as though it would be difficult to create a walkway for pedestrians with the way the parking lot was striped. He asked if there were any room for a defined walkway. Perhaps modifying the landscaping to assist in the parking situation would be an option, he said. He said the goal here was to provide pedestrians with a more comfortable and convenient way to get to the mall.

Vaughn stated that staff would work on this.

Johnson added that they were willing to take a look at this.

Carlberg recalled working hard to get a pedestrian path from Washtenaw Avenue to the stores in the Huron Village shopping center at Washtenaw and Huron Parkway. However, she said, it has been her observation that no one uses the path because traffic on the site moved so slowly and people were willing to walk down the traffic aisles. She could appreciate that raised walkways were a message to drivers, but she did not think they would be very beneficial. She did not think there was anything else to do to improve the situation, noting that there were so few pedestrian accidents because people drove slow in the parking lot.

La'al stated that they tried to define the vehicular pathway to better define circulation, which in turn helped pedestrians.

Carlberg said it appeared that there was no sidewalk on the west side of the site.

La'al showed where the sidewalk was located and said they could increase the sidewalk width to five feet if necessary.

Bona said she liked the plaza at the front, but she thought the connection within the mall was very important and she was not sure a path through the middle of the parking lot was the best thing to do, although some of the connections would be helpful. She said there needed to be a way for the people who parked in this lot to leave their cars and get to the other businesses, and that they needed to be able to park in one place and visit several stores. This was the most efficient, she said. She was not

comfortable making a recommendation on the site plan and having this done before it went to Council; rather, she preferred tabling action so Commission could then see a revised plan. She said what Commission was asking was not straightforward and there may be other ramifications to consider.

Pratt believed Commission members did not think this proposal met the planned project modifications by providing a pedestrian-friendly design.

Potts said she would support tabling the site plan so the suggestions made this evening could be incorporated into the plan.

Bona asked if delivery trucks would block parking spaces when making their deliveries.

La'al replied, yes, they would block spaces temporarily.

Bona stated that with regard to internal parking, the aisle that was shared with the coffee shop drive-through lane started off as a two-way drive and then it ended as a one-way drive. She asked what people would do when they drove halfway down the aisle and found it had turned into a one-way drive. She thought better resolution was needed for that aspect of the design, adding that it would also be difficult for drivers to exit a parking space in these dead-end aisles. She stated that people having to back out to turn around was not good site design. She was in favor of putting the building in its proposed location, but said a good parking plan needed to go along with it. She did not feel obligated to compromise the parking situation. She said the aisle for Bella Vino consisted of three lanes and the suggestion for the petitioner was to think about narrowing the width of those three lanes to add more parking. She thought there were a few other places on the site where a couple of parking spaces could also be added. She agreed with the concept of this plan, but was not comfortable with the parking layout.

Johnson stated that they previously had a plan that met ordinance requirements and that they worked with staff to move the building forward. He said they spent a great deal of time on this proposal and, while there was no perfect solution, he thought there should be some give and take in the process.

Pratt stated that everyone agreed that moving the building forward was good, but said sometimes meeting with staff again was necessary to work out issues that were raised from another set of eyes reviewing the proposal. He believed the concern regarding the dead-end aisles was a significant issue.

Carlberg stated that with regard to businesses in the mall being visible from the street, perhaps the owner of the mall needed to address signage with the tenants. She suggested that the petitioner and the mall owner determine what was visible from the street and whether taller and/or larger signs were needed. She stated that signs on the stores themselves might be appropriate to provide adequate visibility. She thought putting this building at the front of the site was a good idea, but said the viability of the rest of the site needed to be maintained, adding that she would like more information on that.

Hamilton believed that many of his concerns could have been avoided if the mall owner had spoken with the tenants about this proposal; however, he said, the mall owner stopped talking to the tenants once the owner heard a little resistance.

Pratt wondered if shared parking could be designated on the site and that the employees of the mall be required to use those spaces. He said this issue, as well as issues such as signage, needed to be addressed between the petitioner, tenants and staff.

Emaus disagreed with the arguments against dead-end parking aisles, which required people to back out, stating that there were many similar situations in other existing parking lots. He liked the way the building

was placed at the front of the site and liked the proposed traffic flow. He also thought the passageway along the north end of the site was an improvement. He expressed concern about there being no sidewalks into any of the driveways, which would force pedestrians to walk in the same path as cars driving in and out of parking spaces.

Lipson agreed with Commissioner Emaus. Parking may not be optimal and there may be some problems with dead-ends, he said, but people were able to manage those situations. He did not think this proposal should be tabled for that reason.

Pratt said there were eight planned project standards in the Zoning Ordinance. He said the staff report indicated that the proposed location of the building would improve pedestrian orientation and assist with the parking situation. He believed the plaza could be more pedestrian friendly if it did not look out over the parking. He said the main concerns raised this evening had to do with the quantity of parking, the issue of the parking layout and whether it was physically maneuverable, and signage/store visibility.

Bona stated that another concern was that it appeared the petitioner did not have adequate communication with the neighbors.

**Moved by Bona, seconded by Potts, to table action.**

A vote on the motion to table showed:

YEAS: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Potts, Pratt  
NAYS: Emaus, Lipson  
ABSENT: Westphal

**Motion carried.**

c. Public Hearing and Action on Barton Green Zoning and Area Plan, 31.93 acres, west side of Pontiac Trail north of Skydale Drive. A request to zone this parcel R4A (Multiple-Family Dwelling District) and a proposal to develop 253 residential units in 19 buildings, a community building, and 566 parking spaces (tabled at 5/16/06 meeting) – Staff Recommendation: Approval

Vaughn described the proposal and showed photographs of the property.

Scott Betzoldt, of Midwestern Consulting, representing the petitioner, stated that the proposal was consistent with the master plan and with the surrounding uses. He said they worked with staff to resolve all of the issues raised at the May 16 Planning Commission meeting. He stated that the proposed layout was situated on the easterly portion of the property to keep the units and roadways out of the most valuable natural features, which would also provide the residents with a better buffer from the highway. He did not think the proposed access linking this proposal and the neighborhood to the south would generate a great deal of cut-through traffic on Skydale. Interconnectivity did have benefits, he said. The topography of the site was a unique challenge, he said, stating that the site fell 70 feet from north to south. He said the proposed layout of the buildings was driven by that. He described the different types of units that were proposed, noting that they studied urban development in other communities, looking at how they disguised the necessities. He stated that this design would allow very little impervious surface and said they have been working with staff on the forest restoration plan. He was available to answer questions.

George Hauptman, a resident on Pontiac Trail, expressed concern about linking this development with Skydale, stating that there were children who played along Skydale and he was worried for their safety.

He was not convinced that there would be very little usage of Skydale coming from the Barton Green development. He said an argument could be made that the path of least resistance might become Skydale, resulting in it being heavily used. Perhaps speed bumps or pavement options could take care of this concern, he said. He also expressed concern about how construction of this development would affect the residents along Skydale, noting that in some places there was only a 25-foot wide buffer between the single-family homes and new units. He said he would feel more comfortable if some kind of buffer or greenbelt were provided.

Mike Prozinski, 446 Larkspur, said he was a member of the Northeast Area Transportation Plan (NEATP) citizens advisory committee, which worked hard to develop a plan to encourage non-motorized transportation to neighborhoods. It seemed unfortunate to him that the NEATP was amended, without a public hearing, to include motorized transportation connections. While it seemed to be a minor change, he said, it altered the spirit of what the citizens advisory committee had attempted to do. He said no one liked traffic cutting through their neighborhoods and he believed measures should be taken to prevent that. In looking at this proposal, he could see how it would be faster for people to use the access link to Skydale, which would then be a straight road to Pontiac Trail. There was a large park on Skydale, he said, where children played and people walked their dogs. He encouraged the earlier proposal of only an emergency access to Skydale and said he would like the petitioner to work with the residents of this neighborhood to develop a plan for traffic calming devices to discourage cut-through traffic.

David Gag, a resident on Larkspur, said he had two children who played in the park on Skydale. He believed a third of the residents in the Barton Green development would find it easier to use Skydale as a direct link to Pontiac Trail. This could mean an extra 150 cars, he said, and there were only 30 homes along Skydale. He stated that something should be done to replace the clear-cutting that took place on this property and he also suggested that a meeting be held with the residents before this project was approved.

Dale Peterson, a resident on East Barton Lane, expressed concern that so many of the trees on the east side of the site were cut down that there would now be readily available access to his property. He wondered if a barrier might be installed so people would not be moving through his property and wondered if the petitioner had any plans in that regard.

The owner of a piece of property near this site stated that access to his property has been tentatively worked out and he had no objections to this proposal. He stated that removing the access link with Skydale would affect this tentative access.

David Kwan, 218 North Division Street, one of the petitioners, believed they had reached out to the neighbors. He said they mailed postcards for a November 15 neighborhood meeting to the owners and occupants on the same list used by the City for sending notices, but only one resident attended.

Noting no further speakers, Pratt declared the public hearing closed.

**Moved by Carlberg, seconded by Emaus, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Barton Green R4A (Multiple-Family Dwelling District) Zoning and Area Plan.**

Bona said she was very supportive of the Skydale connection because it was extremely important that there be interconnected neighborhoods, not just for access of emergency and delivery vehicles and to avoid forcing all vehicles onto overloaded arterials, but to also encourage social connection to neighborhoods. She said it was perceived to be safer if there were neighbors regularly driving by other

neighbors' homes. While she appreciated the petitioner's attempts at holding a meeting with the neighborhood, she suggested that the petitioner provide the residents with a contact number. With regard to the area plan, she encouraged a straighter route for most of units onto Pontiac Trail, as the current configuration of the routes might cause too much temptation to use Skydale. She did not support making Skydale a shortcut for the residents of Barton Green. She also encouraged that sidewalks be provided on both sides of the private street. She liked the fact that many of the garages were under the units and the more this could be done, she said, the better. She reinforced parallel parking, stating that it was a good, efficient use of impervious pavement to use streets for parking.

Potts stated that the configuration of the streets in Barton Green is what would cause the use of Skydale for shortcuts. There did not seem to be any reason for the zig-zag routes of the streets in this proposal, she said. Although there was a detailed remediation report for parts of the woodland removed prematurely, she said, there have been a few people who have said that there were still some areas where trees were needed. She said she would need to see a map of where the woods were removed and where the replacement trees would go.

Carlberg asked if there were a way to relocate the southern townhouses in order to decrease the impact on the single-family homes along Skydale.

Betzoldt said they were unable to move the units without damaging the native forest fragment. He said this site was very hilly and the design of the site was driven by the topography.

Carlberg stated that there may be some aesthetic value for the units with driveways in the rear, but said it increased impervious surface and asked why the petitioner felt this was a better design than what was designed for the other units.

Betzoldt said their intention was to bring some of the units closer to the street, following new urbanism philosophy.

Carlberg stated that the curving nature of the private road provided residents with a different aspect when looking out their windows, giving them more of a natural setting view. She said it provided a more interesting layout. However, she believed people walked outdoors for health reasons and were not concerned with whether the streets were curved or straight, they just followed the sidewalks. She was not sure how the street could be reconfigured without losing the advantages it provided. Her main concern, she said, was how to minimize the impact from the units closest to the existing single-family homes. She suggested heavy vegetation be provided, adding that it was also important for the northern units to have proper buffering from what was eventually developed on the property to the north.

Emaus stated that the circuitous road pattern at first did not appeal to him. However, he understood that this site was quite hilly and the design of the units was interesting, with the way they fit into the contour of the land with parking underneath. He agreed that people would walk on the sidewalk, regardless of the route, and that the proposed pattern would provide different views for residents. With regard to cars using Skydale, he pointed out that Skydale was a public street, and the park on Skydale was a public park. He would like the residents of Barton Green to take advantage of that park, adding that this was an amenity to all, not just the residents of the neighborhood to the south. He did not think the location of the access link was a prime place for a cut-through, noting that it would not provide access to streets like Barton Drive or Whitmore Lake Road.

Lipson was satisfied that natural feature mitigation would proceed in a way that was acceptable to staff. He was pleased that the buildings were moved further away from the forest fragment. He said he would like to see a direct pedestrian route from all of the buildings to Pontiac Trail, as he would like to see more

people taking the bus and this would provide a direct route to the bus stop. He did not mind the streets being curved, but believed straight walkways for pedestrians were important. He did not think there would be many people from Barton Green driving on Skydale. He wanted the residents of Barton Green to be able to walk to the park on Skydale, rather than drive, stating that walking would help create a community between the two developments. He believed the interconnection was more symbolic than anything else. He agreed that the green buffer between the two developments should be replaced and improved.

Pratt asked if the roads in Barton Green would be public or private.

Betzoldt replied that they would be private, except for the public stub to the roundabout.

Pratt stated that the proposed layout created traffic calming and if there were a connection from the north at the rear of the Barton Green site, he did not think people would be worried about others using the roads as a racetrack. He stated that this design seemed to make sense, noting that its curvilinear nature seemed to be driven by the desire to save the natural features. He stated that the children from both developments would be going to school together and they would be the driving force in getting the neighbors to know each other. While he thought the access link between the two developments made sense, he also thought traffic calming for the Skydale neighborhood was worth pursuing. He stated that the Northeast Area Transportation Plan was created as a result of the Northeast Area Plan, which contained as a goal the interconnection of these large parcels of land. He said the idea in the Northeast Area Plan was to connect neighborhoods with both motorized and non-motorized links.

Potts thought the best way to have interconnectedness between subdivisions was to have a grid pattern and, she said, this development contained the opposite of a grid pattern. She saw the value of public streets being used by anyone, but said the social aspect was that the nature of the unit determined who lived there. She believed the type of units proposed in Barton Green would attract a different group of people than the residents of the single-family neighborhood to the south and she did not have much hope that using the access link to Skydale would encourage acquaintance between the two. She did not feel ready to vote for this proposal, as she had not yet seen information related to the remediation plan and the layout of the site.

Lipson believed grid patterns were generally best for single-family neighborhoods. He questioned whether the Skydale neighborhood would reach the minimum number of cars necessary to allow traffic calming.

Pratt suggested that perhaps some type of traffic calming could be considered, not necessarily with the City.

Bona said there may be an opportunity for traffic calming at the spur where the connection was proposed. With regard to grid patterns, she was not suggesting that the petitioner design a grid on this site; rather, it was her suggestion to find ways to make the design of the roads a little less circuitous.

Carlberg asked if the remediation plan had been started and, if so, who was supervising it.

Vaughn replied that it had begun and that the City's Land Development Coordinator would see that the plan was carried out.

Carlberg stated that this was an area plan and the issue to address with an area plan was whether the proposal appeared to be a suitable arrangement for the property. She believed it was. She stated that many more details would follow with the site plan stage, which would be considered at that time.

Pratt asked about the possibility of providing more of a buffer for the residents on Skydale.

Betzoldt did not see a problem with providing that.

Pratt asked that the site plan address any possible access to the square-shaped parcel at the back corner.

Lipson asked if approval of the area plan meant Commission was saying “yes” to the connection to Skydale.

Vaughn stated that approval of the area plan would send a message to the petitioner on how to proceed with the site plan, although changes could be made at the site plan stage.

Bona stated that when the site plan was submitted, she would like to know what would happen to the two small triangular pieces of street right-of-way land that would be leftover.

A vote on the motion showed:

YEAS: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lipson, Pratt  
NAYS: Potts  
ABSENT: Westphal

**Motion carried.**

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#### AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

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Jim Mogenson, 3780 Greenbrier, stated that in 20 years the Plymouth Road Mall would no longer exist. He said it would likely be demolished and redeveloped and suggested that this be considered when discussing how the parking lot should look. He stated that some parking lots did astonishing things with handicapped access and suggested that he be used as a resource person, as he could provide feedback on how handicapped access worked with parking lots and other uses.

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#### COMMISSION PROPOSED BUSINESS

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None.

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#### ADJOURNMENT

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Pratt declared the meeting adjourned at 11:43 p.m.

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Mark Lloyd, Manager  
Planning and Development Services

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Bonnie Bona, Secretary

Prepared by Laurie Foondle  
Management Assistant  
Planning and Development Services