



Department of Planning and Economic Development

Staff Report to the Planning Commission

January 17, 2023

Rochester University Athletic Fields

REQUEST Site Plan Approval
Tree Removal Permit
Natural Features Setback Modification

APPLICANT Rick Lipski
236 Mill Street
Rochester MI 48307

LOCATION 800 West Avon Road, north side of Avon, west of Rochester Road

FILE NO. PSP2022-0013
PTP2023-0001

PARCEL NO. 70-15-15-451-011

ZONING SP Special Purpose and PUD Overlay

STAFF Chris McLeod, AICP, Planning Manager

Summary

The applicant is proposing the redevelopment of the existing athletic field that is located on the north side of W. Avon Road. More specifically, the athletic fields are located to the north (behind) the Garth Pleasant Arena. The proposal actually represents an update to the existing baseball field that is located in this same area. The improvements provide for a more universal athletic complex that can accommodate several different sports, including, baseball, softball, soccer (men's and women's), and lacrosse (men's and women's). This is being done to provide practice and competition fields for those five sports since the campus currently does not have adequate facilities onsite to accommodate them. It is also noted that the field may be rented by the community for their use as well for sports activities.

The Rochester University campus is subject to a Planned Unit Development (PUD) that guides the overall development of the campus over time. The PUD was originally approved in 2006 and has been amended since that time. City Staff reviewed the proposed site plan against the approved PUD and found the Plan to be generally in line with the intent of the PUD. The PUD also prescribes the methods of plan review, tree conservation and natural features setback modifications as they apply to the overall campus and review process.

The proposed improvements also include a new press box, concessions buildings, storage area, dugouts, bleachers, batting cages, pedestrian connections and minor parking improvements. The improvements will also include a new lighting and scoreboard system. The applicant has requested a modification to the City's lighting requirements that is discussed later in this report. As noted, the proposed site plan also proposes the revision and/or addition of approximately ten (10) parking spaces near the athletic field, half of which are ADA compliant. The pedestrian connections proposed are extensive around the proposed athletic field, tying the area more closely with the remainder of the campus and the associated parking areas.

Based on the schedule provided as a part of the application process, the field is intended to be utilized generally from February through October by the various sports teams. The daily usage is intended during all periods of the day, ranging from morning to evening, with the proposed new lighting system.

As a part of the overall site development, the applicant provided the required tree survey. The tree survey indicates that a total of fourteen (14) regulated trees are proposed to be removed, while twenty one (21) replacement trees are proposed to be replanted. In total, eighty eight (88) trees will be planted throughout the athletic field area as a part of the project.



| | Zoning | Existing Land Use | Future Land Use |
|--------------|---|--|--|
| Site | SP Special Purpose and PUD Overlay | Rochester University – Current Athletic Field | Special Purpose |
| North | R-4 One Family Residential, SP Special Purpose | Clinton River Trail, City of Rochester Hills Open Space | Special Purpose, Park/Public Open Space, Residential 3 |
| South | RM-1 Multiple Family Residential District | Northridge Apartments (across Avon Road) | Multiple Family |
| East | SP Special Purpose and I Industrial with FB Flex Business Overlay | The Groves (multiple family), Rochester Church of Christ | Commercial Residential Flex 2 |
| West | SP Special Purpose and O=1 Office Business District I | Rivercrest Professional Office Center, Clinton River Trail | Residential 3, Park/Public Open Space |

Request for Waiver – Lighting

The applicant is proposing the installation of eight (8) athletic light poles / fixtures as a part of the overall athletic field development. As part of being an NCAA facility, specific lighting requirements are required. These standards exceed those normally permitted by Ordinance for site lighting along with the allowable mounting or pole height for lighting fixtures. However, the Zoning Ordinance does anticipate the potential need for exceedances of the Ordinance for specific, specialized uses such as athletic fields and allows the Planning Commission the ability to grant a waiver to the lighting requirements upon a showing that the waiver is necessary for safety and design factors unique to the site, the minimum amount of lighting intensity is being utilized to accommodate the intended use, and any other conditions or limitations the Planning Commission feels necessary to ensure public health and welfare.

The site plan, as a part of the waiver request for lighting indicates that lighting will essentially be 0.0 lumens approximately one hundred and eighty (180) feet from the light poles. The site plan indicates that the fixture types to be utilized have a flat profile which should direct light more downward, rather than projecting light outward as many traditional fixtures due creating excessive glare. The athletic field is located approximately six hundred (600) feet from the northern property line and is separated from the residential properties to the north by the Clinton River, the Clinton River Trail and a relatively significant wooded area. To the east, is the newly constructed "The Groves" complex which is a part of the overall campus PUD development plan. In addition, to the east is the remainder of the campus and transitions into the nonresidential developments along Avon Road and Rochester Road.

Request for Environmental Feature Setback Modification

The site plan was reviewed by ASTI, the City's Environmental Consultant and the consultant's review indicated that the wetlands were appropriately identified on the site plan and that no wetland impacts are proposed as a part of the project. However, due to the proximity of the proposed improvements around the northern edge of the athletic field there are minor impacts to the required twenty five (25) foot environmental feature setback. Again, these impacts are minor and do not directly impact the wetland that they abut. In addition, the main location of the encroachment, to the immediate northeast corner of the athletic field, is proposed to be replanted with a significant amount of landscape material, including Witch Hazel and Dogwood. Based on Ordinance, the Planning Commission has the review authority for modifying the environmental feature setback. The PUD Agreement for the site also provides direction that such modifications may be granted as long as the proposed modification is necessary for the construction of buildings/facilities that are consistent with the approved PUD the modifications and are not likely to endanger or materially and adversely affect the natural feature adjacent to such setback. Based on the limited impact to the environmental feature setback and that in all cases some form of setback remains, although slightly reduced, City staff has no objections to the proposed natural feature reduction.

Staff Recommendations

Assessing staff have recommended denial as described below; all other staff have recommended approval.

| Department | Comments & Waivers/Modifications | Recommendation |
|-------------|---|----------------|
| Planning | | Approval |
| Fire | | Approval |
| Assessing | Updated legal description needed based on the split created for "The Groves" development. | Not Approved |
| Engineering | | Approval |
| Parks & NR | | Approval |
| Building | Revised sheets for floor plan were submitted and approved by Building Department. | Approval |

Motion to Approve Site Plan

MOTION by _____, seconded by _____, in the matter of File No. JPUD2022-0001 (Rochester University) the Planning Commission **approves** the **Site Plan (PSP2022-0013)**, based on plans received by the Planning Department on December 6, 2022 with the following findings and subject to the following conditions:

Findings

1. The site plan and supporting documents demonstrate that all applicable requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, with the exception of the modifications requested, as well as other City Ordinances, standards, and requirements, can be met subject to the conditions noted below.
2. That the proposed multipurpose athletic field has been found to be generally consistent with the overall Rochester University PUD and the proposed improvements serve as an enhancement to the existing athletic field in the same location.
3. The proposed improvements should have a satisfactory and harmonious relationship with the development on-site as well as existing development in the adjacent vicinity.
4. The proposed development will not have an unreasonably detrimental or injurious effect upon the natural characteristics and features of the site or those of the surrounding area.
5. The applicant has demonstrated that a modification to allow for the lighting plan as proposed, exceeding the permitted maximum footcandles and mounting height for the athletic field lighting, is appropriate based on the fact that the lighting fixtures being proposed to be utilized are of such a design light will be directed downward, rather than outward and that the photometric plan provided indicates that essentially no light will be emitted from the athletic field beyond 180 feet which is significantly less than the nearest residential properties outside of the campus.

Conditions

1. Address all applicable comments from other City departments and outside agency review letters, prior to final approval by staff, including the appropriate final legal description being provided and accepted by the City.
2. Provide a landscape bond in the amount of \$265,558, plus inspection fees, as adjusted by staff as necessary, prior to the preconstruction meeting with Engineering.
3. If, in the determination of City staff, the intensity of the lighting changes or increases, in terms of intensity, glare, or other aspects that may cause adverse off-site impact, City staff may require and order the site plan approval to be remanded to the Planning Commission as necessary for re-examination of the site plan approval and lighting modifications for possible revocation, modification or supplementation.

Motion to Approve a Tree Removal Permit

MOTION by _____, seconded by _____, in the matter of File No. JPUD2022-0001 (Rochester University) the Planning Commission **grants a Tree Removal Permit (PTP2023-0001)**, based on plans received by the Planning Department on **December 6, 2022** with the following findings and subject to the following conditions:

Findings

1. The proposed removal and replacement of regulated trees is in conformance with the City's Tree Conservation Ordinance.
2. The applicant is proposing to remove fourteen (14) regulated trees and no specimen trees, with twenty (21) replacement trees required, and with a total of eighty eight (88), including the required twenty one (21) replacement trees proposed to be installed.

Conditions

1. Tree protective fencing, as reviewed and approved by the City staff, shall be installed prior to temporary grade being issued by Engineering.

No payment to the City's tree fund is required.

Motion to Approve a Natural Features Setback Modification

MOTION by _____, seconded by _____, in the matter of City File No. JPUD2022-0001 (Rochester University), Site Plan No. PSP2022-0013, the Planning Commission **grants a natural features setback modification** for approximately one hundred and five (105) linear feet of permanent impact to the required twenty five (25) natural feature setback to construct parking spaces, install bleachers and pedestrian sidewalks and retaining walls, based on plans received by the Planning and Economic Development Department on December 19, 2022 with the following findings and conditions:

Findings

1. The impact to the Natural Features Setback area is limited and is necessary for construction activities.
2. The approved PUD agreement indicates that modifications necessary for the construction of buildings/facilities that are consistent with the approved PUD the modifications are not likely to endanger or materially and adversely affect the natural feature adjacent to such setback.

Conditions

1. Work to be conducted using best management practices to ensure flow and circulation patterns and chemical and biological characteristics of wetlands are not impacted.
 2. Site must be graded with onsite soils and seeded with City approved seed mix.
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