

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 10, 2024**

ROLL CALL

The Planning Commission of the City of Prairie Village met in regular session on Tuesday, September 10 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at 7700 Mission Road. Chair Greg Wolf called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the following members present: Jonathan Birkel, James Breneman, James Kersten, Melissa Brown, Melissa Temple, and Jeffrey Valentino.

The following individuals were present in their advisory capacity to the Planning Commission: Chris Brewster, Multistudio; Nickie Lee, Deputy City Administrator; Mitch Dringman, Building Official; Terry O'Toole, Council Liaison; Adam Geffert, City Clerk/Planning Commission Secretary.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Breneman made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 6, 2024, regular Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Birkel seconded the motion, which passed 6-0, with Mr. Wolf in abstention.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

NON-PUBLIC HEARINGS

PC2024-114 Site plan - commercial building remodel
 7070 Mission Road
 Zoning: C-2
 Applicant: Kimley-Horn and Associates; GRI Prairie Village, LLC

Mr. Brewster stated that the applicant was requesting site plan approval for the remodel of a vacant commercial building. The remodel would include the removal of a third story, changes to the exterior of the façade, a small addition for a loading dock, reconfiguration of parking and loading areas, and landscape improvements associated with exterior plazas, courtyards, parking areas, and streetscapes. The property is zoned C-2 General

Business, and most recently was used as a Macy's department store. A site plan for a remodel was approved in 2021 by the Planning Commission, but was never executed for building permits. The remodeling will convert the building to a multi-tenant space, which is anticipated to include a grocery store on the lower level, as well as retail, restaurant, and/or service business spaces on the upper level (south elevation).

The proposal advances comprehensive plan policies regarding repurposing underutilized property and returning a currently vacant building to a viable use. Several of the associated improvements will also improve the visual appearance, social spaces, and pedestrian connections to and within the center. Mr. Brewster said that the plan did not fully capitalize on opportunities for active mixed-use centers identified as "activity centers" in the comprehensive plan, but is consistent with all applicable standards of the C-2 zoning district. The existing building is approximately 28' high, measured from the grade at the frontage. Due to the grade of the site, the building has a walk-out on the south side and operates as a three story building (approximately 42.5' high) on the rear and internal to the site. The proposed remodel will remove the upper story, with a resulting height of 21' on the south elevation and 35' on the north elevation.

Mr. Brewster noted that a small building addition is proposed over a current parking area on the southeast portion of the site associated with a loading area. This will involve lowering the grade to the first level, enclosing the truck loading area, resulting in an approximately 10' high x 30' wide upper wall portion on Mission Road. This wall will be between 6' and 10' from the lot line on Mission Road. C-2 allows a 0' side setback; however, it requires a 15' street side setback from Mission Road. This building addition is the same location and configuration as the approved 2021 plan and is lower than the prior plan due to the removal of the upper story and the move of the grocery store to the first level. It is a minor accessory structure addition to the existing building. As a condition of site plan approval, staff recommends details on the landscape and architectural features on the wall be considered to soften the impact on the streetscape.

The application includes a parking plan that shows 232 parking spaces directly related to this proposed site plan and a total parking count of 1,071 spaces for the entire center, a loss of 69 existing spaces. This is within the blended parking rate required for mixed office and commercial centers by the zoning ordinance. The blended rate and the reduction of square footage with this proposed plan (approximately 38,000 less) make the proposed plan acceptable. Mr. Brewster stated that the parking lot did not meet the required setbacks for parking areas and is between approximately 4' and 8' from 71st Street and Mission Road at various locations. However, the lot is an existing parking area that pre-dates these standards and is eligible to remain and be improved according to the nonconforming use and structure provisions of the ordinance.

The Prairie Village Shopping Center is organized around a series of "internal streets", detailed like pedestrian-oriented public streets and dividing the center into a series of blocks. These include a bowed main street extending off and parallel to Mission Road on the east, a connector street from Tomahawk Road to this street in the center, and an extension of Alhambra Street to the west of this building. The latter is the existing entrance to the previous Macy's site and will remain the main access under this plan. The public

streets and internal streets provide vehicle access to the dispersed parking that serves the center. One current access from Mission Road (right-in only) to the parking lot in front of the building will be closed off with this project to allow better utilization of the parking area. Public Works has reviewed a trip generation report supplied by the applicant in association with this project.

Mr. Brewster said that, in general, the proposed plan improves the pedestrian access and amenities for the site and creates a more inviting experience on the south end of the shopping center. Pedestrian connections from both Mission Road and 71st Street are added and emphasized. He noted that 71st Street did not currently have a sidewalk on the north side of the street adjacent to the shopping center, due to right-of-way constraints. The Bike / Ped Plan calls for an 8' sidewalk on 71st Street, which would be desired on the north side to align with the recently installed pedestrian bridge on the north side at 71st Street and Tomahawk Road. Associated with the 2021 proposal, staff explored three additional conceptual options with the applicant, each of which presented compromises and had technical and logistical issues that needed to be solved to implement the concept, and each raised additional issues and concerns for the applicant. Details for each concept are included in the staff report.

Any option would require further study and design strategies to address the following challenges:

- Right-of-way, easement and other technical issues regarding the curb location and property lines
- Connecting to sidewalks and intersections to the east and west
- Addressing utilities and other existing structures along this edge

Based on these conceptual discussions and the challenges, the applicant proposed an option in the 2021 submittal, which is also included in the current 2024 plan:

- A mid-block crossing at Alhambra Street that leads to a north/south pedestrian route to the building frontage along the east side of the access drive
- A sidewalk connection from the existing Mission Road sidewalk to the plaza area at the southeast corner of the building
- An improved landscape edge, with low shrubs and ornamental trees along the parking area at 71st Street

While this was not the desired solution, Mr. Brewster said that staff determined at the time of the 2021 plan that it was acceptable, considering the existing conditions and the constraints for an improved sidewalk connection on the north side of 71st Street. However, staff recommends that the landscape edge treatment be continued west to the Alhambra Street entrance along 71st Street to complete the frontage design and parking screening on that entire side.

Mr. Brewster stated that the plan proposed a trash enclosure just east of the entrance from Alhambra Street. City ordinance requires that all trash enclosures be completely

screened from streets by a combination of architectural and/or landscape enhancements. Due to the proximity to the street and location at a prominent pedestrian entrance staff recommends the enclosure have a strong architectural tie to the building and also have a heavy landscape emphasis in association with the landscape and streetscape improvements.

The plan improves pedestrian access from the south in two specific ways: (1) a connection and crossing at Alhambra Street and an extended peninsula leading to steps and the west side of the building, which adds further definition of the extension of Alhambra Street as an “internal street” contributing to the block structure and pedestrian scale of the center; and (2) a sidewalk connection from Mission Road to the outdoor plaza at the southeast corner of the building and the associated closing of the vehicle entrance on from Mission Road on the south side of the building that will allow a continuous sidewalk from the intersection of 71st Street and Mission Road.

Mr. Brewster said that the proposed building design included cladding with new materials and introduction of storefronts on the south elevation and north portion of the west elevation. Additionally, the lower rear entrance to the pedestrian courtyard will be maintained with a patio for use by the lower level tenant. These changes provide more activation of outside social spaces. The cladding of the existing building introduces three new material elements - composite wood panels, ACM (metal) panels, and painted brick (tan or grey), in addition the existing stone. He added that the design was similar to the U.S. Bank building at 6940 Mission Road on the east side of the Prairie Village shops. However, it is a departure from the main “inline” buildings of the Prairie Village shops, and should not be considered as establishing a precedent for the rest of the shopping center without considering a more comprehensive and long-range plan for future development, rehabilitation, and design of the area.

Staff provided the applicant with the following comments on the original landscape plan. A revised submittal has addressed several of these comments, but some remain to be addressed. (All species recommended to comply with City-approved tree lists or Multistudio’s “Great Trees for Kansas City Region” list):

1. 71st Street Frontage:
 - a. Substitute the Star Magnolia (10’ - 12’ height) with an ornamental tree (20’ to 25’ height) that would remain compatible with existing utilities considering actual maturity height and planting conditions.
 - b. Expand the same treatment to the frontage and parking screen west of the Alhambra Street entrance, so that it meets the ordinance requirement for parking screening and street tree requirements.

2. Mission Road Frontage:
 - a. Add 9 to 10 large street trees spaced evenly along Mission Road for a more comfortable pedestrian path, and to also help soften and mitigate the wall of the lading area along Mission Road.
 - b. Adjust the retaining wall to the lower parking area near the loading dock, so it does not result in a 2’ lower landscape buffer and 4’ upper buffer. Instead,

the wall would be at the back of curb on the lower level, and a 6' to 8' buffer would result at the upper level.

3. Internal Parking Area:
 - a. Substitute the Tulip Poplar for a more durable tree appropriate for parking islands.
 - b. Convert the island "lawn areas" to full landscape for better appearance and easier maintenance / livability.
 - c. Add two large shade trees to the peninsula on the north side of the Alhambra Street entrance crosswalk to help soften the parking and accentuate the pedestrian entry.

4. Interior and Social Spaces:
 - a. Recommend converting larger lawn areas in south plaza to landscape for better visual impact and survival.
 - b. Require screening of two transformers on the east end of the plaza with shrubs, ornamental grasses, and perennials.
 - c. Recommend some enhanced landscape incorporated into the sidewalk stairs on the west side of the building to soften the large façade, enhance the pedestrian walkway, and substitute for the ordinance requirement of foundation plantings along this elevation. The overall approach to the grade and the stairs warrant an exception to the foundation planting provided some alternative landscape enhancement can occur in this area.
 - d. Emphasize and specify landscaping associated with the lower-level patio at the terminus of the interior courtyard on the north of the building.

Mr. Brewster noted that a revised landscape plan had been submitted which addressed many of the issues, and that staff recommended approval of the plan based on the condition that the applicant continue to work with staff on the following remaining items:

- A. Continuing the streetscape treatment of the parking fronting on 71st Street west of the Alhambra Street entrance.
- B. Accentuating the Alhambra interior street extension with additional trees, particularly two large trees on opposing sides of the cross walk (one in the new peninsula and one in the new landscape island on the east side).
- C. Street trees on Mission Road frontage: there are utilities in the area, and particularly at the location where the new building addition exists. However, staff believes these should be at a depth and location where it would not interfere with implementing the ordinance standard for street trees on the Mission Road frontage. This condition includes three aspects:
 - 1) Zoning ordinance requires one large street tree per every 40' of frontage, but also includes contingencies and alternatives for when constraints are encountered.
 - 2) Improving the configuration of the sidewalk and landscape area along Mission Road to provide a better pedestrian experience and be beneficial to both the sidewalk space and the landscape area.

- 3) The trees and landscape issues in this vicinity should be combined with the architectural enhancements of the new loading dock enclosure wall.
- D. Further consideration and potential refinement of the species selection to conform with acceptable plant materials from the City's cited plant resources, and which present the greatest longevity and best maintenance for all landscape areas.

Staff recommends approval of the site plan subject to the following:

1. The applicant coordinates with staff to ensure the details of the trash enclosure include a heavy screen that eliminates visibility from the street and improves the appearance with an architectural screen complementing the building design and enhanced landscape associated with the streetscape.
2. A final revised landscape plan be submitted to staff prior to issuance of building permits to address the following:
 - a. Continuing the streetscape treatment of the parking fronting on 71st Street west of the Alhambra Street entrance; staff may approve any alternatives according to the ordinance and meeting the intent of the parking and streetscape screen.
 - b. Accentuating the Alhambra interior street extension with additional trees, particularly two large trees on opposing sides of the crosswalk (one in the new peninsula and one in the new landscape island on the east side).
 - c. Street trees on Mission Road frontage; staff may consider and approve any alternatives based on space and utility constraints, the objective of softening the wall nearest the street, and improving the pedestrian experience along Mission Road with vertical landscape features.
 - d. Further consideration and potential refinement of the species selection to conform with acceptable plant materials from the City's cited plant resources, and which present the greatest longevity and best maintenance for all landscape areas.
3. Planning Commission concurs with staff's analysis of the building design criteria, and that no precedent is set for future changes to other buildings until a more comprehensive and long-range plan for the shops occurs.
4. The material on the columns of the west elevation be identified and confirmed as compatible with the new additional materials and/or representative and consistent with the existing stone materials.
5. The materials and specific architectural details of the portion of the wall enclosing the loading dock that is visible be identified and confirmed to include ornamentation and visual interest due to the prominent location.
6. Signs in the submittal are conceptual only. Sign plans shall be submitted prior to issuing permits, either: (1) demonstrating compliance with the Prairie Village sign requirements; (2) opting out of the Prairie Village sign plan and complying with the city-wide sign ordinance; or (3) updating the Prairie Village sign plan through appropriate procedures required for area-specific sign plans in the sign ordinance.
7. Prior to the issuance of building permits, a lighting plan be submitted for all exterior lighting demonstrating compliance with Prairie Village lighting standards.

Mr. Birkel suggested increased pedestrian and/or green space on 71st Street would be beneficial, as well as additional trees on the parking lot islands. He also shared concern about traffic congestion at the 71st Street entrance.

Mr. Valentino and Ms. Temple stated that they didn't believe the proposed design of the building blended well with the existing design of the shops.

Ms. Brown and Mr. Breneman shared concern about the proposed grading on the west side of the building.

Gregg Zike, Senior Vice President with First Washington, 7200 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, MD, and Tyler Wysong with Kimley-Horn, 805 Pennsylvania Street, Kansas City, MO, were present to discuss the application. Mr. Zike stated that the previous plan for the building that had been approved in 2021 included 40,000 square feet of office space on the third floor, but that First Washington had struggled to find tenants. As a result, the new plans called for the removal of the third floor from the building. He added that the design materials were similar to those found in the rest of the shopping center, such as stone, brick and wood, and the design itself was similar to the 6940 Mission Road building. Lastly, he said that there were a number of utilities located under the parking lot near 71st Street along with overhead power lines, which limited the size and type of landscaping that could be installed.

Mr. Zike went on to note that the grading plan would require a good deal of excavation near the entrance on the west side of the building to flatten the parking lot, and would result in a "speed ramp" from the south parking lot with a 12% downward grade. Mr. Birkel, Mr. Valentino, Ms. Brown and Mr. Breneman stated their opposition to the significant grade of the ramp due to safety issues, as well as the continuation of Alhambra Street into the parking lot due to traffic concerns. Mr. Valentino added that he would prefer to see a reduction in parking spaces and an increase in green space.

Mr. Zike said that there were approximately 1,100 total parking spaces, which although significant, was an appropriate amount for the size of the shopping center. He added that a busy grocery store would make the surrounding lots look less like "a sea of asphalt" once it opened. Mr. Valentino asked how trucks would approach the loading dock for the grocery store. Mr. Wysong stated that trucks would pull into the shopping center on the east side, turn toward the exit, and back into the dock. Commissioners expressed their concern about the tight turning radius.

After further discussion, Mr. Zike stated that he wished to continue the application to the next meeting so that the suggestions raised by commission members could be further considered.

Mr. Breneman made a motion to continue the application to the October 1 Planning Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Wolf adjourned the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Adam Geffert
City Clerk/Planning Commission Secretary