

Staff Report
Ingles Conditional District Rezoning Application
January 12, 2011

Project: Reconstruction / expansion of existing grocery and new convenience store with gasoline pumps
Location: 201 Barber Boulevard (off Russ Avenue)
District: Russ Avenue Town Center

Description:

The existing grocery store is nonconforming in because the parking lot is located in front of the building, there are no parking lot shade trees, there are no sidewalks connecting the grocery store to either Russ Avenue or Howell Mill Road, and there are no pedestrian walkways internal to the parking lot. A redevelopment/reconstruction of an existing nonconforming building to an extent of more than 75% of its current tax value, as is the case with this project, triggers compliance with all applicable provisions of the Land Development Standards (LDS). In recognition of this fact, Ingles has applied for a Conditional District zoning designation to modify some of the requirements of the LDS.

This project consists of reconstructing and expanding the existing grocery store to a total of 119,848 square feet with an attached 23,728 square feet garden center and 5,897 square feet retail shop. The project also includes the construction of a new convenience store of approximately 1,900 square feet with a connected canopy covering 16 vehicle lanes accessing 8 gasoline pumps. The project proposes 21,296 of additional landscape area, with 53 new canopy trees, and approximately 1,100' of new sidewalk along Barber Boulevard.

Plan Review Comments:

Architectural Design/Grocery store:

1. There are no applicable design standards in the LDS, since the building does not directly front a public street, other than a maximum building height of 40'. The proposed maximum height is 47'. The requested district modifications contained in the List of Standards and Conditions would permit buildings with a maximum height of 47'.
2. The building is generally well articulated with many changes in massing, front façade height and materials alternating between brick, EIFS and glass.
3. There is a high degree of permeability from windows and glass doors.

Architectural Design/Convenience store:

1. There are no applicable design standards, since the building does not directly front a public street, other than a maximum building height of 40'. The proposed maximum height is 29'.

2. Building materials have not been specified, but a high percentage of the façade fronting the alley to the rear of the Home Trust Bank is permeable with windows, but no doorway.

Master Plan:

1. Parking location: currently the grocery store fronts on a large parking lot (approximately 500' deep), and is proposed to continue to be sited in the same location after the redevelopment. This does not comply with the current district standard, which requires all parking to be to the side or rear of principal buildings. This provision has been proposed for deletion by the List of Standards and Conditions of the Conditional District application.
2. Pedestrian facilities: currently there is no pedestrian connection along Barber Boulevard from the existing grocery store to either Russ Avenue or Howell Mill Road, nor are there any internal pedestrian pathways within the large parking lot connecting to the entrances of the building. The Master Plan proposes approximately 750' of new sidewalk construction extending from Howell Mill Road along the driveway and edge of parking lot. This sidewalk would connect with a sidewalk internal to the parking lot extending approximately 500' across the parking lot to the sidewalk in front of the building. There is also a new approximately 200' segment of sidewalk proposed adjacent to the gas station site. A drive-thru lane for the pharmacy window on the front of the building breaks the pedestrian connection from the parking area in front of the garden center to the main grocery store building entrances. Since pedestrians will walk through the drive-thru lane in moving between the garden center and grocery store this will create an obstacle to pedestrian movement.
3. Landscaping: the site is currently nonconforming with regard to parking lot landscaping. The ordinance requires that every parking space be located within 30' of a shade tree. There are currently no parking lot shade trees.

The proposed landscaping plan calls for 85 new trees in and adjacent to the parking area - 69 of these would qualify as parking lot shade trees since they are within 30' of a parking space. These 69 trees would "shade" approximately 622 spaces out of the 890 spaces proposed, or 70% of the parking lot.

As to species, 29 of the 69 (42%) parking lot shade trees are proposed to be Crape Myrtle – a small tree/shrub species. This exceeds the 25% allowance for parking lot shade trees to be a small maturing species. A mitigating factor is that 10 of these trees are proposed within an overhead power line right-of-way. This effort is requested to be deemed "alternative compliance" with the landscaping standards by the List of Standard and Conditions of the Conditional District application.

4. Access: access to the site is provided by Barber Boulevard, a private road extending from Russ Avenue to the parking lot, and by a private driveway extending to Howell Mill Road. No access improvements are planned.

The Russ Avenue Corridor Plan indicates two new street connections on this site: to Russ Avenue at the western end of the property from the access road between the bank and gas station, and to the Pizza Hut site from the driveway connecting with Howell Mill Road (this plan may be viewed at TownofWaynesville.org).

The Master Plan does not show either of these connections, but does indicate an extension of the bank/gas station road to the western property line.

Staff Recommendation:

The staff views the proposed plan as a significant upgrade over the current development with the addition of landscaping and sidewalks and a pedestrian pathway through the parking lot. Given the fact that this project is an improvement of an existing nonconforming situation and complete compliance with all applicable provisions of the Land Development Standards, particularly the required location of parking to the side or rear of principal buildings, would impose an undue hardship and quite possibly prevent the redevelopment of the site, the request for a Conditional District rezoning is appropriate. However, the staff would recommend that the developer and Board of Aldermen consider making the following modifications to the Master Plan and List of Standards and Conditions:

1. Revision of the Site Master Plan (South) to indicate the reservation of rights-of-way for the street connections in locations as indicated in the Russ Avenue Corridor Plan.
2. Limit use of small maturing trees to areas under overhead power lines to reduce the percentage of small maturing trees within the parking area, thereby providing better potential for future shading of the parking area. Follow recommendations of the Town Horticulturist and Community Appearance Commission as to parking lot tree species.

Community Appearance Commission Recommendations:

1. That the crosswalk in front of the gas station be constructed with a material change to serve as a traffic calming device and to make the crosswalk more visible.
2. Where Red Maples are proposed the cultivar Sunset Maple should be used.
3. Than another small tree be used in place of Crape Myrtles, which are shrub-like and may not be hardy in Waynesville's climate.
4. Shrubs should be added to mulched tree island to stabilize mulch and to improve appearance.
5. Some large trees should be added to mulch islands at the gas station.