

Item 25-0267: Request to approve Special Use Permit #2-25 for a standalone off-street parking lot located at 131 North Appleton Street

City Plan Commission

Wed, Mar 26, 2025 3:30PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 01:12

Now to public hearings and appearances. We have one today. This is 25-0266, special use permit number 2-25 for standalone off-street parking lot located at 131 North Appleton Street, and, Colin, is this one yours? All right. All right. Go ahead.

Principal Planner Colin Kafka 01:33

Thank you, Mayor. So, the special use permit that is in front of the plan commission today is for 131 North Appleton Street. It's just across the street here from City Hall. The applicant is proposing to continue the use of and expand the use of an off-street parking lot on that subject site. It formerly had two trays of parking and a bank drive-thru facility that was demolished recently. The expansion of the office off street parking lot will provide upwards of 67 parking spaces to serve a mix of commercial and residential uses at the adjacent property, also owned by the applicant at 200 West College Avenue, which is being redeveloped like I mentioned for a mix of uses.

Principal Planner Colin Kafka 02:20

Currently, the subject site is zoned CBD, central business district. In the central business district, a stand-alone parking lot on a parcel requires a special use permit, and the plan commission makes a recommendation to the Common Council, who makes the final decision on that special use permit. With this staff report, there was an attached development plan, and you'll see that the expanded portion of the proposed parking lot addresses many of the applicable zoning ordinance provisions. More will be developed on that parking lot design through the site plan review process. So, what you see before you today will change a little bit moving forward when we go through that review process, which is a staff administrative process.

Principal Planner Colin Kafka 03:10

This was brought before the development review team, which is an internal staff team that reviews any applications or items, I should say, that go before plan commission. One of the staff comments was related to—there's currently an off-premise sign that was formerly when the Chase Bank was using this site for their drive through facility, there's a Chase Bank sign that is there. Since that facility was demolished, and the future use of this site is just to be a parking lot, that sign will not conform with municipal code, and so staff recommended that, as part of a condition of approval for this special use permit that that condition—that that is a condition with this special use permit apologies.

Principal Planner Colin Kafka 03:53

In addition some future actions, the owner and applicant has agreed actually to dedicate a portion of the adjacent parcel, 200 West College. A portion of that actually sort of ends the public alley way back there. Historically, it's not clear why that alley never went through the entire block, but it actually just stopped just short of Appleton Street. So, the owner has—is willing to dedicate a portion, that portion, as public right of way in the future. So that will be an action item that comes before the commission in the future.

Principal Planner Colin Kafka 04:30

Staff reviewed this special use permit, found that all of the findings of fact were satisfied. All stipulations were satisfied. And so, with that, staff is recommending approval of the special use permit in addition to the conditions that were included with the action item.

Mayor Jake Woodford 04:50

Thank you. This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? Yeah. Your name and address for the record, please.

David Baehr (Oshkosh Investment LLC and Lofgren Properties 6 LLC) 05:00

Good afternoon. My name is David Baehr. I reside at [XXXXXX] in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. I'm representing the project at 200 West College Avenue and also 131 North Appleton Street. Happy to answer any questions. I don't have anything in particular to say other than thank you for allowing me to do business in your community, and I'm happy to answer questions.

Mayor Jake Woodford 05:20

Thank you very much. This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? All right, hearing no others, I declare this public hearing closed, and we'll move now to the associated action item.

Mayor Jake Woodford 05:36

This is item 25-0267, request to approve special use permit number 2-25 for a stand-alone off-street parking lot located at 131 North Appleton Street. Is there a motion? We have a motion and a second to approve, and we'll open the floor for discussion by the Commission.

Mayor Jake Woodford 06:00

I'll just say I've made no secret about the fact that, generally speaking, I'm not a fan of surface parking in the central business district. Understanding the nature of the project, the level of investment that's being made in the property, and the adjacency to a number of different uses in the area, and because this is a continuation of this particular use in this spot, so long as the conditions that have been laid out in the staff report and recommendations are met, in this case I do think it makes sense to allow this to continue to be used as a parking lot.

Mayor Jake Woodford 06:41

In the long run in our downtown, we want to continue making progress of reducing the amount of surface parking, because generally speaking, it is not the highest and best use of land in especially a high demand central business district. And so, I'll be voting with with—as the commission votes, I'll be voting to approve this, but also with the understanding that in the long run, for the downtown district, we want to continue to see activation and use, which is good for—which is good for the entire community. It's also good for the development project that that is currently underway on College Avenue.

Mayor Jake Woodford 07:23

And so, in the future, as also the market around parking continues to evolve, there may be opportunities in the future to develop this site in a way that incorporates parking and further activates the site. But for the time being, understanding that there's a significant level of investment going on in this building and this lot will be necessary to facilitate the success of the operations in those buildings, again, I'll be voting to approve, but the commission will vote as it wishes.

Mayor Jake Woodford 07:54

So, with that, is there any further discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor please signify by saying, aye. Aye. Any opposed? All right, with none opposed, that item has been approved.