

CITY OF HUDSONVILLE
Planning Commission Minutes

November 20th, 2024

Approved December 18th, 2024

6365 Balsam Drive – LaCati Group LLC (Landings at Rush Creek) – Informal Discussion

Vice Chairperson Schmuker called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Altman, Bendert, Dotson, Kamp, Northrup, Schmuker, Staal, Van Der Laan

Absent: VanDenBerg

Staff Present: Steffens, Strikwerda

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Non-agenda items)

1. A motion was made by Altman, with support by Bendert, to approve the minutes of the October 16th 2024, Planning Commission Meeting.

Yeas 8, Nays 0, Absent 1 (VanDenBerg)

2. **6365 Balsam Drive – Landings at Rush Creek – Informal PUD Discussion**

Chad Cassidy of LaCati Group LLC and Chuck Hoyt of Nederveld presented the request.

The staff report was presented.

Chad Cassidy of LaCati has submitted a PUD application to develop 6.9 acres at 6365 Balsam Drive, behind the commercial building where Signatures Restaurant is located which has been vacant for about 25 years. At the last City Commission meeting, the rezoning was approved to change the property from NC to HDR-B. The proposed development has 90 single-family attached units with one-bedroom and two-stall attached garages.

The following discussion took place with Commissioners:

- Utility.
 - Drain commission been contacted about connection to the drain? It is still an open item, but the applicant assumes that the connection could happen.
 - How thoroughly did the engineer review the stormwater?
 - It looks like the stormwater behind the S and E buildings would not be taken care of on site. With the grading it seems like this would be pushing the water into the backyards of Balsam Meadows and the Signatures Property. Will discuss if there needs to be more a swale behind those buildings. Applicant says on the east the topography is trying to grade to pick up to the drain on the north.

- Pavement removal limits on Balsam Drive.
 - In line with industry standards to do full lane widths and saw cuts perpendicular to the flow of traffic. For the best interest in the road, there should be one big patch that is curb to curb rather than two small patches. It eliminates saw cuts in the middle of lanes that creates potholes later.
- Show utility easements on the next set of plans.
- Landscaping.
 - Grading needs to be done on the N and S sides of the property, so retaining the existing landscaping is more challenging. Additional landscaping was added in those areas to help combat the loss of the existing. According to the applicant the trees are bare up to 40' so keeping that isn't very helpful as buffer. Where the dog park was, they are looking to retain some existing evergreens.
 - West side.
 - Notated that they are retaining existing vegetation there, but the grading goes halfway into that area, so it might end up removed because of the excavating crew, it is possible that half of it would be removed. The applicant can give instructions to their excavation company to retain as much as possible.
 - There is underbrush in this area as well that has remained and adds to the existing vegetation buffer.
 - It would help to save money to retain the existing buffering to put money into other elements on the site.
 - S side.
 - The first-floor elevation of the proposed building sits up 6' above the grade, the assumption is that the Balsam Meadows development sits around 3' above grade.
 - The applicant has stated that the existing vegetation is sparse, with the trees being bare 40' up, which is why they are installing all new.
 - This has been beefed up beyond the requirements of the ordinance with evergreens.
 - The Commission would still like to see some existing retained while not impacting Balsam Meadows too much.
 - Overall site landscaping.
 - The site overall has buildings that are less than architecturally pleasing so it is a concern that the landscaping isn't adequate to soften that look.
 - Landscaping in front of the doors.
 - Is that going to be different throughout the project? No, the shrubs are all the same type, grass, then the trees would have some variation.
- Setbacks.
 - The setback of balsam meadows was approximately 50' this project is half that, which is why the landscape buffer is so important.
- Architectural/Unit Types.
 - There are instances where grades are different, but the architectural of the site isn't as interesting as it could be, because everything is one type.

- There is a lack of ADA accessibility in the project and that was a condition on the previous statement of findings that the commission asked for, even though building code does not require it, the Commission saw it as a possible public benefit.
- Is there a way to combine the building in the center of the project that back up to one another to create a better connection in the project and help with setbacks? The applicant says that there has been a lot of thought into this site and the existing layout.
- The city has many collections and types of architectural style. Is there merit in each community to being a diverse collection of unit types, or is there a merit to with a lack of one bedrooms to have this be all that type? When you have diverse housing types, you have diverse life phases of residents. There is preference to having multiple types of units as well as architectural types.
- Having some difference in architectural interest between buildings, specifically the 6 unit buildings tend to get more monotonous.
- The fronts of the buildings do have interest with the slight inset on the doorways. But that is lacking on the back.
- Do not forget to pay attention to the sides of the buildings.
- Is there a way to have insets on the rear of the building? The applicant says no, the costs to build this have been factored in.
- An accent above the mechanical rooms? Awning?
- The 6 unit townhome buildings get long and all have the same feel.
- Could colors be changed up? Changed up more than shades of grey?
- Even having a roof over the mechanical room door on the rear could add interest on the rear elevations.
- Site Elements.
 - The mailboxes being next to the parallel parking spaces. That could be a hinderance to those getting mail. If that is striped off that would be helpful.
- Pedestrian Crossing.
 - Adding crossing to the North of the project to Winter Street so that there could be connection to Sunrise Park. A crossing at the creek to the south is also being considered by the city to connect Elmwood Lake Trail to Sunrise Park.
- Open Space.
 - Could sidewalk run through the open space within the project if the parallel spaces are removed and the buildings are shifted North to expand the space? Move the visitor parking to the south of the pond. Then a path could connect from the sidewalk piece coming from Balsam Drive, through the open space, and out the other side to connect to the fire access road. Shift the western buildings to the north to give the open space to the east a clear visual of the pond and delete two of the six units via the possible tax incentives to create a soft corner. Then an amenity like a gazebo being there looking over the pond makes it feel more like a park.
- Deviations.
 - This design still feels cramped because of all the deviations on the project. The commission is still hoping for more open space and a non-motorized option through the project.
 - Is there a way to move buildings around, possibly removing the lake to make this project feel less tight? The applicant says they need the sand from the lake to help

- them to grade the site, they could bring in sand, but it would be a cost. If they rearranged the project, it would be higher density.
- The benefit for the applicant is strong, but we haven't gotten into the benefits to the community. If there is a mix of units that could still work for the developer but provide more open space on the site then is that still a win? We need to still think about the rest of the community.
 - Struggling with the lack of benefit to this project. Could there be a pocket park, something to add to the site?
 - Refer to Open Space section for more comment.
 - Planning on making each of the units to have EV charging in each unit. Could that be seen as a benefit?
 - Higher Density Plan Option.
 - If a mix of units is what the commission wants, in order to do that the applicant has shown a plan that has 16 buildings around the property line edges and interior parking lots.
 - Applicant has been to Georgetown, Jamestown and Hudsonville rental projects. Specifically, townhome style is all the same product with 2 and three bedrooms in the same footprint. With a higher price point than what the developer is proposing.
 - Master Plan.
 - For employers in the area, are there state incentives, anything for their workers who want to live in this community? We need diverse housing styles and accessibility within those. We do have to give weight to the fact that this is vacant and has been for a long time.
 - Tax Incentives.
 - The applicant is banking on Brownfield TIF but needs to sit down with the city to talk about more funding.
 - If there is additional funding, could some of the units be deleted to help with the open space? That is something that could be looked into.
 - Financially it is better to put 200 units on the site, no question. But the applicant is looking to do a quality product and needs financial incentives to make this product work.
 - If buildings were removed based on tax incentives, making that option viable. Make up for lost buildings to fit a rear to side facing buildings to have a better layout of the plan for more open space and non-motorized.
 - Parking.
 - Is there a thought to do shared parking for visitors with signatures during their off hours? The applicant is willing to have that discussion with the business owner.
 - Could we lose the visitor parking on the site plan if we have shared parking with signatures? That could be a location for a pocket park.
 - Narrowing the roads would require that no one could park on the roads. Relying on signatures and an agreement with them is not enough as people would end up parking on the sides of the streets.

A consent vote was made for the statement of findings and recommendations to be provided to the Planning Commission and the applicant.

Yay 8, Nay 0, Absent 1 (VanDenBerg)

A consent vote was made to put the Landings at Rush Creek PUD on the December 18th, 2024 Agenda to hold their public hearing.

Yay 8, Nay 0, Absent 1 (VanDenBerg)

3. Discussion

- Staff Appreciation
- December PC Meeting
- Hudsonville Flats
- Parks and Recreation Plan
- Prospect Flats
- Barry/Allen Realignment

4. Adjournment

A motion was made by Kamp, with support by Bendert, to adjourn at 9:02 pm.

Yeas 8, Nays 0, Absent 1 (VanDenBerg)

Respectfully Submitted,
Sarah Steffens
Deputy Planning & Zoning Director