



PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

CITY OF NOVI

Regular Meeting

June 8, 2022 7:00 PM

Council Chambers | Novi Civic Center
45175 W. Ten Mile (248) 347-0475

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Member Avdoulos, Member Becker, Member Dismondy, Member Lynch, Chair Pehrson, Member Roney, Member Verma

Staff: Barbara McBeth, City Planner; Beth Saarela, City Attorney; Lindsay Bell, Senior Planner; Christian Carroll, Planner; Rick Meader, Landscape Architect; Ben Peacock, Planning Assistant

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Member Lynch led the meeting attendees in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made by Member Avdoulos and seconded by Member Roney.

VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE THE JUNE 8, 2022 PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA MOVED BY MEMBER AVDOULOS AND SECONDED BY MEMBER RONEY.

Motion to approve the June 8, 2022 Planning Commission Agenda. Motion carried 7-0.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Chair Pehrson invited members of the audience who wished to address the Planning Commission during the first audience participation to come forward. Seeing that nobody wished to participate, Chair Pehrson closed the first public participation.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. **MASTER PLAN SURVEY ANNOUNCEMENT**

City Planner McBeth said this memo was shared with the City Manager and City Council previously, but we also wanted to share it with the Planning Commission. As you know, the Master Plan Steering Committee has been meeting this spring, and they had their third meeting last week. At the second meeting, the survey was reviewed by the Committee members. It was modified a bit before being sent out. The survey is online only, and it is available to anyone in the community who lives, works, or owns property here. We are hoping that people 11 years old and over will fill this out. Certain questions will direct the survey taker to different following questions based on their answer to the original question.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were not any Committee reports.

CITY PLANNER REPORT

City Planner McBeth said at the Master Plan Steering Committee meeting last week, the Committee talked about housing and demographics. These topics will likely be revisited at a later meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA - REMOVALS AND APPROVALS

There were not any consent agenda items.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were not any public hearings.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. ARAMCO RESEARCH CENTER JSP22-19

Consideration at the request of Aramco Americas, for Preliminary Site Plan approval. The subject property is located in Section 4, east of Hudson Drive and north of West Road, and is zoned I-1, Light Industrial. The applicant is proposing to install outdoor storage tanks with liquid hydrogen and natural gas in the existing parking area on the south side of the building.

Senior Planner Bell said the subject property is in Section 4, north of West Road on the east side of Hudson Drive. The parcel is approximately 4.75 acres and is developed with a 2-story research and development center and associated parking. The applicant also owns the vacant adjacent 2.4-acre parcel to the south. The parcel is zoned I-1 Light Industrial as are the surrounding properties. The Future land use map indicates Industrial Research Development Technology for this area, and there are no woodland and wetland areas present on the site. The applicant is proposing to install hydrogen and natural gas tanks for their fuel cell research in a portion of the parking lot to the south of the building. The tanks would be screened with a 12-foot-tall louvered wall on three sides. National Fire Protection Act regulations require tanks of this size to be stored outdoors and to not be completely enclosed in walls. A vent pipe will extend above the screen wall, as required by NFPA, but the tanks themselves will not extend above the wall. The wall material matches the rooftop screening on the existing building. As the accessory use will exceed 1,000 square feet in area it is not eligible for administrative approval. The proposed plan meets the ordinance requirements except for those requested waivers noted in the motion sheet that conflict with NFPA regulations. In addition, the applicant indicates the properties will be combined to comply with setback requirements. No stormwater or utility changes are proposed at this time. All reviewers recommend approval, with some changes to be made prior to Final Site Plan approval. The Planning Commission is asked tonight to approve or deny the Preliminary Site Plan. Representing the project tonight are David Cleary from Aramco and the engineer Brett Friedman.

Chair Pehrson invited the applicant to address the Planning Commission. Seeing that the applicant did not wish to address the Commission at this time, Chair Pehrson turned it over to the Planning Commission for consideration.

Member Lynch asked did the applicant have the hydrogen and natural gas stored on site previously? Is this review just to meet new fire standards?

Brett Friedman, Engineer with AEI, said the larger tanks on site currently are for liquid fuels, primarily gasoline and diesel. There are gaseous bottles stored outside. We've had hydrogen

bottles and helium cylinders before, but this is the first time that we've had large quantities of helium and natural gas on the property.

Member Lynch said I have no issue with this request, but I would like to know if we would require a similar industrial company to come in to update their layout at their own expense each time the fire code is updated.

Senior Planner Bell said my understanding is that all the equipment proposed in this area is new equipment, and it is complying with the current National Fire Protection Act. We are only reviewing the newly proposed additions.

Member Becker said I saw that the applicant has proposed to use 20 of the spaces now used for parking as something called a land banked parking space. Could one of our staff members explain to me what that means?

Senior Planner Bell said the land banked spaces were approved by the Planning Commission in a previous plan. This means that the applicant will designate parking spaces on a site plan but not construct them at that time unless it is deemed necessary due to an overflow in parking requirements. It's a way to save a landowner from constructing something they don't think that they will need, but it also preserves the area for parking if it is needed later.

Member Dismondy asked if the applicant had to purchase the adjacent lot to accommodate this.

Mr. Friedman said the other lot was purchased several years ago, so we didn't buy it with just this intent. We are in the process of combing the lots due to setback regulations we didn't realize would affect us since we own both lots.

Member Dismondy asked how long have you been at this site?

David Cleary, on behalf of Aramco, replied since around 2014 or 2015.

Motion made by Member Avdoulos and seconded by Member Lynch.

In the matter of Aramco Research Center, JSP22-19, motion to approve the Preliminary Site Plan based on and subject to the following:

- a. The City's Zoning Ordinance states such outdoor storage shall be in compliance with any applicable state and federal regulations;**
- b. Waivers from Ordinance screening requirements are needed in order to be in compliance with NFPA standards which prohibits liquid hydrogen tanks greater than 600 gallons to be enclosed on all sides and requires a vent stack to extend above the screening enclosure, which is hereby granted;**
- c. Property combination shall be completed prior to Final Stamping Set approval in order to comply with setback requirements;**
- d. The findings of compliance with Ordinance standards in the staff and consultant review letters and the conditions and the items listed in those letters being addressed on the Final Site Plan.**

Member Verma asked if any accidents have occurred on the site in the past.

Mr. Cleary said safety is our very highest priority, and we have never had a construction or operation accident. We are designed to be safe, and we have procedures in place to be safe. Again, zero safety incidents.

Member Verma asked what type of flooring will surround the cylinders?

Mr. Friedman said the larger tanks will be sitting outside on a concrete pad. The depth is 12 inches plus a footing around the edge.

Member Verma asked if they would be storing any of the smaller cylinders on or near the concrete pads that hold the larger tanks.

Mr. Friedman said no, there is a separate location where those are caged. By code, the liquid hydrogen must be a certain distance away from those. The hydrogen tank is horizontal and is about 9 feet in diameter and 20 feet long. The gaseous hydrogen storage containers are 11-inch cylinders that are 40 feet long and stored at higher pressure. Natural gas is stored in a 54-inch diameter steel sphere.

Member Verma asked if there was any likelihood of leaking.

Mr. Friedman said each device on every concrete pad has a pressure relief device. If anything leaks, it will go upward. Both gasses are lighter than air, so they'll rise at a fairly rapid rate. There will be ultraviolet infrared detectors, so if there are leaks, we will be able to see those – a hydrogen flame is colorless. If the pressure relief devices go off, alarms will be triggered, and pressure transmitters will notify a building automation system.

ROLL CALL VOTE TO APPROVE THE PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN FOR JSP 22-19 ARAMCO RESEARCH CENTER MOVED BY MEMBER AVDOULOS AND SECONDED BY MEMBER LYNCH.

***Motion to approve the Preliminary Site Plan for JSP22-19 Aramco Research Center.
Motion carried 7-0.***

2. JSP21-33 MAPLE MEDICAL OFFICE

Consideration at the request of AJSS Property, LLC, for approval of the Preliminary Site Plan and Stormwater Management Plan. The subject property is approximately 0.42 acres and is located east of Novi Road and south of Fourteen Mile Road in the RA, Residential Acreage, Zoning District with a Planned Unit Development (PUD). The Maples of Novi PUD Agreement & Area Plan was recently amended to allow this site to be reviewed under the B-1, Local Business, Zoning District. The applicant is proposing to remove the existing tennis courts on the site and construct a 2,558 square foot medical office.

Planner Carroll said this 0.42-acre site is located south of Fourteen Mile Road and on the east side of Novi Road. It was formerly used as a tennis court. The site is located near Flagstar Bank and a shopping center to the north, an assisted living facility and single-family residential to the west, the golf course maintenance building to the south, and single-family residential to the east. There is also an access easement, which can be seen on the plans. It is zoned RA, Residential Acreage, which is part of the Maples of Novi Planned Unit Development. The recently approved Second Amendment to the Maples of Novi PUD Agreement & Area Plan allows this site to be reviewed under the B-1 Zoning District standards. The subject site does not contain any regulated woodlands or wetlands. The applicant is proposing to remove the existing tennis courts and construct a 2,558 square foot medical office. In the provided narrative, the applicant is asking that the proposed site be reviewed as part of the Local Business (B-1) per the recently approved Second Amendment to the Maples of Novi PUD Agreement and Area Plan. The hours of operation will be from 9am to 9pm, and most required site conditions are met. One item of note is that a 6-foot-high screening fence is proposed along the east property line to provide proper buffering from the nearby residential area and to provide additional protection from the golf course. If permitted by the adjacent property owner, the applicant

would like to remove the existing fencing near this east property line so only one fence will exist along this line. The applicant has been advised to work with the adjacent property owner throughout the process.

Planner Carroll also said there are three landscape waivers being requested largely due to the narrowness of the site and utility conflicts. The first waiver is for the lack of required street trees along Novi Road due to utility conflicts, which is supported by staff. The second is for the lack of a berm or wall between a commercial use and residentially zoned property because the use is a sufficient distance from the nearest residential unit, which is supported by staff. The final waiver is for the lack of foundation landscaping on two sides of the building visible from Novi Road, which is not supported by staff.

Planner Carroll concluded by saying all other outstanding issues will be addressed on the Final Site Plan if this were to be approved by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is asked tonight to consider the Preliminary Site Plan and Stormwater Management Plan for Maple Medical Office. Ghassan Khalaf, the applicant's engineer, is here representing the project tonight. Staff is available to answer any questions.

Chair Pehrson invited the applicant to address the Planning Commission. Seeing that the applicant did not wish to address the Commission at this time, Chair Pehrson turned it over to the Planning Commission for consideration.

Member Lynch asked is there room to plant the foundation plantings along Novi Road? What is the reasoning for the applicant requesting a waiver for that?

Landscape Architect Meader said it is a very small site. They are supposed to have four feet wide landscape beds on all sides, but especially on the sides facing the road. They haven't left room for that. They do have the total area requirement provided around the other two sides, but the two visible sides are not landscaped because there isn't room.

Member Lynch said we have approved waivers for something like this before due to utility issues or lot size, but I would like to stick to the ordinance if possible. Would it be possible to include the trees without redesigning the entire site?

Landscape Architect Meader said I don't believe there is because of the site's size.

Member Lynch said I see that staff prefers that the applicant include the landscape trees, but in this particular case it seems that their request is not unreasonable.

Member Becker said the two sides of the site most visible to Novi Road would be the west side and the north side. My first thought was that they could move the building south and east. If they did this and left those two walls with no foundation planting, would this provide enough space for foundation planting on the north and west side? On the east side, there is a 6-foot wall – a foundation planting would not be seen by anyone from the east.

Ghassan Khalaf, design engineer representing the owner, said we cannot move the building due to the minimum building setback requirement.

Motion made by Member Avdoulos and seconded by Member Lynch.

In the matter of Maple Medical Office, JSP21-33, motion to approve the Preliminary Site Plan based on and subject to the following:

- a. The site shall be reviewed under the B-1, Local Business, Zoning District standards as listed in the executed Second Amendment to the Maples of Novi Planned Unit Development Agreement and Area Plan;**

- b. Landscape waiver for the lack of required street trees along Novi Road due to utility conflicts, which is hereby granted;
- c. Landscape waiver for the lack of a berm or wall between a commercial use and residentially zoned property because the use is a sufficient distance from the nearest residential unit, which is hereby granted;
- d. Landscape waiver for the lack of foundation landscaping on two sides of the building visible from Novi Road, which is hereby granted;
- e. The findings of compliance with Ordinance standards in the staff and consultant review letters and the conditions and the items listed in those letters being addressed on the Final Site Plan.

ROLL CALL VOTE TO APPROVE THE PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN FOR JSP21-33 MAPLE MEDICAL OFFICE MOVED BY MEMBER AVDOULOS AND SECONDED BY MEMBER LYNCH.

Motion to approve the Preliminary Site Plan for JSP21-33 Maple Medical Office. Motion carried 7-0.

Motion made by Member Avdoulos and seconded by Member Lynch.

In the matter of Maple Medical Office, JSP21-33, motion to approve the Stormwater Management Plan based on and subject to the findings of compliance with Ordinance standards in the staff and consultant review letters, and the conditions and items listed in those letters being addressed on the Final Site Plan.

ROLL CALL VOTE TO APPROVE THE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR JSP21-33 MAPLE MEDICAL OFFICE MOVED BY MEMBER AVDOULOS AND SECONDED BY MEMBER LYNCH.

Motion to approve the Stormwater Management Plan for JSP21-33 Maple Medical Office. Motion carried 7-0.

3. JSP21-32 VIBE CREDIT UNION HEADQUARTERS MAINTENANCE & SITE IMPROVEMENTS

Consideration at the request of Nowak & Fraus Engineers, for approval of a Revised Landscape Plan. The subject property is approximately 9.84 acres and is located west of Cabaret Drive and south of Twelve Mile Road in the OST, Office Service Technology, Zoning District. The applicant is proposing landscape changes to the site as part of minor site improvements that require Planning Commission consideration.

Planner Carroll said this 9.84-acre site is located south of Twelve Mile Road and on the west side of Cabaret Drive. It is near the new Vibe Credit Union branch to the west, a couple hotels to the south, and Fountain Walk to the east. It is zoned OST, Office Service Technology, with the surrounding area consisting of OST, RC, and RA. The Future Land Use for the site indicates Office Research Development Technology, which is consistent with the OST district. The surrounding area consists of Office Research Development Technology, Regional Commercial, and residential uses to the north. The subject site does contain regulated woodlands and wetlands to the south. The applicant is proposing significant changes to the landscape plan to increase visibility of the new Vibe Headquarters and to meet current landscape ordinance standards. Revisions to the landscape plan have led to the removal of 10 mature woodland replacement trees along the Twelve Mile and Cabaret Frontage that will be replanted to the south within a proposed Woodland Conservation Easement. 13 greenbelt plantings will take the place of the 10 woodland replacement trees along the site frontage. Some additional plantings and reclassifications along this frontage make-up this difference. In addition, there is 1 landscape waiver that the applicant is requesting due to potential overcrowding. It is a waiver for the lack of required parking lot landscape trees along the south parking lot – they are missing 6 trees.

Planner Carroll concluded by saying all other outstanding issues have been asked to be addressed on the Electronic Stamping Set if this were to be approved by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is asked tonight to consider the Revised Landscape Plan for Vibe Credit Union Headquarters. George Ostrowski, Landscape Architect with Nowak and Fraus, is here representing the project tonight. Staff is available to answer any questions.

Chair Pehrson invited the applicant to address the Planning Commission. Seeing that the applicant did not wish to address the Commission at this time, Chair Pehrson turned it over to the Planning Commission for consideration.

Member Lynch said I think I was on the Commission when we approved the Vibe Headquarters building back in 2002. I think the request is reasonable. I think we are meeting the intent with the parking lot trees. There are a lot of trees there to prevent a heat island, but at the same time putting too many there would steal nutrients from existing trees and plants. Is this your assessment, Mr. Meader?

Landscape Architect Meader said that isn't the biggest issue. The biggest issue is the northeast corner. In the original plan, they had many woodland replacement trees there which over time blocked the view of the building from 12 Mile, and the owners weren't comfortable with that. The applicant wants to remove a lot of those trees to increase visibility of their building. Staff made sure that whatever removals and replacements are going to happen will meet the current ordinance. This also decreases the amount of parking lot trees that are required. They will also plant new replacement trees around the detention pond and add a conservation easement to protect those trees. It's okay to have trees close together as long as they aren't too close; woods have that all the time. I am comfortable with what they've done to achieve their objectives. They will certainly still have landscaping in the front, but it will not be as much as originally planned.

Member Becker clarified with Planner Carroll that the Commission is only reviewing the landscaping for the site and not the addition to the building which is currently under construction.

Member Roney asked what the blue trees on the current landscaping plan represented.

Landscape Architect Meader said those are greenbelt trees. They aren't adding many new ones because they had a lot to begin with.

Member Roney asked Landscape Architect Meader to clarify what a greenbelt tree is.

Landscape Architect Meader said greenbelt trees are trees between the sidewalk and the site; they help screen the site. It's a mix of ornamentals, canopy trees, and large evergreens.

Motion made by Member Avdoulos and seconded by Member Lynch.

In the matter of Vibe Credit Union Headquarters Maintenance and Site Improvements, JSP21-32, motion to approve the Revised Landscape Plan based on and subject to the following:

- a. The proposed revised landscape plan is a significant change to the site and does not qualify for administrative approval as listed in Section 6.1.C.v of the Zoning Ordinance;**
- b. The proposed revised landscape plan does not meet the standards of Section 5.5.3.5.E.iii of the Zoning Ordinance, which permits minor changes in site landscaping to be approved by the Landscape Architect when there is no reduction in the quality of plant materials or no significant change in size or**

location of plant material, and therefore staff has determined that the plan must be reviewed by the Planning Commission, due to the removal of 10 mature trees from the Twelve Mile Road and Cabaret Drive frontage and the following being planted:

- i. 10 new woodland replacement trees at the rear of the property; and
- ii. 13 greenbelt plantings on Twelve Mile Road and Cabaret Drive

The Planning Commission can approve the change if it finds that the woodland replacement trees and the greenbelt plantings proposed meet the current standards of the Woodland Protection Ordinance, Zoning Ordinance, Landscape Design Manual, and all other applicable provisions;

- c. The relocated woodland replacement trees shall be placed in the proposed woodland conservation easement located in the rear of the site;
- d. Landscape waiver for the lack of required parking lot landscape trees along the south parking lot due to potential overcrowding of trees, which is hereby granted;
- e. The findings of compliance with Ordinance standards in the staff and consultant review letters and the conditions and the items listed in those letters being addressed on the Final Stamping Set.

ROLL CALL VOTE TO APPROVE THE REVISED LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR JSP21-32 VIBE CREDIT UNION HEADQUARTERS MAINTENANCE AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS MOVED BY MEMBER AVDOULOS AND SECONDED BY MEMBER LYNCH.

Motion to approve the Revised Landscape Plan for JSP21-32 Vibe Credit Union Headquarters Maintenance and Site Improvements. Motion carried 7-0.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MAY 11, 2022 PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Motion made by Member Lynch and seconded by Member Verma.

ROLL CALL VOTE TO APPROVE THE MAY 11, 2022 PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES MADE BY MEMBER LYNCH AND SECONDED BY MEMBER VERMA.

Motion to approve the May 11, 2022 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. Motion carried 7-0.

CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS FOR COMMISSION ACTION

There were no consent agenda items.

SUPPLEMENTAL ISSUES/TRAINING UPDATES

There were not any supplemental issues or training updates to report.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Chair Pehrson invited members of the audience who wished to address the Planning Commission during the final audience participation to come forward. Seeing that nobody wished to participate, Chair Pehrson closed the final public participation.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Member Lynch.

VOICE VOTE ON THE MOTION TO ADJOURN MADE BY MEMBER LYNCH.

Motion to adjourn the June 8, 2022 Planning Commission Meeting. *Motion carried 7-0.*

The meeting adjourned at 7:36 PM.