



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Planning Division

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TO: Plan Commission

FROM: Timothy M. Parks, Planner

DATE: May 18, 2015

SUBJECT: ID [38021](#) – Consideration of an alteration to an approved PD(SIP) (Planned Development-Specific Implementation Plan) to extend the approval of a surface parking lot at 115 N. Mills Street; 8th Ald. Dist. on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus.

On July 19, 2011, the Common Council conditionally approved an application by the University of Wisconsin–Madison to rezone 117 N. Charter Street and 115 N. Mills Street from PUD-SIP to Amended PUD-GDP-SIP [1966 Zoning Code] to modify the plans for the renovation and expansion of the University’s Charter Street Heating Plant. The amended Planned [Unit] Development superseded plans approved by the Common Council in 2010 to allow the expansion and renovation of the Charter Street Heating Plant as part of its conversion from a coal-fired plant to a facility that burned a combination of biomass and natural gas. The 2010 approvals included the demolition of a one-story physical plant shop building at 115 N. Mills Street to allow the construction of a biomass fuel handling and storage facility to serve the converted heating plant. The amended plans from 2011 called for a natural gas-fired power plant to be constructed west of N. Mills Street and for a parking lot to be constructed east of N. Mills Street on the site of a previously approved biomass storage and handling facility.

The amendment to the PD zoning of the property was the result of a decision by the State of Wisconsin to eliminate plans to use biomass fuel at the plant in favor of burning natural gas exclusively for the foreseeable future. As a result, plans for a biomass handling and storage facility planned on the 1.6-acre parcel located on the east side of N. Mills Street were shelved indefinitely. The 2011 SIP amendment called for the 1.6-acre parcel at 115 N. Mills to instead be used as a surface parking lot for 106 automobiles and 18 mopeds, with temporary parking for buses visiting the campus along the northerly edge of the lot. Despite the use of the site for parking for the foreseeable future, the General Development Plan for the heating plant continues to identify the 1.6-acre site for future use as a biomass storage and handling facility should that fuel source be reintroduced into the program for the plant by the State.

As part of the 2011 PD alteration to use 115 N. Mills Street as a parking lot, the Plan Commission recommended and the Common Council approved the Specific Implementation Plan with conditions requiring that the next University master plan show the parking lot at 115 N. Mills Street as a temporary use, with the future long-term use of that site to be as a biomass storage and handling facility or academic building, and that the approval of the interim parking lot at 115 N. Mills Street be valid for a period of two years following construction, with use of the parking lot beyond the two-year period to require re-approval by the Plan Commission. The full 2011 approval letter is attached for reference.

On April 6, 2015, the University submitted a request to the Plan Commission to grant an extension to allow the parking lot to remain beyond the two-year initial approval period, which is expiring. No changes to the temporary lot are proposed. The letter of intent submitted with the extension request notes that the 2005 Campus Master Plan for the UW campus called for a building to be constructed on the subject site. In addition, the University is currently beginning its 10-year master plan update, and anticipates that the forthcoming plan will also call for a building to eventually be constructed at 115 N. Mills Street to replace the parking lot. The University anticipates approval of the master plan update in late 2016.

In closing, the Planning Division recommends that the Plan Commission approve an alteration to the PD(SIP) for the Charter Street Heating Plant to allow the parking lot at 115 N. Mills Street to remain beyond the previously approved two-year period. Staff recommends that any extension granted be for at least 5 years. While staff would prefer that the site be developed with an academic building or fuel handling facility for the heating plant, it feels that the parking facility is an acceptable interim use until the University is prepared to proceed with a more intensive use of the site.

City agencies reviewed the proposed alteration and submitted comments with no conditions of approval beyond those already in place for the parking lot per the attached July 21, 2011 approval letter. Those conditions should continue except for the time limitation pending the outcome of the Plan Commission discussion.

cc: Gary A. Brown, Director, Campus Planning & Landscape Architecture, University of Wisconsin–Madison (by e-mail only)