



Department of Planning and Economic Development
Staff Report to the Planning Commission October 15, 2024

PCU2025-0005

**The Highland Room Conditional Use
Unit #1 of the Gerald Building**

REQUEST	Conditional Use Recommendation
APPLICANT	Mike (Manish) Chaudhary The Highland Room (RH) LLC 13500 Foley St. Detroit, MI 48227
LOCATION	Located within Unit #1 of the newly constructed Gerald building, on the south side of Auburn and west of Dequindre (site was formerly 1760 E. Auburn)
FILE NO.	PCU2025-0005
PARCEL NO.	15-36-230-001
ZONING	BD Brooklands District
STAFF	Chris McLeod, AICP, Planning Manager

Summary

The applicant has filed for a Conditional Use Permit to allow for alcoholic beverage sales for onsite alcoholic beverage consumption as a part of a new restaurant/café located within Unit #1 of the newly constructed Gerald building, located on the south side of Auburn and west of Dequindre.

The tenant space is the westernmost unit within the Building and is approximately 1,260 square feet in size. The floor plan provided includes seating for approximately 33 persons in a mix of tables, casual seating areas and bar seating. The remainder of the space will be a bar/barista area, kitchen area, locked storage area, and restroom facilities. The information provided as a part of the application indicates there is no proposed outdoor seating.

The menu and business plan provided shows that the Highland Room Café will be a modern, community driven café and cocktail lounge that is upscale, yet approachable, offering specialty coffee, craft cocktails, and fusion inspired cuisine. The business plan further details the anticipated roll out of offerings and benchmarks for offerings and how the operation of the café is intended to evolve over the first three (3) years.

The site is currently zoned BD Brooklands District. Restaurants/cafes in the Brooklands District that include alcoholic beverage sales for on premises consumption require a Conditional Use permit, after the Planning Commission makes a recommendation and City Council approval. The applicant will not be seeking a quota license, rather they will be purchasing a licensing with the intent of transferring it into the City. The City Council will take up the issue of the liquor license and the conditional use recommendation once the Liquor License Committee convenes on the liquor license itself.

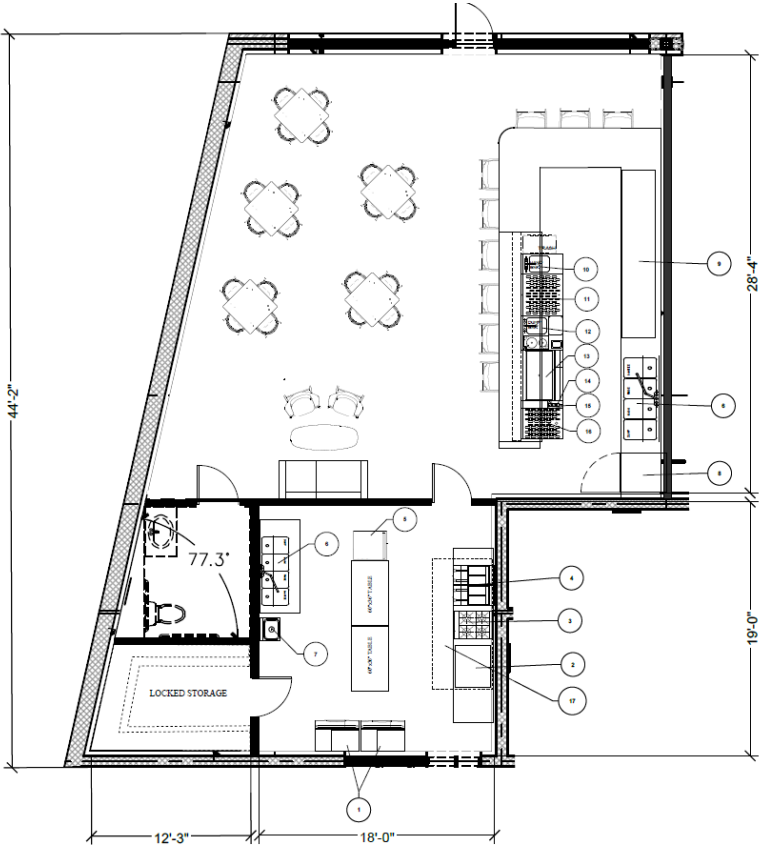
The applicant has indicated this location will be affiliated with the Highland Room Banquet and Café located in Highland Park. That location, based on internet reviews, appears to be a much larger facility offering a larger event space. The subject location is intended to be open from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. As a part of the applicant's EIS, the applicant has noted what the anticipated trade areas are for the proposed café and what the main competitors or similar uses may also be within that same area. The applicant has noted the proposed café may differentiate itself by having evening drinks and social gatherings, specialty menu items and night events, and providing a unique ambience.

Aerial Photograph



Floor Plan

EQUIPMENT SCHEDULE	
1	COUNTER
2	SEAL
3	REFRIGERATOR
4	STOVE
5	WET DISH DRAIN CATCHER
6	WET DISH DRAIN CATCHER
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Zoning Map	Master Land Use Plan
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|---|---------------------------------------|
| RE One-Family Residential District | NB Neighborhood Business District |
| R-1 One-Family Residential District | CB Community Business District |
| R-2 One-Family Residential District | HB Highway Business District |
| R-3 One-Family Residential District | BD Brooklands District |
| R-4 One-Family Residential District | O Office District |
| RCD One-Family Residential Cluster District | I Industrial District |
| RM-1 Multiple-Family Residential District | SP Special Purpose District |
| RMH Manufactured Housing Park District | EC Employment Center District |
| | FB Flex Business Overlay District |
| | MR Mixed Residential Overlay District |
| | PUD Overlay |



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|---------------------------|--|
| Estate Residential | Commercial Residential Flex - 2 |
| Residential 2 | Commercial Residential Flex - 3 |
| Residential 2.5 | Office |
| Residential 3 | REC Workplace |
| Residential 4 | REC Technology and Office Image Corridor |
| Residential 5 | REC Interchange |
| Mixed Residential Overlay | Regional Commercial |
| Multiple Family | Industrial |
| Residential Office Flex | Special Purpose |
| Auburn Road Corridor | Park/Public Open Space |
| | Private Recreation/Open Space |

	Zoning	Existing Land Use	Future Land Use
Site	BD Brooklands District	Newly constructed mixed use building (commercial and residential units)	Commercial Residential Flex 2
North (across Auburn Rd.)	BD Brooklands District	Gas station	Commercial Residential Flex 2
South (across alley)	R-4 One Family Residential District	Single family residential homes and a City parking lot	Residential 4
East (across Gerald Ave.)	BD Brooklands District	Multi-tenant commercial building including a Greek restaurant, a salon, an insurance agent	Commercial Residential Flex 2
West	BD Brooklands District	Marcoin Business Services	Commercial Residential Flex 2

General Requirements for Conditional Uses

Per Section 138-2.302 of the Zoning Ordinance, there are five (5) areas of consideration for the Planning Commission for the discretionary decision of a conditional use. Each of the criterion are listed below in italics, followed by staff comments on the proposed conditional use's compliance with each.

Criterion:	Staff Comment:
1 <i>Will promote the intent and purpose of (the Ordinance).</i>	The BD Brooklands District does support and promote this type of use when ancillary to a permissible use such as a restaurant.
2 <i>Will be designed, constructed, operated, maintained, and managed so as to be compatible, harmonious, and appropriate in appearance with the existing or planned character of the general vicinity, adjacent uses of land, the natural environment, the capacity of public services and facilities affected by the land use and the community as a whole.</i>	The proposed tenant space is the western most tenant space within the building. The abutting land uses to the west are nonresidential in nature. To the east are the additional tenant spaces of the Gerald, which are not currently occupied. To the south, there is a residence located to the south of the alley. It is noted that between the tenant space of the proposed café is the parking area for the Gerald, the alley way itself and the privacy fencing installed by the City between the single family residences of the Brooklands and the nonresidential areas. As noted above, the restaurant, as proposed, will not have any outdoor seating, there is not a designated space for such a use in the future and the applicant notes that there are no plans for outside operation. Given the proposed hours of operation (generally opening at 8:00 a.m. and closing between 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m.), the conditional use for alcohol consumption onsite should not have a significant impact on adjoining residential properties since there will be no outdoor seating.
3 <i>Will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services, such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, drainage ways, refuse disposal, or that the persons or agencies responsible for the establishment of the land use or activity shall be able to provide adequately any such service.</i>	Being a new building, the tenant space has been vacant to this point. The tenant space, as proposed, is approximately 1,260 square feet based on the condominium documents and should not have a significant impact on parking or overall intensity of the shopping center, particularly given the hours of operation. As a new mixed-use building within the Brooklands, the building was reviewed and approved by all City Departments to ensure compliance with City standards, therefore the Building should be served adequately by all City services. Any demands placed on the public infrastructure should already be accounted for by the current use of the site.
4 <i>Will not be detrimental, hazardous, or disturbing to existing or future neighboring land uses, persons, property, or the public welfare.</i>	In regard to the proposed use, there should be no detrimental, hazardous or disturbing activity to the existing or future neighboring uses, persons, surrounding properties, or to the public welfare given the limited size of the tenant space, the fact that there is no outdoor seating, and the limited hours of the use as described in the application. In addition, there is only one residence proximate to the site, which is to the south. The proposed use should not impact the residence as it is separated by the parking area of the Gerald, the alley and the City- installed fencing along the alley.

5	<i>Will not create additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services that will be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.</i>	There will be no additional requirements at a public cost for public facilities and services that would be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.
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Staff Recommendations

The conditional use was noticed for a public hearing. Staff has not received any comments regarding the proposed use. Based on the application provided, staff recommends approval of the proposed conditional use request. If the Planning Commission agrees that allowing alcoholic beverage sales for on premises consumption will be harmonious and compatible with the surroundings, below is a motion for consideration:

Motion to Recommend Approval of a Conditional Use

MOTION by _____, seconded by _____, in the matter of File No. PCU2025-0005 (The Highland Room), the Planning Commission **recommends** to City Council **Approval** of the **Conditional Use** to allow sales for on premises alcoholic beverage consumption associated with a restaurant/cafe use, based on documents received by the Planning Department on September 18, 2025 with the following findings:

Findings

1. The proposed use will promote the intent and purpose of the Zoning Ordinance.
2. The existing building and proposed conditional use have been designed and is proposed to be operated, maintained, and managed so as to be compatible, harmonious, and appropriate in appearance with the existing and planned character of the general vicinity, adjacent uses of land, and the capacity of public services and facilities affected by the use.
3. The proposed restaurant use should have a positive impact on the community as a whole and the surrounding area by providing additional eating and gathering opportunities within the Brooklands District.
4. The existing development and proposed use are served adequately by essential public facilities and services, such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, water and sewer, drainage ways, and refuse disposal.
5. The existing development and proposed use should not be detrimental, hazardous, or disturbing to existing or future neighboring land uses, persons, property, or the public welfare. In addition, a use of this nature falls in line with the vision of the City's redevelopment of Auburn Rd. and the Brooklands District, to make the area more vibrant and walkable, and a restaurant use will help facilitate that.
6. The proposal will not create additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services that will be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.

Conditions

1. City Council approval of the Conditional Use.
2. If, in the determination of City staff, the intensity of the use changes or increases, in terms of traffic, noise, hours, lighting, odor, or other aspects that may cause adverse off-site impact, City staff may require and order the conditional use approval to be remanded to the Planning Commission and City Council as necessary for re-examination of the conditional use approval and conditions for possible revocation, modification or supplementation.