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## Planning Commission Formally Fails to Recommend The Hub <sup>[1]</sup>

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**By:**

Jessy Gregg



The proposed ten-story-tall, student-focused "The Hub" development formally failed to get a positive recommendation from East Lansing's Planning Commission Wednesday night. The project has been proposed by national developer Core Spaces for the southeast corner of Bogue Street and Grand River Avenue, on the edge of the MSU campus.

The vote was split three commissioners in favor and three against, with three commissioners absent. A tie vote means a project is not recommended by Planning Commission to City Council. The project will now proceed to the City Council for a public hearing and final decision.

Speaking on behalf of the developer, attorney David Pierson highlighted some of the alterations that the developers have made to their design in response to feedback from the public hearing <sup>[2]</sup> at Planning Commission last month.

The updated design now includes over 400 covered spaces for bicycle parking. When combined with in-unit bicycle storage nooks (design shown below) to be made available in the two bedroom units, this will mean that there is enough bicycle parking for one bike per resident.



Balconies that had been planned for the south side of the building have been removed in the current design in response to community feedback that balconies too often become loud gathering spaces. The balconies on the recessed inner portions of the building remain.

With 131 parking spaces designed to be available for development's expected 585 residents, the ratio of 0.22 parking spaces per tenant remains a contentious issue, even after what Pierson characterized as a glowing recommendation of the project from the Transportation Commission.

Pierson maintained at Planning Commission on Wednesday that Core Space's goal is to find tenants who are not interested in having cars. He used Core Space's James development in Madison, Wisconsin, as an example of this approach, saying that a study of traffic patterns at that housing development showed an average of only ten trips per day through the "out" gate of their parking area.

The James is one of the Core Spaces developments which was involved in a property acquisition agreement [3] with American Campus Communities last September.



Brian Hagan of Hagan Realty used the public comment portion of Wednesday's meeting to raise concerns regarding the low parking ratio, saying that in his company's developments, they sometimes elect to build smaller buildings so that they can include more parking on site. He said that they have a continuing problem with students who commute into class parking in their company's parking lot, which is near the proposed Hub development. Hagan said that neighboring landlords and business owners have said they have the same problem.

In response, Pierson pointed out that tenants of the Hub development would not be driving cars to campus from elsewhere because they would live right on the edge of campus.

Planning Commissioner Kathleen Boyle said that she would feel more comfortable if the experiment with low levels of parking was tested on development half this size, rather than one with over five hundred residents, which she said had potential for "disaster."

Planning Commission Chair Dan Bollman commented that a building of the proposed height might not be appropriate for that site at this time, and said, "there's nothing wrong with building footings to hold a ten-story building and then only building a six-story building." The idea would be to add stories later. But the developer showed no interest in that approach.

When it came down to a vote, Commissioners Leo Sell, Andrew Quinn, and John Cahill voted in favor, and Bollman, Boyle, and Hannah Grall voted against. Commissioners Rory Neuner, Chris Wolf and Don Davis were absent.

The Planning Commission is an advisory board so it is not necessary for the project to receive a majority "yes" endorsement before it moves to a Public Hearing before the City Council.

After Wednesday's meeting, Pierson told ELI that his clients would like to move quickly, and that they hope to receive project approval before the end of the year so that they can clear the site and break ground for the new project in February of 2018. Council will have to first vote to set the public hearing at a later meeting.

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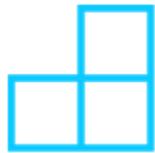
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