

COMMUNICATIONS

Sara Roediger officially welcomed Jennifer MacDonald to the Planning Commission as the Recording Secretary.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Brnabic opened Public Comment for items not on the agenda at 7:03 p.m. Seeing no one wishing to speak and no email communications received, she closed Public Comment.

NEW BUSINESS

2021-0347

Request for Site Plan Approval - City File No. 21-001 - Priya Living, a 172,780 s.f. two-story senior independent living development on 13 acres near the northeast corner of Adams and South Blvd., zoned R-4 One Family Residential with an FB-1 Flexible Business Overlay, Parcel Nos. 15-13-301-011 and 15-31-351-017, Priya Living, Applicant

Attachments: [Staff Report 8-17-21.pdf](#)
[PEA Response Letter 7-21-21.pdf](#)
[Review Comments.pdf](#)
[EIS received 7-22-21.pdf](#)
[Traffic Impact Study 12-8-21.pdf](#)
[Priya confirmation of age restriction.pdf](#)
[Architectural Plans.pdf](#)
[Site Plans Pt 1.pdf](#)
[Site Plans Pt 2.pdf](#)

Present for the applicant were Arun Paul, founder and CEO of Creative Living, 2601 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA, and Brian Devlin, Ramu Ramacha and JR Watkins with Perkins Eastman, The Rookery 209 South LaSalle Street Suite 400, Chicago, IL 60604.

Ms. Kapelanski summarized that the applicant is proposing to construct a structure that is less than 175,000 sq. ft. for a two-story senior living development on 10 acres of land, near the corner of Adams Rd. and South Blvd. The project requires site plan approval and approval of a tree removal permit. She advised that the current zoning of the site is R-4 One Family Residential with an FB-1 Flexible Business District overlay, and noted the applicant will be developing under the FB-1 overlay provisions which permit the development of multiple family residential housing. The site is also part of a noncontiguous historic district contains a historic stone house that fronts on Adams. The applicant appeared before the Historic Districts Commission at their August 12, 2021 meeting. At that meeting the HDC did grant the requested Certificate of Appropriateness. As permitted in the FB overlay the applicant is requesting several modifications as follows: to allow a greater front yard setback along Adams Rd., and also along south Blvd.; to allow parking in the front yard along South Blvd., and is asking for a determination that the proposed fiber cement siding can be used as a primary building material.

Ms. Kapelanski noted that the applicant is otherwise generally in compliance with ordinance requirements. A tree removal permit is required and has been recommended since the applicant has met the minimum preservation requirements. The access along Adams is intended for emergency access only and will be gated, and the only public access will be along South Blvd.

Mr. Paul noted he would like to introduce their organization, which is a senior living company with a unique strategy that is inspired by Indian culture and the needs of immigrants. Mr. Paul explained that he went through the process of searching for a senior living facility for his parents, and noticed that there is a real need for culturally inclusive facilities. The communities that they are constructing are very inclusive and appeal to a wide number of seniors that are looking for housing alternatives. Mr. Paul noted they became interested in Rochester Hills because it is a diverse community, and the site they have chosen is located across the street from the temple of cultural significance. Their company is in multiple other cities in the United States, but would be the first of its kind in Michigan. Mr. Paul shared conceptual pictures and explained that they were inspired by concepts in hospitality and not by traditional senior living facilities. They provide activities including game rooms, a Bollywood cinema, telehealth stations, libraries, and health and fitness options including a cardio fitness center, yoga studio, and outdoor games. He discussed their approach to landscaping, noting that the building is just one part of the story. They utilize biophilic design, which uses landscape to improve human wellness. They are very proud of their association with Perkins Eastman.

Mr. Devlin explained that they have utilized the back end of the property, with a ceremonial entrance and a meandering drive off of South Blvd. They will provide common area programs that will take place in a central square and provide opportunities for social interaction. They will provide amenities in the courtyards and every apartment would have a nice view. In designing the building it helps to imagine seeing the elevations in three dimensions. They tried to play with rooflines to break up the massing of the long building, and used a tonal color palette with some splashes and pops of color. With regard to the historic home on the property, they will be bringing it up to a better state by repairing windows and doors, and by supporting it with a park like setting. Mr. Devlin noted they will be cleaning up the landscaping around the home, planting new trees to buffer around it, and installing a granite pathway around it. These improvements will allow the public to appreciate the historic significance of the home.

Mr. Neubauer asked for the maximum number of people that could be accommodated with the 172 units to be provided, the number of such facilities they have constructed, whether all people are welcome, and how much diversity there would be with the residents.

Mr. Devlin explained that there will be a mix of one and two bedroom units, and there may end up being about half couples and half single people. Their residents are generally young seniors since it is independent living, and they have nine such facilities across the country. Mr. Paul noted that all cultures are welcome, and the diversity could be 50/50 or 80/20. He stated that their

residents are interested in having a cultural experience that is not available elsewhere.

Ms. Brnabic asked how many outdoor amenity areas such as benches and walkable areas would be added. She noted that it's nice to see an accurate vision on the plans and normally that would be included so give an accurate view of what it will look like. Mr. Devlin replied that they are still in the planning phases for their landscape design; however they will provide the proper amenities that will be needed by the residents, and their landscape architect is in attendance who can answer specific questions.

Ms. Brnabic asked for confirmation if the price range of \$2,000-\$3,400 listed in the Environmental Impact Statement is per month, and noted that the EIS should be updated to clarify that item. She asked if they plan to start construction immediately, and if they had a plan for phasing the construction.

Mr. Devlin noted unit price ranges listed are monthly, and they are hoping to commence construction this fall or early next year, and it should last 14-18 months. They will build in just one phase.

Ms. Brnabic asked for clarification of the size of the individual balconies pictured on all of the elevations, and the railing height.

Mr. Devlin introduced his colleague Ramu Ramacha who could provide details.

Mr. Ramacha said the balconies will generally be 5 ft. by 6 ft., or possibly 5 ft. by 8 ft., and the railing heights would be 42 in.

Ms. Brnabic noted there are no accent materials shown on the elevations, and noted that some accents are needed, especially for the front façade, such as stone or brick. She asked for staff clarification if they are required to have 40% accent materials, and now there are none.

Mr. Devlin explained that the technical drawings come across as flat but there are some textural features, and there is more contrast that what is depicted such as pops of color. He noted that if there are other details that the commission desires such as lap siding we are certainly willing to look at and implement those.

Ms. Kapelanski stated that in the FB Flexible Business zone district, up to 40% is allowed for accent materials but that's not a requirement. The building materials in the FB district are a modifiable standard, and the commission can decide to accept the materials as presented. Ms. Kapelanski noted that the one specific question to the commission is regarding building materials is whether the fiber cement siding could be considered a primary material in order to meet the 60% requirement.

Mr. Weaver asked for clarification regarding the applicant's plans for the historic house, and if they have any programs planned for it. He noted that he would hate to see it left and not used and forgotten, and suggested it could be used for special events.

Mr. Paul stated that they spent a lot of time thinking about this question and about what would compel someone to want to use the older space when they are building a state of the art facility next door. They feel strongly that the story behind the house has paved the way for the structure they will be building behind it. They would like to honor the house through signage and research, and they are commissioning additional research into the house's history. The landscaping they will be installing will honor the house's story. Mr. Paul noted it would be better at this time to leave the house intact, and as the community develops see if there is a better use.

Mr. Weaver noted that with regard to the new building, architecturally he likes the rooflines and the accent colors, however he does agree with Ms. Brnabic that they could add texture accents such as stone or brick. He stated that it is obvious how large the building is and he does struggle with that a bit, however it is so far setback from the road it will be acceptable. Mr. Weaver asked how the rain gardens will operate, whether there will be any supplemental runoff collected or if the rain gardens are just for show. He noted that just perennials installed around the building may work in some other states but is not appropriate for Michigan. He stated that he would like more information as they continue to develop the plans regarding the courtyards and foundation plantings.

Mr. Watkins explained that they have catchbasins sending water to bioswales. Stormwater for the area that is being developed is being detained onsite, near the northeast corner of the site.

Mr. Berman noted the design is for stormwater to collect in the catch basins and the rain gardens will also work as infiltration for the system, and they will use native plantings and seed mixes. He noted these designs are a work in progress and the patio may need to shift.

Mr. Weaver noted he appreciates their plans to use landscape to improve the residents' quality of life. He asked if they plan on residents having their own vehicles or if the parking spaces would be mostly used for guests. He suggested they utilize evergreens on each side of the property so that headlights don't shine through to adjacent residential areas, and noted this is a fun and interesting project.

Mr. Paul said that they will have a shuttle for residents and the parking demand will be much lower than in a conventional community.

Mr. Hooper noted that the architecture looks plain and not very attractive, especially on the south elevation. Upgrades are needed including masonry, sill treatments, natural stone or limestone, and the blank wall of flush windows needs to be broken up. He remarked that as the different elevations are bumped out they need to look different.

Mr. Devlin noted that with the subtle palette they have chosen the elevations are difficult to depict in technical drawings, but they have utilized lap siding and then switch to panelized boards to provide different reveals. As the building comes out the roofline also changes and with the material changes there will be some

contrast.

Mr. Hooper asked why they have not elected to show a public access to Adams Rd., and what improvements they were planning to do on South Blvd. He asked regarding right turn tapers and other requirements, and if they made changes would that change the impact of the traffic analysis. Mr. Watkins suggested no public access on Adams Rd. was a recommendation from the City's traffic engineer, Paul Davis.

Mr. Davis noted that the Road Commission for Oakland County had additional requirements for improvements along Adams Rd. if the applicant were to show a public entrance, and therefore they elected to proceed with the single public entrance on South Blvd. He noted that acceleration and deceleration lanes are required on South Blvd., and there were additional improvements required for an Adams Rd. entrance in addition to acceleration and deceleration lanes. He noted the traffic analysis should be updated.

Mr. Hooper suggested that they need to do more than just tapers in and out of the driveway for this development. Mr. David stated the RCOC had not asked for additional improvements on South Blvd. but if the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) is updated they may change their mind.

Mr. Gaber said that he echoes the sentiments the colleagues have raised, and noted this will add a very intriguing element to the community. He asked for confirmation that there will be no assisted living. He noted that with 172 units, if there are 1.5 residents per unit, that would be about 250 people. He asked how many employees there would be. Mr. Paul said there would be 15 employees. Mr. Gaber remarked that with 250 residents, employees and guests, would 192 parking spaces be sufficient.

Mr. Paul replied that they felt this would be a sufficient number of parking spaces since a fair number of residents don't have a vehicle, or they may have one vehicle for two people.

Mr. Gaber noted he has concerns about Adams Rd. being blocked off for public access. He suggested that they look at that option again, in order to provide two egress points, to alleviate some rush hour traffic going to one road, and to update their TIS. He asked the applicant to explain any interior or exterior improvements they were planning for the historic house, and suggested that they preserve the interior as is until they make a determination.

Mr. Devlin noted they are planning on tuckpointing, replacing windows and doors, and creating a parklike setting around the structure. They will make further plans once they get a feel for what the residents may like to see.

Mr. Gaber noted his biggest concern is the new building elevations and the choice of exterior façade materials. He said that he is not in favor of saying that the cement fiberboard could be a primary material, which could set a precedent. He noted that for another commission review for a site on Walton, they worked with the applicant to meet the material requirements and break up the façade. For this project, the windows are all uniform, he suggested they look at utilizing

sills and awnings to enhance what is proposed especially on the south and west facades. Mr. Gaber noted that otherwise this project is well laid out and will be a great asset to the community, and asked if they can show comparable photos of their facilities constructed in other locations.

Mr. Devlin appreciated the honest feedback on the elevations, and noted they are providing large windows in order to make the interior of the apartments seem larger, and it difficult to change the window types without providing a scattered look to the exterior façade. He noted they will reevaluate their color schemes, details and materials. Mr. Devlin explained that for the entry they changed the architecture to provide more of a storefront looking system, and the town center are of the building that holds many of the common areas is a story and a half/two story structure with large skylights and other interesting architectural features. The interior lining and the inside of the courtyards will have some color pops. He explained that it is a balance to operate within a budget, provide the interior finishes that they desire while providing a nice looking exterior.

Dr. Bowyer thanked the applicant for proposing this unique idea. She said she concurs with what her colleagues have said. She is concerned that the proposed building is massive, white and stark and reminds her of a prison. She noted there are no trees or shrubs around the building to break up the look, and they are needed against the building. The building would not look good in the winter with the snow in Michigan. Dr. Bowyer asked the applicant if they expect lots of people crossing the street to attend the temple, and if they had looked at the safety of the crossing. She asked if there would be medical staff onsite for the residents, and how many ambulance runs they would expect per year.

Mr. Paul noted they had not assessed the safety of the street crossing to the temple. Since it would be an independent living facility there would be no medical staff onsite; however they offer transportation for medical appointments and residents could utilize telehealth appointments. He said they would expect around two to three ambulance calls per year since the residents are generally in their early 70s.

Dr. Bowyer noted there was no picture of what the gate at Adams would look like and asked if it would be close to the sidewalk. She noted the gate needs to be aesthetically pleasing.

Mr. Devlin noted they are still in the design process and will consider the gate design, they wouldn't want it to detract from the historic home but the primary use would be for emergency vehicle access.

Ms. Brnabic asked the walking distance to the temple for residents. She noted that since this will be independent living, people are capable of getting exercise. She is questioning this further because Dr. Bowyer has a valid point that the applicant should consider updating the crosswalk.

Mr. Paul said they prefer that residents don't walk and instead utilize the shuttle that they will provide.

Mr. Kaltsounis noted that the driveways are connected so he would see

residents wanting to walk on a nice day. He said that he was not sure if this is under their jurisdiction but it is a concern. He pointed out that the development for senior living of this size is challenging; however the houses in the area are more of an exception to the other senior living facilities. Mr. Kaltounis explained that they still need to ensure that there will be enough landscaping to provide screening for headlights to adjacent residences. He noted that the hurdle with this project now is the renderings, and he is horrified at the request for the exception for the fiber board. The issues with the facades need to be addressed so we have an accurate picture of what the building will look like. He noted that their website is excellent and he looked at some of their other developments in California, the interiors look beautiful. He explained that there are many examples around Rochester Hills of features or textures that could be added to the facades. As presented, in winter time the façade would look washed out and not fitting. He said that they need to update their TIS to understand the ramifications of not having public access on Adams Rd.

Mr. Devlin appreciated the comments, and noted the massing and rooflines seem not be an issue, and noted the plans are conceptual, they can go back and accentuate the facades.

Mr. Struzik commented that there is an increasing need for senior housing and he agrees with the comments about the façade being too plain, especially on the south side. He said that he would prefer a functioning Adams Rd. entrance, and has some concerns that an ambulance should be able to enter from Adams Rd. and not just a fire truck. He remarked that this is a very busy corner for fire runs and it would be better if they had the option to access the development from Adams Rd. He also concurred with concerns about the crosswalk to the temple.

Mr. Neubauer commented that parking is compliant with ordinance requirements, and noted that if all of the two bedroom units had only one car, and each of the 15 employees have one car, there would be 187 parking spaces used just for the community, allowing for only five visitors at a time. He explained that he assumes that some of the two bedroom units would have two cars, and suggested that the applicant reevaluate if more parking could be added.

Mr. Paul noted that in their other locations, 30-40% of their residents do not have a car and their residents are looking for a car free lifestyle.

Mr. Neubauer noted that Michigan is different, the weather is different and even if there is transportation provided it may not go where people want to go. He explained that lifestyles are different in Michigan than in California. Mr. Neubauer noted that he's also from a family of immigrants and thinks it is great to give them a connection to what they left behind, and does not want independence taken away from people in an independent community by not having cars.

Mr. Dettloff commended the applicant for saying residents in their early 70s are "younger". He said that is a great project and when other communities see this they will be clamoring to have it in their communities. He asked for the

applicant's reassurance that whatever renovations are made to the historic house will follow the Secretary of the Interior guidelines. He noted that the amenities provided are outstanding and asked with the price points provided, would there be any rent subsidies provided for senior on a fixed income. He asked if this would be the first such development in the Midwest. He agreed with other commissioners' comments regarding architectural treatments. He thanked the applicant for bringing this project to Rochester Hills.

Mr. Paul noted that units will be private pay and so no subsidies would be accepted. They also have projects in development in Dallas, Houston, Atlanta and Chicago.

Mr. Gaber asked to follow up regarding the building elevations, and asked regarding the visibility of the building from the road in the winter time when there are no leaves on the trees.

Mr. Devlin noted they focused on buffering the building from the historic home which was important during their presentation to the Historic Districts Commission last week. He said that the south elevation of the building is set far back from South Blvd.

Mr. Struzik said that parking is sufficient to meet the ordinance requirements, and he likes the idea of having a shuttle. He commented that it was a risk to take with the tenants that there will be sufficient parking, but he doesn't feel the need to pave more earth for additional parking.

Mr. Kaltsounis explained that he has wanted to do a similar project for the Greek community. He noted the big hurdles for the project have been crossed, and the applicant needs to remove the fiber cement lap material and add some texture and color, maybe wood or stone. He said you can find modern touches elsewhere in the city but this doesn't need to mimic another development. The applicant also needs to revise the TIS and the landscaping. Mr. Kaltsounis asked if the applicant has talked to another of the neighbors. He said that he would love to have both entrances, and asked if the block length rule applies for this development.

Ms. Kapelanski noted that rule would not apply in this instance.

Ms. Roediger explained that there's a fire code that says how many entrances are required based on the population, and that requirement is not in the zoning ordinance. She noted it's a different standard for multiple family than single family but it sounds like we need to look at other solutions. She suggested the applicant may consider a right in and right out on Adams Rd.

Mr. Davis commented that they can take this discussion up with the road commission and the applicant further; the right in and right out design may be a good idea, and maybe a full entrance should still be looked at. A TIS amendment will be needed if there will not be an entrance off Adams Rd.

Ms. Roediger introduced resident Paul Center who wished to speak via Zoom.

Paul Center, 3890 South Blvd. W., Rochester Hills, MI 48309

Mr. Center asked if he could have direct communication with Mr. Paul and Mr. Devlin regarding two maple trees the he would like to not be chopped down, one of which is at least 100 years old. He said this tree is located approximately 10 ft. from the eastern border of the property. He commented that he understands the need for the facility and his property is directly adjacent. He noted that since he lives across from the temple he has witnessed many people walking there and also people leaving the entrance by car who may not accelerate quickly enough almost causing accidents. He suggested that with a new elderly community, driving and walking to the temple would be a concern for causing more accidents.

Mr. Brnabic asked the applicant if the red maple tree in question is slated to remain, and noted the neighbor would like to discuss the plans directly with the applicant prior to the next meeting. Mr. Devlin noted that with the location of the water main the tree may need to be removed. Mr. Paul noted they will look closer at the plans for the tree in question. Ms. Brnabic noted the applicant will contact Mr. Center directly.

Mr. Kaltsounis made a motion to postpone and directed the applicant to work on their renderings and facade colors.

Ms. Brnabic noted the applicant needs to identify the locations of courtyards, benches and related items on the site plan and also provide renderings for the next meeting.

A motion was made by Kaltsounis, seconded by Hooper, that this matter be Postponed. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 9 - Brnabic, Dettloff, Gaber, Hooper, Kaltsounis, Bowyer, Weaver, Neubauer and Struzik

Resolved, that the Planning Commission hereby postpones this item to allow the applicant to return with the requested information.

2021-0346

Request for a Tree Removal Permit - City File No. 21-001 - for the removal of as many as 1,036 regulated trees for Priya Living, a new senior independent living development on 13 acres near the northeast corner of Adams and South Blvd., zoned R-4 One Family Residential with an FB-1 Flexible Business Overlay, Parcel Nos. 15-13-301-011 and 15-31-351-017, Priya Living, Applicant

Attachments: [trp phn 8-17-21.pdf](#)

Postponed

2021-0349

Request for Site Plan Approval - City File No. 18-021.2 - for a campus development including five buildings totaling 456,608 s.f. for office/research, warehouse/production on 25 acres on Livernois, south of Avon, zoned REC-W Regional Employment Center - Workplace, Parcel No. 15-21-276-013; Erik Klooster, Applicant