

NORTHBROOK ZONING AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Village Green Center presents rentals, retail

Board questions parking for proposed three-story building in downtown NB

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Although the Tuesday, June 3, Northbrook Planning and Zoning meeting ended with positive remarks, commissioners had multiple ideas and questions relating to a potential three-story mixed-use building proposed for the vacant area located at 1312-1318 Shermer Road in downtown Northbrook, next to Kamehachi and across from Village Green Park.

The applicant, Village Green Business Center, proposes to build 10 luxury rental apartments on the second and third floors as well as retail space on the first floor fronting along Shermer Road, while the rear portion of the first floor will provide access to 10 indoor parking spaces via the existing parking lot. One parking space would be rented out to each of the 10 tenants.

The second and third floor would each have five rental apartments: four two-bedroom, two-bathroom units and one one-bedroom, 1.5-bathroom unit. Each apartment will have one dedicated indoor parking space on the first floor, and additional parking spaces will be available on the shared subject property. The proposed building would reduce the existing outdoor parking by six spaces, bringing the site total to 200 spaces.

Before the commissioners even started asking questions, however, Chairperson Marcia Franklin told Selwyn Marcus, the applicant and a Northbrook resident, as well as his architect that the submitted application needs to be completed more thoroughly.

"When you file an application with the plan commission requesting zoning variations and a special permit, as you're aware, there are a number of standards you have to address in your application," Franklin explained. "And you've requested a number of variances, including the

special permit. Some of the standards have been addressed, and a lot of them have been simply anecdotally glossed over."

Commissioner Susan Elfant was displeased with the fact that there are no plans for windows on the southwest side of the building.

"The southwest side of the building has to remain that way because if the two-story building were to ever be developed one day [next door], I can't just have windows facing that side, so all the units are either facing Shermer Road or facing the parking lot," said Jim Tinaglia, the applicant's architect.

"I really like the use of a mixed-use development and am generally in favor of going up to three stories ... [but] I could not approve it with [how] the southwest side is now," Elfant said. "It just would be an eyesore from the center of town."

"I really think some balconies, even recessed in ... would add a nice element to the front of the building," Commissioner Muriel Collison noted.

Almost all of the commissioners addressed the issue of parking, as there is a one-way going toward Meadow within the parking lot.

Collison was concerned about access to the parking behind the proposed building.

"[Renters] can't access some of these spaces as you have listed in the total amount of parking spaces. Are you planning on reconfiguring how that is?" she asked.

"No. For the most part, they will drive around the property to get [to] that section of the lot," Marcus said.

Marcus went on to further explain that his team studied the configuration with the fire department, and said there is only "enough space for one aisle [of parking.]"

Collison said that despite it being a large parking lot, "the parking spaces closest to this residential building are very few, especially in the back."

"Without reconfiguring at least some of that other lot, I don't see people parking over by Meadow Road," Collison said. "I think that a



Pictured is the rendering of a three-story building, proposed by Village Green Business Center, that would house retail and apartments at 1312-1318 Shermer Road in downtown Northbrook, if approved. IMAGE SUBMITTED

lot of people are going to be parking in front of the building."

"I am concerned about the parking; they are the concerns of a frequent shopper, and they are the concerns of somebody who drags small children through that parking lot all the time," Franklin said while addressing Marcus. "The thing that concerns me the most about this project is that the people who live in the building will take up parking spaces along Shermer. We get a tremendous amount of visitor traffic from the Village Green with all the sporting events that go on ... I would like to see you look for a more creative solution to parking in the back."

One member of the public, Northbrook resident Scott Robson, spoke against the proposed development.

"As far as the parking and the traffic pattern, that gets violated all the time," Robson said, noting the one-way in the lot. "I'm not sure we can count on those retail spaces ever filled ... traffic on Shermer is [not] going to support two stores let alone one going."

Commissioner Jeremy Melnick asked Marcus if he knew what kind of retail he would target, and Marcus said: "At this point, no idea."

"I still am concerned about the retail plan, or the lack there of. The space is small, hard to rent," Melnick said. "I think the lack of accessibility from the parking lot ... I'm a firm believer, having retail operations myself, you need to have bet-

ter loading. Loading in the front just disrupts everybody. I think we need to revisit that, have a better plan."

The applicant is requesting a variation to reduce the required number of loading spaces from one to zero. The subject property currently does not have a loading space that meets the Village's requirements; however, the applicant has stated that the site has a designated loading area in the rear of the property adjacent to the trash enclosure area.

Commissioner Norm Jacobs had some additional thought on the loading zone.

"I have some concerns about how to do loading and unloading for the retail space," Jacobs said. "I think the loading zone is far enough away that anybody that's going to provide stuff to the retail space isn't going to look from the back; [they'll] look to the front ... I think that needs to be revisited."

Franklin ended the discussion on a positive note, however, saying the development would be "a terrific addition" to the community.

"I think we're all excited about this project," she said. "I would like to see mixed use of that lot. I think consolidation for the lot is appropriate," she said.

The commission will meet with the applicant again on July 1 to discuss revised plans. The application is scheduled to appear before the Architectural Control Commission on Thursday, June 12.

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