

Planning Board Summary and Recommendations

Sapphire Place Annexation, Rezoning, Subdivision, and Master Site Plan¹

Planning Board Recommendation:

On Tuesday, June 6, 2023, the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend approval of a variance request to allow three lots to be created that do not abut and have access to a public and private street.

The Board's motion to recommend conditional approval of the Sapphire Place Subdivision Preliminary Plat Application and Master Site Plan failed to pass, with a tie vote. Under the Planning Board's bylaws in the event of a tie vote, the item is forwarded to City Council with no recommendation.

Planning Board Motions:

Recommend City Council approve the variance request from Article 3, Section 3-030.1.C.3 of the City Subdivision Regulations, which requires each lot to abut and have access to a public or private street or road, to allow three lots to be provided access via an alley and require a public access easement containing a pedestrian path. ***Passed by a vote of 8-0.***

Recommend City Council approve the Sapphire Place Subdivision Preliminary Plat Application and Master Site Plan, subject to the recommended conditions of approval, based on the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the staff report. ***Failed to pass by a vote of 4-4.***

Planning Board's Recommended Conditions of Approval:

None, because the motion to approve the subdivision application failed to pass. The staff report includes 32 staff-recommended conditions of approval.

Planning Board Discussion:

Planning Board members expressed the following thoughts:

- Board members lamented the lack of mixture of uses planned in this subdivision. For example, Rick Hall stated the historic residence would be perfect for ground floor retail or office space, and noted the lack of mixed uses will still require people to drive to work and services. He encouraged a developer to try mixed use in the area.
- Joe Dehnert from IMEG noted there are 100 linear feet of commercial planned on Lot 10, but stated the developer's specialty is residential development, not mixed-use.
- Board members expressed uncertainty as to how this subdivision would blend in with others in the vicinity and meet the intent of the Sxwtpqyen Area Master Plan. Several board members stated having a context map of approved and proposed subdivisions would be beneficial, as would comparing the layout of the Sxwtpqyen Master Plan with what is actually being proposed by developers. Shane Morrissey said without that context, it feels like we are reviewing these projects as 'one-offs' as opposed to evaluating a cohesive plan, and said he feels like this project does not meet the spirit of the Master Plan.
- Board members asked how the historic residence would be restored, who would bear the costs (the developer), and what land uses might be developed there. They asked for a more solid plan for the historic home and that City Council review the three historic preservation related conditions of approval to determine whether the conditions are sufficient to meet the City's policies. Joe Dehnert from IMEG stressed that no alteration of the exterior of the historic structures may occur without an historic preservation permit, as per the conditions of approval.

¹ The planning board does not have a role in property annexation and zoning upon annexation. The planning board reviewed the preliminary subdivision plat application and master site plan.

- Shane Morrissey asked how many parking spaces are proposed. Joe Dehnert answered 518.
- Sean McCoy asked whether there could be a small farm that could complement the residential community.
- Board members recognized the need for rental housing. Tung Pham said that while this proposal may be imperfect, the additional housing outweighs the downside. Tung Pham said higher density in this location could help spur a greater mixture of uses, although the market does not seem to demand it right now.
- Board members also recognized this proposal complies with the review criteria and provides different residential building types and rental units.

See the Planning Board Minutes for further Planning Board discussion.