

The Planning Commission found no conflict of interest.

B. 385 Leonard St NE - Multifamily PRD

Address: 385 Leonard St. NE
Applicant: CD Holdings LLC (Lawrence Duthler)
Pinnacle Construction Group, Inc. (James Lewis)
Requesting: **Approval to rezone the subject property from NOS (Neighborhood Office Services) to a Planned Redevelopment District (PRD) to facilitate the construction of a (+/-)186-unit, five-story building with a commercial component. A parking waiver is also requested.**
Zoning: NOS Neighborhood Office Services
Requirements: 5.7.06. Special Districts - Planned Redevelopment Districts
5.12.08. Site Plan Review
5.12.12. Planned Redevelopment District
Case Number: PC-PRD-2024-0021
Staff Assigned: Elizabeth Zeller ezeller@grcity.us
Type of Case: Planned Redevelopment District
Effective Date: City Commission Approval

Ms. Zeller presented the request explaining that the applicant is proposing construction of an approximate 186-unit, five-story, apartment building with a commercial component on the same parcel as the existing Sun Title office building, with some shared uses on the site. A parking waiver is also requested. Ms. Zeller explained further that along with the Sun Title office, YMCA Greater Grand Rapids uses a previously existing commercial kitchen, both of which will continue. Rezoning from Neighborhood Office Service (NOS) to Planned Redevelopment District (PRD) is proposed to facilitate this project. Ms. Zeller related that the NOS zoning could not support the project from a density or height standpoint. PRD would also facilitate the mixed uses on the site.

The zoning map was displayed with the subject parcel identified within the NOS district. Medium-low density residential is located to the north and east. Mary Waters Park and a Grand Rapids public school are located to the south. The school is slated to close this year. Located to the west is St. Alphonsus Church. Ms. Zeller also identified the surrounding zone districts. To the west is Mixed Density Residential (MDR), which allows a higher density of residential uses than would be found in the TN-LDR Zone District. The park to the south is zoned office space.

Ms. Zeller reiterated that Sun Title occupies the existing improvements on the site. She provided some site history and displayed a photo of the structure that previously occupied the site; St. John's orphan asylum. That structure was located where the existing building is located. It doesn't appear that the west part of the site has ever had a structure on it. St. John's orphan home was a substantial, fairly tall building. Renderings of the proposed building were displayed, which is also a substantial building. The building is proposed on the west side of the site. It ranges between 4 and 5-stories in height because of the grade. The grade is driving the design of the building, which the applicant can speak to further. The size of the entire property is approximately 3.4 acres in area. The existing building is approximately 30,000 sq. ft. and has 58 parking spaces. Retaining walls are proposed because of the grade change.

Ms. Zeller noted that until 2021 the subject site was zoned TN-LDR like the property around it and it was a residential institutional use. Sun Title was interested in purchasing and occupying the building and NOS was an appropriate rezoning.

Ms. Zeller provided further detail of the proposed project. A five-story courtyard-style building is proposed. Due to grade changes it will vary between an appearance of four stories and five stories, depending on where on the site one is. It is tallest at the corner of Leonard and Lafayette. On the Carrier side/north, it is four stories. There are some berms proposed to transition grades. A courtyard is proposed in the middle, which will include amenities for residents of the building. A service area is located on the east side of the building, between the Sun Title building and the proposed building. The service area will accommodate refuse removal and move-in/move-out loading/unloading. A small commercial component is proposed at the corner of Leonard and Lafayette; approximately 622 sq. ft. The applicant intends to have the space utilized as a coffee shop initially.

Ms. Zeller commented on parking relating that parking is proposed in a partially underground parking deck, which is visible at the lower level. The Lafayette side rendering was displayed and Ms. Zeller noted that the parking deck is accessed from Lafayette at approximately the mid-point of the building. The location of that entrance was decided upon with input from Mobile GR to ensure it was safe and appropriate. The parking deck will provide 78 parking spaces as well as some bike parking.

Ms. Zeller noted that the plans show 181 dwelling units. However, the applicant is asking for approval of up to 186 units to provide some flexibility for reconfiguration of units depending on market demand. The parking analysis was based on 186 units. Ms. Zeller indicated that at 181 units, 86 are proposed as studio units of approximately 400 sq. ft., which is a micro-unit by the City's definition. 91 are proposed to be one-bedroom units ranging in size from 520-650 sq. ft. and 4 two-bedroom units are proposed at approximately 900 sq. ft. each. Most units are proposed to have a balcony or porch. There will be a lounge and the Sun Title building has a large gym and use of the gym space is proposed for the residents.

Ms. Zeller commented on setbacks noting that the site for this building has three front yards; any street facing side is considered a front yard. The NOS zone district has a minimum setback of 25 ft. and doesn't have a Required Build Line as the TN zone districts do. Additionally, institutional uses, such as a church, also have a minimum setback and no RBL. On Leonard a setback of 20 ft. from back of curb is proposed. The existing Sun Title building is approximately 30 ft. On Lafayette, the St. Alphonsus building is approximately 30 ft. from back of curb and the applicant is proposing a range of 19-23 ft. on Lafayette, presumably because of the geometry of the street. On Carrier St., where residential uses are located across the street, there is an established building line of the homes of approximately 28 ft. and the Sun Title building is approximately 23 ft. The proposed setback for the subject building is 30 ft. The Planning Commission should consider the surroundings and determine if the proposed setbacks are appropriate. Ms. Zeller related that her staff report did not include the information that in a TN district the Planning Commission can approve a setback of 0 ft. At the southwest corner of the subject site there is a proposed setback from the lot line of 2.5 ft./19 ft. from back of curb. The Planning Commission has the discretion to allow the proposed setbacks if found to be appropriate.

Ms. Zeller advised that PRDs have a low green space requirement of 15%. The NOS district for residential projects has a 30% requirement and 20% for mixed use. The applicant is proposing 29.8% greenspace. Ms. Zeller requested the Planning Commission establish a percentage that staff can follow in the future should some minor changes be necessary. The draft resolution suggests 25%, which allows them some flexibility.

With respect to tree canopy, 26% is required in the NOS district and 12% for a PRD. The applicant is proposing 34.8%. Again, Ms. Zeller requested the Planning Commission establish a minimum. She has suggested 26% in the draft resolution to allow for flexibility.

Ms. Zeller commented on height. The NOS district allows no more than 2.5 stories. The PRD maximum is 55 ft./4 stories. The Planning Commission has the ability to modify that requirement and the proposed is between 4 and 5 stories with a height range of 52-59 ft.

Ms. Zeller related that proposed materials are brick and fiber cement panel. The building has been appropriately designed relative to pedestrian entrances, which is located at the corner. There is a lot of transparency, including for the commercial portion. Ms. Zeller suggested the discussion of transparency focus on the portion of the parking structure that is visible. That discussion could also include the façade variation portion of the Ordinance. Ms. Zeller referred to the renderings noting that there is some detail that continues into the concrete of the parking deck to provide some relief/visual interest to break up that expanse of wall. On the three street facing sides, a significant amount of landscaping is proposed. On the Lafayette side, the narrative and rendering shows green screens along with the columnar evergreens. The green screens are not reflected on the landscape plan. Ms. Zeller asked that the applicant clarify what is intended there. The Planning Commission should determine if the proposed design and landscaping treatment adequately addresses the lack of façade variation.

Ms. Zeller advised, with respect to density, that the NOS zone district allows residential uses as a primary use; it doesn't have to be a mixed-use development. The entire site, including the Sun Title portion, could support up to 155 dwelling units. 186 dwelling units are proposed. The Planning Commission should consider whether the proposed density is appropriate. Considerations may include the availability of transit in the vicinity, the fact that the current zone district allows a relatively high density, and that a significant number of the units are intended to be quite small. They are intended to be studio units and by the Ordinance definition they are micro-units. In other mixed-use commercial zone districts, such as the TCC, TBA, or C, micro-units aren't counted toward density. The applicant is not asking for a waiver along those lines.

With respect to parking, an interior parking structure is proposed to have 78 parking spaces. Using either the PRD or NOS parking requirements, which are higher than TBA or TCC requirements, 283 parking spaces are required; there is a significant deficiency. The applicant is requesting that the parking be reduced based on available on-street parking, proximity to transit, and alternative vehicle parking. There are two bus lines on Leonard that serve the site. On-street parking is not permitted on Leonard or Lafayette. On-street parking is permitted on Carrier but on the portion of the site to be developed there is existing green infrastructure that makes on-street parking in that area impossible but there are spaces adjacent to the Sun Title portion of the site. Six alternative vehicle parking space are proposed within the garage. There is also a parking

reduction allowed for micro-units. Parking for micro-units can be reduced by ½ a space as long as two enclosed bike parking spaces are provided per unit. The applicant is not calling them micro-units to receive any waiver for density or parking. That being said, the project won't meet the full bike parking requirement. They are proposing 56 bike spaces inside; 103 bike spaces are required. The applicant is requesting a waiver of 47 bike parking spaces.

Ms. Zeller related that the applicant did a trip generation analysis in cooperation with Mobile GR. Mobile GR reviewed the analysis and agreed with the conclusions that trip generation for this project is anticipated to be minimal and doesn't warrant a traffic impact study.

With respect to signage, the applicant requests that the retail component be subject to the use table for the TN-TBA zone district. It would also be appropriate to assign TN-TBA for signage, which staff is amenable to. The commercial space is very small. Staff would also recommend that office use be allowed by right, which would otherwise be a Special Land Use in this location.

Ms. Zeller commented on the Sun Title portion of the site. They own the site and intend to continue their office use there. They have 58 parking spaces on site, 29 fewer than what is required for the amount of floor area of the office use. Sun Title was granted Director Review for deferred parking as they didn't feel they needed as many spaces as required and requested deferred parking if the need arose. Sun Title has related that they will never need that amount of parking and asked for a formal waiver of those additional 29 parking spaces. Ms. Zeller suggested the accessory use of the YMCA using the commercial kitchen won't create any conflict with parking demand. The applicant is requesting to establish the NOS zone district for both uses and signage for the Sun Title portion of the site, which staff supports.

With respect to neighborhood input, staff has received several letters in response to the post card notification as well as the neighborhood outreach conducted by the applicant. Several letters of support have been submitted by residents. One letter did express concerns about density and parking. Letters of support have also been submitted by the Creston Neighborhood and Business Associations. The letter from the Neighborhood Association indicates that their support is based on commitments by the applicant that were made at a meeting with the Association. The commitments include ten affordable housing units, collaboration with The Rapid to construct sheltered bus stops near the development and engagement and additional community outreach activities about the proposed construction activities. Ms. Zeller clarified that affordable housing is not part of the applicant's application and was not taken into consideration in staff's analysis. Ms. Zeller deferred to the applicant to speak to that in further detail.

Ms. Zeller summarized the request as a primarily residential building with up to 186 units and between 4 and 5 stories.

Mr. Rozeboom asked if they could put residential in what is shown as commercial space if the commercial use doesn't work out.

Ms. Zeller replied that would be something for the Planning Commission to consider and perhaps incorporate into the conditions of approval. The public notice was for 186 units.

Ms. Turkelson stated that because of the way it was noticed, with the specific numbers for parking waivers and number of units, that any increase in residential density would likely necessitate it to come back for that modification, because it is a PRD, unless they stay within the 186-unit maximum. It also depends on whether the commercial space is material to the decision of whether the project meets the standards. If immaterial, there is more flexibility.

Mr. Rozeboom recalled other developments have come back with that request.

Lawrence Duthler, co-owner of Sun Title, was present along with his business partner Tom and their team from Pinnacle who are partnering with them on this project. Mr. Duthler provided some history relating that their journey into Creston began in 2003 when they purchased their first building. At the time they liked the neighborhood and it was the perfect location between their two homes. They fell in love with the district and have been there over 20 years improving buildings, houses, etc. They have great relationships with the neighborhood and business associations. It has always been their vision to turn the entire community into the gem it has become recently. Some of the other developments occurring are amazing. They are excited about what is happening in Creston. It has always been a great neighborhood and is beginning to get the attention it deserves. Mr. Duthler related that in the middle of COVID they were running out of space in their corporate headquarters where they had purchased a number of buildings at the corner of Spencer and Plainfield. Mr. Duthler took a very scientific approach knowing they wanted to remain in the Creston neighborhood. He went to Google Maps, zoomed out and noticed the subject site, which was owned by Hope Network at the time and it was for sale. Hope Network was using the space for somewhat of a quasi-residential use with offices on the upper floor. The building was constructed in 1960 and had gone through a number of use iterations. Mr. Duthler stated that they looked at the site and found that it provided enough square footage for their office. They love renovation projects and this site excited them. They are trying to attract a younger work force and bring professionals into this area. They knew they needed a corporate headquarters and office that would provide something interesting and special. During their first tour they discovered the commercial kitchen and wondered what they could do with that. They also discovered the full size gym, with basketball courts. They have installed pickle ball in the space. Mr. Duthler stated that it has some very interesting features. The building is approximately 32,000 sq. ft. and just under half of that is common space consisting of the gym, huge break room, commercial kitchen, boiler room, etc. The site provided neat amenities they saw as two-fold. It was an opportunity to sell something neat to employees to show them that they could offer something different than other employers. They also found it has had a huge community impact. They've been using the gym for some wonderful events for some organizations they support, such as Hand to Hand. A professional women's basketball team needed a place to practice and in exchange for use of the space they are doing community events with the neighborhood girls doing mentoring and basketball clinics. Mr. Duthler stated that their site search was employee and community focused. They were also interested in the vacant land next to it. One of the challenges their employees have is finding housing, affordable housing. They also wanted it to be a beautiful building. Mr. Duthler stated that his office will overlook the subject building. He feels Pinnacle has done a beautiful job designing the proposed building and incorporating the colors of the brick from the Sun Title building. The grade of the property is challenging. From the first floor of the Sun Title building to the corner of Leonard/Lafayette there is an approximate 25 ft. grade difference. Mr. Duthler stated that they are excited about how it has been designed. The parking underneath is good. With regard to setbacks, there is a

large brick retaining wall that is approximately 1 ft. from the sidewalk. That will be removed and this project will make things far more open feeling than it is now. From an aesthetic and walkability standpoint they feel it has been designed as a beautiful building. The green space is also great. They're doing the best they can to hide the parking garage with the greenery. Lafayette has the most view of the parking garage and they feel a lot of that can be masked with the landscaping.

Mr. Duthler commented on parking. When they moved into the building, they moved in approximately 35 employees and didn't need all the parking. Sun Title is now at approximately 80% capacity on the first floor. The second floor has been leased to a construction client of theirs with some sub-tenants they have. The entire building is now approximately 80% full and parking spaces remain available. Neither Sun Title or the other tenants have a lot of retail traffic. Sun Title's commercial closing group is located on this site so some clients come in for closing but that doesn't require a lot of visitor parking. Mr. Duthler stated that there has been no street parking utilization up to this point. The parking requirement for the size of building takes into account the enormous gym and large break room. There is also a gigantic interior courtyard where they have picnic tables and umbrellas for employee lunches, etc. Mr. Duthler added that they discussed parking with Pinnacle and he looked into the transit to see what that really means. You can take a bus from this building to Family Fare, east on Leonard, in 9 minutes using one bus and no transfers. You can take a one shot approach and get to Van Andel Arena in 14 minutes. You can get to the Medical Mile on one bus in 9 minutes. It is a beautifully located building. Mr. Duthler stated that they considered the size of the apartments and the affordability, which was a key component with their employees. Title insurance hires a lot of people that don't go to college, have a high school degree and it is a great opportunity to have a professional office career. However, finding affordable housing is challenging, which he feels was a real breakthrough with how Pinnacle designed this with the slightly smaller units and the ability to reduce the cost of those units to residents. Mr. Duthler stated that their vision is that it is an opportunity for them to have their own employees reside there.

Mr. Duthler related that their community outreach will continue. They have great relationships with the neighborhood and business associations and he sees no reason that will change. They continue to find new ways to have their facility utilized by other non-profits. It has been a great community asset and there are a lot of opportunities for that. Mr. Duthler stated that their commitment to the Creston area continues and they are excited about this project.

Ms. Joseph asked if bike hooks or storage will be incorporated into the units.

James Lewis, Pinnacle, replied that they aren't to that point in the design process.

Ms. Joseph wished to confirm that the proposed vegetation to screen the parking garage would provide screening all year long.

Mr. Duthler replied that that is the goal. He has asked for a few more evergreens.

Mr. Lewis added that that is part of the discrepancy on the Lafayette side where they have both arborvitae and the green screen. There will be some pine in there as well as a vine that may lose

leaves over the winter. He recognized a lack of coordination in the drawings between the vision and what the landscape architect has shown.

Mr. Rozeboom expressed appreciation for the input on the transit lines. He asked how they came up with the number of spaces they should actually provide.

Mr. Lewis replied that some of it is what is physically possible on the site. It also led into their thinking on how they skew the mix of units. Instead of being heavier on the one-bedroom units they are heavier on the studio units depressing the need for parking a bit more than might otherwise be the case. They looked at ideas of bringing surface parking into the courtyard but then you lose a lot of green space and it doesn't provide as nice of an amenity. They really don't think that the market is demanding the parking at even close to one to one. They believe it is closer to ½ space per unit ratio for this type of unit. He reiterated that it is on two bus lines, has bike lanes in front, and is within walking distance to the Dash. There aren't many better sites in town from an alternate modes of transportation standpoint.

Mr. Rozeboom asked where people will park if they are wrong.

Mr. Duthler replied that it wasn't an official study but they went around and counted on-street spaces one block in every direction and counted at least 50 spaces within a reasonable walk of the entrances to the property. Additionally, St. Alphonsus struggles with parking on Sundays and there may be some opportunities to work with them on shared arrangements if necessary.

Ms. Turkelson asked how confident they are that the green screens facing west are feasible.

Mr. Duthler replied that currently the sidewalk is up against a brick wall. With this development there will be quite a bit of space from the sidewalk to the entrance area. Their plan is to use native plants to ensure it is hardy to survive the winters. They want it to look nice also and take a lot of pride in the work they do.

Ms. Turkelson recognized that they share the same goals. However, her experience with green walls/green screens makes her question whether it is viable. If it isn't viable, are they willing to supplement with additional landscaping that can be replanted at a future date?

Mr. Duthler replied they would have every intent to do that. They want it to look nice.

Ms. Turkelson wished to go into further detail on the grades, particularly along Carrier St. In looking at the street grades it ranges from 700 to 703 and the finish floor is at 709; 6-9 ft. above the street.

Mr. Duthler stated that one way to look at it to get a visual of where the deck sits in relation to Carrier is if you follow the wall from their building that goes to the first corner that is about the same grade level as the deck. It is the parking lot that is below that.

Ms. Turkelson understood. She again stated that finish floor is 6-9 ft. above grade and they are mitigating that elevation change through landscaping, which is good. In light of the fact that there are two-story homes across the street and this being a pretty tall four story, she asked if

there was any consideration to doing a step back, which would result in the loss of approximately 8 units on the fourth floor, to try to better transition into the neighborhood. If it couldn't work, she asked for an explanation of why.

Mr. Duthler replied that it would be a matter of not only pushing units back but also parking because the parking deck is below grade there.

Ms. Turkelson clarified that she was speaking about just stepping the fourth story back on Carrier. Stepping back on that elevation might be a better scale.

Mr. Lewis replied that one thing that hasn't been brought up in the meeting is that they also did a geotechnical study on the site and found the soils are less dense than they would want for regular spread footing soil along much of the perimeter of where they want to put the building, which began consideration of how they develop the site in a way that maximizes it but is also as cost effective per unit as possible. The unsuitable soil conversation and the grade change led them to the underground parking scenario, which is a significant expense for the project in order to get any sort of residential project here to work. Sharing the load of the parking garage on a per unit basis is an important consideration for getting this project developed. Another thing they haven't discussed today is that their next step in this process are the incentives they will seek. They are applying for Neighborhood Enterprise Zone tax abatement, which is predicated on the retail portion of the building. They do have a plan if the commercial space doesn't work out and it will likely become more building amenity space such as a shared co-working space or internal coffee shop for residents and users at Sun Title. They will also be seeking a significant Brownfield TIF on the project for the underground parking and unsuitable soils. They will also be pursuing the new housing Brownfield. The new housing Brownfield is what will provide the compliance mechanism for the affordable unit component. If the housing Brownfield is passed, they will have a 20% ratio of units in the affordability range as defined by the new housing Brownfield program; instead of 10 it would 37 affordable units.

Ms. Turkelson felt that made sense. She felt it was important for the community and Planning Commission to understand the grade change. Ms. Turkelson feels a step back from a massing and scale perspective makes sense. However, the soil suitability and development proformas are also something that has to be considered. She felt it was important to be transparent about the rationale, which is why she asked the question.

Mr. Swem asked which parking level plan is correct, C1 or A01. C1 has a significantly larger bike parking area, which consequently shows less bike parking spaces than the smaller one.

Mr. Lewis replied A01. It is a different bike storage system. A01 utilizes a 2-tier system and C1 utilizes wall mounted hooks.

Mr. Swem asked what the system is. Fitting 10 bikes in a 5' x 6' space is impressive.

Mr. Lewis provided the name of the system and offered to share the information.

Mr. Rozeboom opened the public hearing and invited public comment; there was none. The public hearing was closed and Mr. Rozeboom invited Planning Commission discussion.

Ms. Joseph expressed excitement about the project. It is appropriate in this location and parking waivers are appropriate based on the transportation options that have been discussed. Ms. Joseph stated that she has been driving by the property a lot lately, transporting children, and each time she thinks that something should be here. She was happy to see it show up on the agenda. Ms. Joseph appreciates the discussion about scale and the surrounding neighborhood. She feels they've done a good job with façade variation and the landscaping. Ms. Joseph expressed her support.

Ms. Shannon recalled all the discussions they've had about the need for housing, affordable housing, and the use of transit. She appreciates that the parking is underneath. Rarely do they see that and she recognizes it is much more expensive. More green space vs. asphalt will be positive. Ms. Shannon likes the micro-units. The more she studies and learns about housing patterns and the trend of the future, the idea of 400-600 sq. ft. affordable units is better than one's parent's basement. It may also be a way to attract young people and provide them opportunities they don't seem to have right now in housing. Ms. Shannon is also supportive.

Mr. Swem stated that he has no problem with the use or density. However, he is disappointed how it reacts to the street and the fact that there is a giant concrete wall. He has no faith that anything is going to grow on the proposed green screen system. He understands the landscaping in front of it but he can think of a lot of examples in town where the green screen didn't work and he can't think of any that did outside of vortex live wall systems, which is just irrigated planter boxes. That is not what is being proposed. Mr. Swem is concerned what that will be like to walk past in general. He doesn't know that it needs to change their decision on the project but that is a concern. He is not concerned about the size or scale of the building in general.

Ms. Turkelson recognized that Mr. Swem's concern was similar to the concern she expressed. Depending on how others feel she suggested potentially reevaluating the landscaping and not rely on the wall system.

Mr. Swem agreed that would likely be more appropriate. However, when would the landscaping be the significant portion of that experience. Will it take years to develop because very small plantings are installed? His main concern is that they are considering a significant parking reduction, which he is comfortable with, but when talking about that it means that people are walking in front of this building all the time. Therefore, he feels it should be appropriate space for people to walk and it needs to be comfortable.

Ms. Turkelson advised that as a PRD the Planning Commission has the flexibility to impose conditions and expectations on the project that they might not otherwise have under a traditional site plan review. Her recollection from the Ordinance is that plants be 24 inches at the time of planting and there is a time period of how long the landscaping is monitored by the City, which she believes to be a year from the time the site is complete and stable. If there is a need to ask for more mature landscaping to be planted initially, that is something the Planning Commission has the ability to do because it is directly related to the pedestrian experience and material to their decision as to whether this is an appropriate scale and design.

Ms. Shannon related that she often walks along a first level parking structure that has a screening with landscaping at grade. She doesn't find the structure to be that distracting compared to others she has walked by that are just concrete. She doesn't feel it is inappropriate to have ground floor parking and some kind of screening. She feels all of the landscaping and green space make up for that.

Mr. Van Strien shared the concern related to the screen wall. It would be better, if possible, to open the parking up slightly. He wasn't sure if it would be structurally possible but some parking decks are open air to the exterior with some metal screening or something to prevent people from passing through the opening. It provides some transparency, even if it is into a parking lot, and feels a bit more comfortable. He provided an example of a parking ramp in downtown Grand Haven and it doesn't feel just like a concrete wall; it feels more scaled.

Ms. Turkelson suggested Mr. Lewis speak to that. She recalled other locations with openings into the parking deck. There are ways to have openings into the deck. It would break up the massing of the wall and then landscaping can be used to supplement.

Mr. Lewis indicated that it is physically possible but it makes it more difficult to condition the garage. With the majority of it being underground they can keep it at temperature a lot easier than being open. He pointed out that they are doing arborvitae that will grow tall as well as the wall screening. He suggested it is double landscaping along that side just in case. If the openings are something the Planning Commission wants to see it is something that is physically possible although not necessarily their preference. They did discuss the pros and cons of both approaches.

Mr. Rozeboom asked if that consideration included window openings.

Mr. Lewis replied more of a screened opening. He suggested it could be glass even though they didn't discuss that version of it.

Mr. Rozeboom appreciates the attention to this detail. They recognize Sun Title's excellent track record in property management and development but they also have to plan for future owners. He welcomed additional thoughts on the pedestrian experience as well as the appropriateness of the density in this location.

Mr. Van Strien expressed that he is not at all concerned with the density.

Ms. Bersche agreed.

Ms. Joseph reiterated that Leonard is a main street with good access to transit. She feels this level of density is completely appropriate.

There was additional discussion related to the pedestrian experience. Mr. Swem suggested the applicant work with staff. He feels they share similar concerns and that coordination with staff makes sense.

Ms. Turkelson wished to clarify that a majority of Commissioners share the concern of mitigating measures such as architectural treatment to break up the façade, whether openings or

some other means of breaking up the foundation wall, and to look at landscaping options which would include more mature landscaping at the time of installation.

The Planning Commission was in agreement.

Mr. Rozeboom indicated that he appreciated the question Ms. Turkelson raised about stepping the building back. He did find the applicants explanation compelling. He asked what others thought.

Others agreed with Mr. Rozeboom.

Ms. Shannon stated that there is a balance with cost, density, affordability, and parking underground. This is a significant amount of new housing that will be affordable and meet a demand. When considering the entire package, it seems to hit many of the points they discuss when considering housing.

Mr. Williams wished to clarify that they talked a bit about the affordable housing piece. However, this application has no affordable housing.

Ms. Turkelson clarified that they have committed to the neighborhood that they would include some affordable units within the development. It is not within the Planning Commission's purview to require that. If the economic development incentive tools move forward, those would likely be the tool where the City has more ability to require that. Mr. Williams is correct that the Planning Commission's decision does not include the inclusion of affordable units.

Mr. Williams understood. It shouldn't be stated that this is affordable housing when there is no requirement that this be affordable housing. The application doesn't include that. He expressed caution on using the term affordable housing when this could very well be penthouse suites. That is obviously not the intent but he didn't want a false impression that this is going to be affordable housing when it is not at this point.

Ms. Turkelson agreed. The term affordable is very loosely defined depending on who you ask. In most instances they would look to how Community Development defines affordable housing, which is an area median income adjusted for family size. The proposed are more affordable because they are micro-units at a market rate but that isn't how the City would define affordable housing.

Ms. Joseph recalled that they were asked to consider establishing minimums for green space and tree canopy. One of the draft conditions says at least 25% green space and 26% tree canopy. She was curious how others felt about that.

All agreed with the recommendations included in the draft motion.

Mr. Van Strien acknowledged that they received a letter of opposition that mentioned little faith in anyone actually reading the letter and considering their comments. Commissioners have read it and considered it. Mr. Van Strien feels some of the comments made, especially in light of

some of the recent discussions on affordable housing and housing availability in general, are a bit misguided.

Ms. Joseph MOVED, NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Planning Commission recommends approval of the request of CD Holdings (Lawrence Duthler) and Pinnacle Construction Group, Inc. (James Lewis) to rezone 385 Leonard Street NE from NOS (Neighborhood Office Services) to PRD (Planned Redevelopment District) to facilitate the construction of a (+/-)186-unit, five-story apartment building with a commercial component and vehicular and bicycle parking reductions for the following reasons:

- 1. The proposed use will meet the Site Plan Review Standards of Section 5.12.08.E. because all elements of the site design are harmoniously and efficiently organized in relation to topography, the size and type of lot, character of the neighborhood, and adjoining property and natural features and site topography are incorporated into the proposed site design to the maximum extent practicable.**
- 2. The proposed use, density of development, and design of the proposed PRD are consistent with the Master Plan and the purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance because the proposed development will increase the number and variety of housing units in the city; locate new higher density residential development to capitalize on transit and improve land use transitions; direct development and investment toward infill and reuse of previously developed sites; and allow reductions in required off-street parking in areas that are within easy walking distance of transit routes.**
- 3. The proposed PRD will ensure efficient development on the property and will result in a logical and orderly development pattern in the neighborhood because the building has been sited on the property to mitigate impact to the residences directly across Carrier, while contributing to the urban street wall along Lafayette and Leonard.**
- 4. The proposed development will be compatible, harmonious, and appropriate with the existing or planned character and uses of the neighborhood, adjacent properties, and the natural environment because the proposed building design and high-quality materials meet the characteristics important in Planned Redevelopment Districts and the project maintains the neighborhood's unique character, enhancing its walkable scale and reinforces its sense of place.**
- 5. Potentially adverse effects arising from the proposed development on the neighborhood and adjacent properties will be minimized through an appropriately screened parking lot, including berms and landscaping, and attractive architecture and appropriate building orientation and entrances.**
- 6. The proposed development will not be detrimental, hazardous, or disturbing to existing or future adjacent uses or to the public welfare by reason of excessive traffic, noise, or visual clutter because vehicle access to the parking level is located on Lafayette, which will mitigate impacts to nearby residences and safety impacts to the intersection of Lafayette and Leonard; the trip generation analysis indicates that the development will have minimal impact on existing traffic operations and along adjacent roadways; excessive noise is not anticipated from this residential use; and signage will be limited.**
- 7. Connections for pedestrians and vehicles are provided to and within the site.**
- 8. The proposed development will retain as many natural features of the landscape as practicable because the proposed development will respect the grades on and near the site and adequate greenspace and stormwater detention will be provided.**

9. Adequate public or private infrastructure and services already exist or will be provided at no additional public cost, and will safeguard the health, safety, and general welfare of the public because the subject property is located in close proximity to public transit and major streets and is currently served with public utilities and the applicant will be responsible for the construction of any infrastructure improvements necessary to support the development.
10. The proposed development will not be detrimental to the financial stability and economic welfare of the City because the proposed development will help mitigate the existing housing shortage, and may encourage future development in the area and the scale and design of the proposed development does not place an excessive burden on services currently furnished or may be required by the City.
11. Wherever practicable, the proposed development will provide amenities, including but not limited to, park and recreational facilities, urban open space, and non-vehicular connections that serve a public purpose because the development will maintain significant greenspace for the visual relief of nearby residents.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the following conditions of approval shall apply to this project:

1. Standard Condition Set A. Approvals:

- i. That the application and plans submitted by the applicant and signed, dated, and stamped by the Planning Director, shall constitute the approved plans, except if plan elements do not meet ordinance requirements and/or as amended in this resolution.
 - ii. That the use shall operate according to the application and per testimony as recorded in the Planning Commission minutes.
 - ~~iii. That this approval does not include any proposed signs, and any future signs shall be subject to the requirements of Article 15 of the ordinance and permits received prior to installation.~~
 - iv. That a Land Use Development Services (LUDS) permit, building permit, and all other required permits be obtained from the City of Grand Rapids prior to construction, demolition, or operation.
 - ~~v. That any expansion of the approved Special Land Use requires an additional Special Land Use review and approval by the Planning Commission.~~
 - vi. That the proposed use will comply with all other applicable City ordinances and policies and all State laws.
 - ~~vii. That this approval shall take effect 16 calendar days after the date of the Planning Commission's decision.~~
2. That the new westerly building shall be governed by the rules and requirements for the TN-TBA Zone District for the purposes of signs and uses in the ground floor commercial space, except that office and residential are permitted uses.
 3. That the existing Sun Title office building shall be governed by the rules and requirements for the NOS Zone District for the purposes of signs and uses.
 4. That the site shall maintain at least 25% greenspace and 26% tree canopy.
 5. That this approval shall take effect as required by the City Commission approval in accordance with Section 5.12.12.G. of the Zoning Ordinance.

6. That the building elevations be modified to provide openings and/or architectural variation within the foundation wall screening the below grade parking deck and be subject to review and approval by the Planning Director.
7. That the landscape plan be modified to eliminate the proposed green screen and/or supplemented with additional plantings. Further, the proposed landscaping adjacent to the building be modified to ensure mature vegetation at the time of planting.

SUPPORTED by Ms. Bersche.

Ms. Turkelson clarified the 7th condition. The applicant may eliminate the green screen. If they choose to keep it they must supplement the landscape plan with additional plantings in that area. The condition gives them the flexibility to keep or eliminate the green screen.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED TO CITY COMMISSION [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Laurel Joseph, Vice Chairperson
SECONDER:	Kristine Bersche, Board Member
YEAS:	Rozeboom, Van Strien, Bersche, Swem, Joseph, Shannon, Williams
ABSENT:	Aaron Jonker

Ms. Shannon left the meeting. The Commission took a brief recess.

- C. 1700 28th St., 2856, 2858, 2862 & 2900 Kalamazoo Ave SE - Gas Station Alcohol Sales, 24-hour Operation

Address: 1700 28th St., 2856, 2858, 2862 & 2900 Kalamazoo Ave SE
Applicant: Meijer, Inc. (Matt Levitt)
Requesting: Approval for a 24-hour vehicle fueling station and convenience store with the sale of beer and wine; demolition of the existing fueling station without redevelopment on that site; and a conceptual plan for future development.
Zoning: MCN-C Mid-Century Neighborhoods–Commercial
Requirements: Article 6 Mixed-Use Commercial Zone Districts
5.9.05. Alcohol Sales and Consumption
5.9.38. Vehicle Fuel Stations
5.12.08. Site Plan Review
5.12.09. Special Land Uses
Case Number: PC-SLU-2024-0023
Staff Assigned: Elizabeth Zeller ezeller@grcity.us
Type of Case: Special Land Use
Effective Date: May 25, 2024

Ms. Zeller related that this is a request from Meijer for a new development at the corner of Kalamazoo and 28th Street. Staff noticed for a public hearing today but the applicant has requested the matter be postponed to the 6/13/24 meeting to make some plan changes.