



PLANNING STAFF REPORT

MEMO DATE: May 5, 2020

MTG. DATE: MAY 13, 2020

TO: Village of Cottage Grove Plan Commission

CC: Village of Cottage Grove Board of Trustees
Matt Giese – Village Administrator
Lisa Kalata – Village Clerk
Larry Konopacki – Village Attorney
Kevin Lord – Village Engineer

FROM: [Erin Ruth, AICP – Village Planning Director](#)

RE: **Comfort Suites Hotel – Precise Implementation Plan**

BACKGROUND

Property Owner: Badger Hotel Group/Greywolf Partners

Location: Parcel #0711-041-2120-1 on Landmark Dr.

Area: approx. 57,000 sq. ft.

Agent: Todd Rizzo – Greywolf Partners

Existing Zoning: Planned Office

Proposed Zoning: Planned Unit Development

Future Land Use Plan: Planned Business

OVERVIEW

The applicant is seeking approval of a Planned Unit Development for a five-story, 82 room hotel totaling approximately 57,000 sq. ft. The hotel will be branded as a Comfort Suites, which is a CHOICE Hotels brand. Amenities in the building will include an indoor pool, fitness room, meeting room, breakfast area, and an outdoor space.

The Village's zoning ordinance includes a process for approving a project as a Planned Unit Development (PUD). Planned Unit Developments are appropriate for projects that exceed



some aspect of the standard zoning district, where the project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and provides positive benefits to the community (market need, aesthetics, or tax base). This is a relatively common process that has been used in recent years for projects such as Cottage Grove Commons and the Summit Credit Union headquarters.

A PUD has a two-step approval process. The first step, the General Development Plan (GDP), was approved in January 2020. The applicant is currently seeking approval for the second step, the Precise Implementation Plan (PIP).

LOCATION MAP



The PIP includes a few minor changes from the previously approved GDP, as follows:

- The building height at the entry has increased from 64' to 68', while the height of the rest of the building decreased from 64' to 63'.
- The Floor Area Ratio (FAR) has been reduced from 1.0 to 0.93.
- The width of the sidewalk along Landmark Drive has been increased from 5' to 6' per the GDP approval.



- The applicant is proposing to handle stormwater management and infiltration with an underground facility beneath the parking lot.
- The building elevations have been modified to meet the CHOICE Brands standards and to incorporate feedback from the ARC provided at the GDP review stage. The ARC was concerned that white EIFS in the GDP design would soon look dirty and they were concerned that EIFS at ground level would be a maintenance issue. The revised PIP design incorporates stone along the first floor on all sides (similar to that found on the retail building to the north), incorporates more brick in the upper floors, and replaces the white EIFS with a blue/grey color.



Figure 1: GDP rendering



Figure 2: PIP rendering



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY

Per the Planned Business description in the Land Use Chapter, “the northern and western edges of the (Commerce) Park, with their visual exposure to I-94 and CTH N, are improved for Planned Business development which may consist of retail, high quality office, and supporting land uses such as quality restaurants, lodging facilities, and financial institutions.”

In addition, several Planned Business policies are relevant to this project. Policy #1 states that “the Planned Business uses around the interchange of I-94 and CTH N will serve as a “gateway” into the Village from other locations inside and outside of the region and reflect the image of the Village to passers-by. Due to the location, particular attention should be given to ensuring that development is of a high aesthetic quality.”

Policy #7 states “encourage Planned Business development that occurs along major transportation corridors (e.g. Interstate 94 and CTH N, CTH BB) to contribute toward establishing and enhancing a positive image for the Village. The developments that are built along these corridors and surrounding interchange areas are highly visible to residents and visitors, and can help establish an attractive image for the Village.”

The proposed project complies with the design guidelines in polices #9 and #10 for the Planned Business district.

The Economic Development chapter of the Comprehensive Plan includes a survey of local business owners. Approximately 80% of respondents felt that a hotel and a meeting/event space would provide a major or minor improvement to the Cottage Grove business community. No respondents felt such facilities would detract from the business community.

The chapter also includes a resident survey. In that survey, approximately 70% of respondents were at least mildly interested in adding a hotel to the Village, which was one of the highest scores among the businesses listed.

The Economic Development chapter also includes a matrix indicating the desirability of various industry types in different areas within the Village. The matrix indicates that accommodations (hospitality) and food service are appropriate and desirable within the Commerce Park.

In the opinion of staff, the proposed project is consistent with the Village’s Comprehensive Plan.

ZONING ORDINANCE CONSISTENCY

The subject property is currently zoned Planned Office. The applicant is requesting that the property be rezoned to a Planned Unit Development to accommodate features of the project that do not fit within the base zoning category.



Requested exceptions

The requested exceptions are as follows:

- The proposed building is 5 stories, while the PO zoning allows a maximum of 4.
- The proposed building is approximately 64 feet tall, while the PO zoning allows a maximum of 45 feet.
- The proposed landscape ratio for the property is 14.4%, while the minimum in the PO district is 25%.
- The floor area ratio of the proposed project is 1.0, while the maximum allowed in the PO district is 0.3.
- The proposed project has a 0-foot side setback on the north side of the property, while the minimum side setback in the PO district is 10 feet.
- The proposed project has a 0-foot street paved surface setback, while the minimum street paved surface setback in the PO district is 10 feet.

Parking

325-49(H)(11)(b) requires one parking space per room plus one space for each employee on the largest shift.

Therefore the 98 available parking spaces can accommodate the 82 rooms and up to 16 employees without making use of the spaces at the adjacent Greywolf building to the north. It is expected that in most cases the hotel will not be full to capacity, in which the case the parking lot will provide spaces for overflow for the retail building to the north.

It should be noted that the proposed project completes the connection of the retail buildings west parking lot to the existing parking lots to the south. Currently the parking lot on the west side of the retail building is a dead end making it less convenient to use. Completing the connection should make parking on the west side more appealing.

Landscaping

The proposed landscaping exceeds the minimum requirements of the Planned Office district.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

In a successful planned unit development, higher densities or other accommodations are provided for a project that provides community benefits (such as filling a market need, providing higher aesthetics, or increasing tax base) while limiting negative externalities.

The accommodations the applicant is seeking are noted above under 'Zoning Consistency' and positive attributes related to market needs and aesthetics are noted under 'Comprehensive Plan Consistency' above. Staff estimates the hotel will provide 4 to 5 times the tax base that would be provided by a small office or restaurant that would fit within the current Planned



Office zoning. Furthermore, the hotel will provide a significant room tax to the Village that would not be provided by other uses.

During the neighborhood meeting preceding the General Development Plan and in subsequent correspondence from neighboring property owners, two primary potential negative externalities have been raised, potential for hotels to attract crime and potential impacts to traffic and parking. Staff has researched these topics to better address those concerns.

Hotels and Crime

Staff found two academic papers that address hotels and crime.

The first is entitled 'Exploring the Relationship Between Hotel Characteristics and Crime' by W.S. Wilson Huang and Gregory Strieb of Georgia State University and Michael Kwag of Boston University¹. The study highlighted several factors that potentially influence crime at hotels, including the following:

1. Target suitability – this is a balance of the attractiveness of the target and the ease of access. Essentially a higher end, more expensive hotel would be expected to have wealthier clientele that would attract certain types of criminals, while lower end hotels are less expensive and have less security making them more attractive to certain other types of criminals. The proposed Comfort Suites is an upper mid-range hotel brand (as described by CHOICE Hotels 2019 annual report) that would appear to fall between the two extremes.
2. Proximity to a potential pool of offenders – Cottage Grove is regularly ranked among the safest communities in Wisconsin and therefore the local pool of potential offenders appears to be small. Proximity to the interstate means the hotel would be accessible to a wider range of clientele, but that same access is what makes the hotel attractive to most users. Many Madison hotels are located along the interstates or beltline, so the proposed hotel is not unique in that regard.
3. Guardianship – refers to 'target hardening' or effectiveness in preventing crime. The applicant plans to have 16 cameras monitoring all entries and interior spaces. The main entry requires key card access from midnight to 5 a.m., and other entries require key card access at all times. Staff will be on site 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. The property will be managed by S&L Hospitality of Madison. All of S&L's hotel properties rank in the top 3% of their brand.
4. Natural surveillance – refers to the "capacity of residents or pedestrians to casually and continually observe" the property. The proposed project is surrounded by established Commerce Park businesses that are active throughout the day from morning to evening. The site is also directly adjacent to and visible from Highway N. Over one-hundred luxury apartments are under construction roughly kitty-corner from the hotel site. The capacity for natural surveillance appears to be quite high.
5. Image – refers to the "general perception of a property and its surrounding environment." The Commerce Park buildings in the vicinity of the hotel site feature high quality design and materials and are well maintained. The proposed hotel also features similar high-quality materials (stone, brick, architectural metal panels) and an attractive design.



Based on the above research, it does not appear that the proposed Comfort Suites would have the characteristics that are typical of a crime-ridden hotel property.

The second article is entitled “What are Guests Scared Of? Crime Related Hotel Experiences and Fear of Crime” by Xi Y. Leung and Elliot A. Durbin of the University of North Texas and Yang Yang of Temple University².

The methodology employed by the authors was to analyze Trip Advisor hotel reviews for content related to hotel crime. Essentially, the authors found that “high-class hotels experienced more theft, fraud, and burglary while low-class hotels encountered more prostitution and drug-related activity.” Again, the proposed Comfort Suites is an upper mid-range hotel chain that appears to fall between the two extremes.

The Village Engineer’s report includes a traffic analysis that observes that a hotel use generates less traffic than uses such as offices or restaurants that would be allowed under the Planned Office zoning.

As noted above, the proposed hotel provides the amount of parking spaces required by Village Ordinance.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Precise Implementation Plan be **APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS**, with the conditions as follows:

1. The adjacent retail building to the north is under same ownership (Greywolf). BB Jack’s has a large white equipment box placed on the west side of the building facing Highway N. Greywolf has waited to enclose this equipment until the area around the north side of the hotel was designed. Given that PIP approval includes a design for the north side of the hotel, the freezer should be enclosed as soon as possible. The applicant shall provide a design for the enclosure for staff approval.

¹*Hospitality Review*, Vol. 16, Issue 1, January 1998

²*Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, June 2018