

Davidson Commons East Hotel: Frequently Asked Questions

7/25/17

These questions include responses to questions asked by citizens at the Public Input Session on October 3, 2016 as well as general information found in the Joint Work Session Staff Analysis located on the [project's webpage](#). Abbreviations are used as follows: Davidson Commons East (DCE); Davidson Planning Ordinance (DPO); Public Input Session (PIS).

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. What is the proposal?

Response: Nish Patel of Beacon IMG, Inc. (i.e. the developer) proposes to construct a four-story hotel on 2.1 acres at 131 Davidson Gateway Dr., which is located at the corner of Griffith St. and Davidson Gateway Dr. (immediately east of the Community School of Davidson's elementary school campus). The proposal includes four stories of hotel room, including a ground-floor bistro; on-street parking along Griffith Street; a retail component on the site's northwest corner; and, a plaza extending along Griffith Street. The parcel is located within a Conditional Planning Area, which means that the Planning Board must provide a recommendation and the Board of Commissioners must hold a public hearing prior to providing a decision regarding the project.

II. HISTORY

2. What is the history of this site? Have development proposals been approved before?

Response: This site has been subject to many plans, with the initial plan being approved in 2006 as part of the larger Davidson Commons Master Plan. This plan has been amended multiple times and has included a range of proposed uses from residential townhomes to office/retail/residential condominiums. For a detailed history of this site and its plans, please see the [project webpage](#) and review the Staff Analysis produced for the 7/31/17 Joint Work Session; specifically, Section 2. Planning Staff Review - Background.

3. What did the Circles @ 30 Small Area Plan have to say about this site?

Response: This plan was completed in 2013. Although not adopted, the plan contains several points that speak directly to the subject site. Recommendations relevant to the proposed project include: Consideration of two- to four-story development along Griffith Street (Pg. 9); required retail frontage on Griffith Street (10); smaller-scale development along Davidson Gateway Drive (i.e. two to three stories, 16); and, consideration of angled parking on Davidson Gateway Drive (17).

III. PROCESS/OVERVIEW

4. When did the latest proposal for this site come forward?

Response: The applicant met with town staff at various times during 2016 to discuss the development of the 2.1 acre tract of land as a commercial hotel. During those conversations, staff and the applicant discussed the details of the development process. The property's current designation as a Conditional Planning Area and the site/building's proposed features, some of which do not fully comply with the planning ordinance, led the applicant to request a Conditional

Master Plan amendment (DPO 14.5). A fuller description of the process is included in the Joint Work Session Staff Analysis.

5. What is a Conditional Master Plan?

Response: This is a development proposal in which the proposed standards for a development do not fully match the allowed standards listed in the Davidson Planning Ordinance. In cases such as this, the standards for a development are negotiated between the developer and the town. This process requires a developer to hold a Public Input Session, receive a Planning Board recommendation, and receive approval from the Board of Commissioners after a public hearing has been conducted.

6. What is a Public Input Session and when did this occur?

Response: The purpose of a Public Input Session (PIS) is to introduce a development proposal to the public and allow for public input. It typically includes general ideas about where a building is located, what its basic form could look like, and what the site layout could be. A PIS for this project was held on October 3, 2016 and was attended by more than 75 people. A copy of the PIS Report summarizing the comments received can be found on the [project webpage](#). Additional opportunities for public input are listed on the project webpage's Timeline tab.

7. Is the project required to do a Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA)?

Response: Yes: The developer paid for an independent consultant selected and overseen by the town to complete a TIA for this project. The TIA was undertaken in the winter of 2016-2017, reviewed by staff, and its results are available on the [project webpage](#). To summarize, the analysis found that the proposed hotel would generate less vehicular traffic than the two previously-approved, three-story mixed-use buildings. The report also made several targeted recommendations for vehicular and pedestrian improvements in the project vicinity.

IV. DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

8. What is currently allowed to be built on site?

Response: The existing, approved plan permitted the development of two, three-story mixed-use buildings – one fronting Davidson Gateway Dr. and one fronting Griffith Street. This plan allowed commercial, office, retail, and residential uses to be located in each building. These uses are consistent with the overall pattern of uses in the Circles @ 30 area.

9. What is proposed to be built on-site?

Response: The proposal includes a four-story hotel of approximately 74,500 square feet (+/- 115 rooms), including an indoor pool and bistro. The ground floor is envisioned to include the bistro food service as well as a retail component at the site's northwest corner. Additionally, the proposal includes a plaza and a formalized streetscape with on-street parking along Griffith St., on-street parking along Davidson Gateway Dr., and a surface parking lot behind the building.

10. What are the proposed conditions?

Response: The [Staff Analysis](#) undertaken for the Joint Work Session includes a list of the applicant's proposed conditions. They relate mainly to the requested height, building types, uses, parking, and impervious coverage requirements that are listed therein. Where the conditions are silent or do not address a standard, the Davidson Planning Ordinance standards would control. Additionally, staff has included a list of potential improvements related to the project; these could

become conditions depending on the Planning Board recommendation, Board of Commissioners decision, and developer's agreement to address the identified improvements.

11. How does the height compare with nearby building heights?

Response: The proposed hotel requests a height of four stories. When surveying other buildings in the immediate and broader vicinity, the proposed height is consistent with existing buildings. For comparison, approximate height values for nearby buildings are: One Harbor Place (Sabi Restaurant) is three stories, or 51' to parapet; Two Harbor Place (Dunkin' Donuts) is three stories, or 57' to parapet; The Linden is four stories, or 48' to parapet; Woodies Automotive is two stories, or 36' to parapet; and, Homewood Suites is five stories, or 59'. Notably, these buildings are adjacent to other commercial or high-density residential areas. Where the buildings approach the higher-density residential blocks there is a transition, or "step-down," in height that occurs across a right-of-way. This transition typically spans less than two stories in height differential between the commercial building and adjacent residential property.

12. How does the proposed use compare with historic and current uses allowed in the vicinity?

Response: The existing, approved plan permitted the development of two, three-story mixed-use buildings – one fronting Davidson Gateway Drive and one fronting Griffith Street. This plan allowed commercial, office, retail, and residential uses to be located in each building. At the time the plan was approved the DPO considered hotels to be a type of commercial use. Collectively, these uses are consistent with the overall pattern of uses in the Circles @ 30 area.

For the current proposal, the specific uses requested are: Hotel/Inn; Commercial Services; Restaurant; and, Retail, Primary & Secondary. Examples of each of these uses exist both near and in the broader vicinity of the subject site. The proposed hotel use, including a bistro and retail component, would be consistent with the existing and future land uses envisioned for the Circles @ 30 area.

13. How much parking is required for this project?

Response: The plan proposes to utilize a mix of parking formats including off-street surface parking (69), on-street parking (22), and a shared parking arrangement with the adjacent Woodies Automotive building (14), for a total of 113 spaces. For commercial properties, DPO Table 8-1 lists a minimum parking requirement of two spaces per 1,000 SF of commercial floor area. At 74,500 SF in total building area, this results in a required parking minimum of 149 spaces (which translates to 1.3 spaces per room). Importantly, this table considers only gross commercial floor area and does not distinguish between different uses that may generate different trip patterns. In this case, assigning one parking space to each hotel room may not accurately reflect actual parking demand.

The current proposal represents a 36-space difference in the required (149) and proposed parking (113). The amount of proposed parking, however, is consistent with nearby jurisdictions (1.0 spaces per room). At 113 spaces, the proposed parking ratio is 0.98 spaces per room; if the developer's experience operating Homewood Suites is an accurate indicator (that hotel's parking is 84% full on sold out nights), then the proposed hotel could anticipate needing 97 parking spaces. The proposed 113 spaces represent 98% of the hotel's rooms.

For further discussion of the parking, please see the Joint Work Session Staff Analysis on the [project webpage](#). Additionally, note that any proposed reduction will be subject to technical review by staff and approval by the Board of Commissioners.

14. Are there any environmental constraints that impact this site?

Response: The site is located in the Lake Norman Watershed Critical Area. This means that it is limited in the total amount of impervious coverage it can provide on-site (i.e. hardscape surfaces). Because all four parcels (A-D) east of Davidson Gateway Dr. were originally part of one plan, the total allowed amount for Lots 4A-D is 120,521 SF. Over the years, the various plans and plan amendments associated with this site have allocated the allowed impervious coverage in different ways. For example, in 2014 Woodies Automotive was constructed on Lot 4C and that site's impervious coverage was subtracted from 120,521, leaving Lots 4A, B, and D to split the remaining value. The chart included as part of the proposed project conditions specifies these values (see [Staff Analysis](#)). Lots 4AB are allocated 52,360 SF, collectively, and the proposed plan illustrates 52,336 SF of impervious coverage, which meets the requirement.

15. How does the proposed plan impact the tree canopy along Griffith Street?

Response: Currently the site features stands of mature trees along Griffith Street. Along with trees on the north side of the street, these create a canopy that frames the street. The stands are less formalized than the trees one block west along Griffith that line the street for the length of the CSD campus. The 2007 Conditional Master Plan revision included a 0.21-acre public open space along Griffith St. with the intent of preserving the existing tree stands. However, the 2010 amendment removed this provision. Retaining the tree stands means that the building must be set back further from the roadway, which potentially results in the following tradeoffs:

1. A building setback that is inconsistent with the DPO's setback standards for the Lakeshore Planning Area as well as new construction that has occurred throughout the Circles @ 30 area. However, pedestrian features such as plazas, walkways, and sidewalk cafes may be included as part of the front setback area.
2. A less viable commercial retail location at the corner of Davidson Gateway Dr. and Griffith Street.
3. A less formalized streetscape than occurs on adjacent properties and that is required throughout new development in the Circles @ 30 area.
4. Limitations on the building and site design, including the amount of parking able to be provided on-site.

These tradeoffs were carefully considered throughout the site design process, including with regards to feedback about amenities received at the 10/3/17 PIS; the tradeoffs noted above; and, town-adopted plans and goals (listed the Staff Analysis' Plans & Policies section). The revised plan reflects a building location consistent with town requirements and aims for targeted growth nodes, which means replacement of the existing Griffith St. canopy with a plaza, formalized streetscape, and retail component. To address the loss of trees along Griffith St., the formalized streetscape contains mature tree plantings consistent with other development and, to the site's south/southeast, the plan proposes replantings as described in the Staff Analysis' Adjacent Uses section.

16. Are there any open space requirements for this site?

Response: As a Conditional Master Plan, the open space requirements can be set through negotiation as part of the master plan process. For comparison, the comparable Lakeshore Planning Area requires a minimum of five percent of the development to be dedicated open space. For this site, that equates to roughly 4,500 SF of open space. Per DPO 7.2.2, development within 0.25 miles of an existing public park may receive a reduction not to exceed 25% towards the required open space area. This site's

proximity to Roosevelt Wilson Park enables a reduction of up to 1,125 SF, leaving 3,375 SF of required open space. At 7,311 feet, the proposed plaza area along Griffith St. meets the criteria listed in DPO 7.4.

V. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

17. Is there any need for additional hotel capacity?

Response: Businesses throughout Davidson have expressed a need for additional hotel capacity in town. This includes large corporate clients and institutions but also testifies to the town's increasing draw as a destination for persons interested in visiting Davidson/Lake Norman as casual visitors or as guests of nearby residents. Moreover, the hotel industry is one of the few industries that requires a "market report" to be completed by project owners/operators prior to the flagship organization permitting the franchising of their brand at a specific hotel (i.e. Hyatt, Marriott, etc.). According to Beacon IMG, Inc., the developer/operator, the proposed project meets Hyatt Hotels Corporation's market requirements for opening a franchise in this location.

18. What type of fiscal impact will this project have on the town compared to the approved commercial buildings?

Response: When comparing the three-story mixed-use buildings to the proposed hotel, the net revenue generated by the hotel exceeds that of the mixed-use buildings. This is mainly due to the occupancy and prepared food taxes generated by the hotel. With the inclusion of a bistro and retail component within the hotel project as currently contemplated, the net revenues increase further while the costs to serve remain comparable to that of the mixed-use buildings.

19. Concerning costs to serve, will the proposed hotel generate lots of crime? Is it ok to have a hotel located next to a school?

Response: Based on available crime data and input from the Davidson Police Dept., the proposed use is not anticipated to generate significant service requirements or levels of crime. This is based on data from the existing Homewood Suites and Davidson Village Inn from 2012-2016. The level of service is derived from the number of *calls of service* generated by a use; a *call for service* is any call initiated by a citizen. Examples of 2012 calls for service at Homewood Suites include: Assisting a drunken guest back to their room (friends helped); damage to property (crime report taken); marijuana pipe found in a hotel room (police documented/destroyed); and, officers assisted a medic with a guest having a medical emergency.

Regarding the proposed hotel use's location adjacent to an elementary school: The Davidson Police Dept. does not anticipate this being an issue. Residents have expressed concern about issues such as kidnapping or pedophilia by guests of the hotel. In the police's experience, the vast majority of these crimes are perpetrated by persons known to the victim. The Davidson Police Dept. can answer any additional questions residents may have about these issues.