



To: Urban Design Committee
From: Planning and Preservation Division
Date: March 9, 2017
RE: **Zoning Ordinance Sec. 30-442.4(1)d review of the pedestrian plazas at the new Church Hill North Culinary Complex, 2500-2534 Nine Mile Rd & 1401-1405 N. 25th St.; UDC #17-09**

I. APPLICANT

Ivan Wu, Timmons Group

II. LOCATION

2500-2534 Nine Mile Rd & 1401-1405 N. 25th St.

Property Owner:

Church Hill North Holdings Llc C/o Steven A Markel.

III. PURPOSE

The application is for review of the pedestrian plazas at the proposed Church Hill North Culinary Complex at 2500-2534 Nine Mile Rd & 1401-1405 N. 25th St., as set forth in Section 30-442.4(1)d of the City's Zoning Ordinance. The Urban Design Committee is making a recommendation to the Director of Planning and Development Review as part of the Plan of Development review process for the overall building.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The Culinary School Complex is phase one of a larger development that will bring a full service grocery store to the area including retail stores, apartments, and restaurants. It is the goal of the developers and partners in the project to create a place that supports, promotes, and educates the community at large to embrace healthy lifestyles and dietary choices. This project would establish pedestrian plazas throughout the proposed development of a new Culinary School Complex at the intersection of Nine Mile Road and N. 25th Street. The proposed development is permitted use in the B-5 zoning district and is being reviewed by the Land Use Administration division of the Department of Planning and Development Review. The City's Zoning Ordinance allows for the provision of a larger front yard than what is permitted when the yard is used for a pedestrian plaza. In this scenario, the Urban Design Committee reviews the plans for the plaza and submits a recommendation to the Director of Planning and Development Review prior to approval of the Plan of Development.

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Design Guidelines and the Master Plan. Specific to the recommendations of the Guidelines, Staff finds that the selection of paving materials to be sustainable, low-impact and will reduce the site's impervious area; the plazas will create inviting spaces with shade trees, improved landscaping, and seating, encouraging a more vibrant streetscape than what currently exists. Staff also finds that the proposed façade of the building, with large expanses of glass, will seamlessly link passersby to the educational programming taking place inside.

Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Director of Planning and Development Review grant approval of the plaza with the following considerations:

- To provide more landscaping along the southwestern part of the proposed development which includes the outdoor dining area.

Staff Contact:

Joshua Son, (804) 646-3741

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The site is located on multiple parcels bounded by Nine Mile Road to the south, N. 25th Street to the west, N 26th Street to the east, and existing residential development to the north and is located in a B-5 (Central Business) zoning district. N. 25th street is a one-way street that carries vehicular traffic south and into the abutting roundabout. The roundabout was part of the corridor improvements presented in the East End Transformation plan and opened in August 2015 to help reduce vehicle speeds.

The applicant proposes to construct a mixed-use development consisting of approximately 23,000 SF for a culinary school; 11,200 SF for private restaurants; 50,796 SF for residential space (49 apartments); and 7,800 SF for retail space. When completed, J. Sargent Reynolds Culinary Institute will anchor the culinary complex development.

As part of a larger plan to combat “food deserts” in the community, City Council rezoned these parcels that ranged in zoning from B-2 Community Business District, R-6 Single-Family Attached Residential District, and R-5 Single-Family Residential District to a B-5 (Central Business) zoning district (ORD. 2016-211).

b. Scope of Review

The development proposed for this site is a permitted use in the B-5 district and is being reviewed as a Plan of Development by the Land Use Administration division of the Department of Planning and Development Review. Sec. 30-442.4 of the City's Zoning Ordinance sets forth the yard regulations in the B-5 district. Subsection (1)d. states, a front yard with a depth greater than permitted by application of the provisions of paragraphs “a” through “c” of this subsection may be provided when such front yard is improved for purposes of a pedestrian plaza or outdoor dining area as permitted by section 30-440.1 of this division and is approved subject to a plan of development as set forth in article X of this chapter. Except where the property is within an old and historic district, the city urban design committee shall review the application and plans and submit a recommendation to the director of planning and development review prior to approval of such plan of development by the director. The Director of Planning and Development Review has sole authority to approve the Plan of Development.

c. Project Description

This project would establish a series of pedestrian plazas throughout the proposed culinary complex. A primary feature of the culinary school is the incorporation of the plazas with the pedestrian ROW, including the continuation

of the brick paving from the sidewalks into the plazas. The property line runs adjacent to the curb for the majority of the property, so most of the sidewalk, typically thought of as belonging to the City, will actually be owned and maintained by the property owner.

The plazas are designed to engage residents and students by connecting them to the exterior spaces of the complex and connecting the complex to the natural environment. The Community Garden, Big Tree Garden, and the Greenhouse will be accessible by the plazas, encouraging the community to participate and learn about nutritious food.

The ground floor of the complex will consist of a market dining area with direct access to an outdoor seating area along the southwest corner; two retail spaces on the eastern corner; and a mix of kitchens and administrative office spaces toward the center of the development, recessed behind the School Garden Courtyard and Greenhouse. Regarding the façade, the proposal calls for the use of brick red integrally colored concrete for solid walls, bright grey painted steel for exposed structure, and large expanses of clear, transparent glass with steel mullions for openings, paying homage to the traditional brick buildings of Richmond with white wooden porches.

The materials being considered for the plazas consist of brick and grasscrete paving, a porous pavement that will reduce storm water runoff on site.

The proposal calls for the preservation of some existing trees on site, throughout the complex. The trees proposed along the periphery of the plazas on Nine Mile Road will be placed 10' from the curb. It will contain 67 off-street parking spaces between two parking lots, one abutting N. 25th street with landscaped islands, including some existing trees, and the other abutting Nine Mile Road, which will be screened.

d. UDC Review History

Staff was unable to identify any prior projects involving the subject property.

e. Master Plan

The subject property is located in the 25th Street/Nine Mile Road Redevelopment and Conservation Area, as defined in the Master Plan. This area was adopted in 1995 to eliminate blight and deterioration within a 26-block area in a historic area of Church Hill. The Plan contains specific language to this area, noting that “the redevelopment area designation is intended to revitalize a targeted area through programs designed to eliminate existing blight and the long-term conditions that result in deteriorating neighborhoods” (page 160). The Plan further notes “redevelopment areas are targeted for additional federal, state, and local rehabilitation and redevelopment funds and frequently result in land use changes as well. Such designation allows for the public acquisition of property for redevelopment purposes” (Page 161).

An amendment to the Master Plan in 2003 noted “as commercial uses along Nine Mile Road and North 25th Street are revitalized and new retail establishments locate on the corridor, the demand for commercial parking is expected to increase. Additional parking should be provided for utilizing vacant lots along the corridor. However, placement of these lots should be done in a

manner that does not negatively impact the adjacent residential neighborhood” (page 170).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines note that “the selection of appropriate paving materials should be based upon the desired visual image, compatibility with adjacent paving materials, performance, durability, maintenance requirements, and cost. Consideration should be given to the massing of impervious material...” (page 3). The guidelines further note that “simpler paving designs are more compatible with diverse building styles”. The color of brick and concrete pavers should coordinate with building architecture and adjacent streetscape pavements” (page 3).

As to landscaping, the Guidelines state that “site landscaping should complement and soften new construction and building architecture” and that “plant materials should create spaces by providing walls and canopies in outdoor areas”. In addition, the Guidelines note that “landscaping should provide a sense of scale and seasonal interest”. Landscape plans should “include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings” and “shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting” (page 10).

Though intended for public facilities, the Guidelines provide some language apt to the proposed plaza, stating that “plazas should provide a pleasant transitional environment for pedestrians from the street to the building(s) it serves”. “Public plazas”, the Guidelines continue, “should use landscaping, public art, and historic preservation to create inviting spaces” (pg 14). Lastly, “adequate seating, lighting and trash receptacles should also be provided in the design of plazas” (page 14). The Guidelines go on to say that “exterior lighting should also avoid light pollution by directing light downward (page 22).

The Guidelines express support for low-impact development, the goal of which is to “mimic a site's predevelopment hydrology by using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source” (page 11).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**