

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 27, 2007

NEW BUSINESS:

CASE 107-07 MORTON'S THE STEAKHOUSE - Request for approval of final site plan, located at the northeast corner of 117th Street and Nall Ave.

Staff presentation:

Mr. Joseph: This is case 107-07, Morton's Steakhouse in Park Place. The applicant is Steve Haasl with Shea, Inc. The applicant is requesting approval of a final site plan for a tenant finish storefront within the Park Place development. This property is located at the corner of 117th and Nall Avenue. This case was continued from the October 23 Planning Commission meeting due to some outstanding issues regarding the architecture of the building. The applicant has submitted revised drawings addressing all of the concerns of the Planning Commission.

Just to go down the list, the south elevation has been revised to incorporate the descent of the Aloft Hotel as part of this tenant finish. The signs from the awnings have been removed. Four additional artificial windows with louvers and awnings have been added to the west elevation in an effort to break up the brick façade. The portion of the north elevation under the hotel has been changed from stucco to brick, and also they added three windows along there.

Staff is recommending approval of this case with the stipulations stated in the staff report. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

Comm. Williams: A couple of things. Some of this is semantics, I guess. You make reference in several lines of your write-up as this being tenant space, tenant finish. In other places you talk about it being a building. Technically there's differences there, so what are we really dealing with? Are we dealing with a building, or are we dealing with tenant finish?

Mr. Joseph: This building was shown as part of the Aloft Hotel. It's the retail portion of the building, and you can call it tenant finish. Also you can call it a three-sided building.

Comm. Williams: Well if I recall correctly, when we reviewed it for the Aloft, it was basically shown as a block. So there's no architectural carry.

Mr. Joseph: Yes, it is just a block. Now they are finishing the lights.

Comm. Williams: So we get into putting exterior fenestrations in and so forth.

Mr. Joseph: Correct.

Comm. Williams: That becomes more of a building than a tenant finish.

Mr. Joseph: Correct.

Comm. Williams: In that regard, you're listing six recommendations here. If this is indeed a full building, would we not have the full list of building considerations we normally have, like concealed gutters and screening of rooftop equipment and that sort of thing, which we have rooftop equipment on this project?

Mr. Joseph: Again that part has been handled when Aloft Hotel came in, so if you would like to add that stipulation, that's okay. You can add that to the list. Maybe all the stipulations from the Aloft Hotel project can be added to this project also.

Comm. Williams: I picked out those two because those are typically very important issues, and again since this building now has rooftop equipment, there's no reference to the screening of rooftop equipment in their submittal.

Mr. Joseph: Yeah, it's actually part of the Aloft Hotel project, so we can add those stipulations.

Chairman Rohlf: So Jeff, would these staff reports be considered as one report? Would they be filed together?

Mr. Joseph: No, this is a separate project. We have a separate file for this, but if you add the stipulation in there, then we look at the other stipulations.

Chairman Rohlf: Okay. That's the way we can handle it. All right, do you have anything else, Len?

Comm. Williams: Not at this point in time, thank you.

Chairman Rohlf: Does anyone else have questions for staff? All right, then we'll hear from the applicant.

Applicant's presentation:

Steven Haasl, Shea, Inc., 100 N. Sixth Street, Minneapolis, MN, 55403, appeared before the Planning Commission and made the following comments:

Mr. Haasl: We do have some presentation boards I'd like to share with the commission. I'd like to thank the commission for having us back. At the last presentation, there was general agreement as to the exterior design. As you know it's a Morton's Steakhouse. Morton's is a 30 plus year business, luxury steakhouse, top of the line, high quality product, materials, staff, service, food. I think the comments that were brought up last time, generally there was agreement as to the design of the building, but the comments were based on more of how the building connected to the hotel, how the hotel connected to the ground, how the back of the facility looked, and also the treatment of the southeast corner of the building. So we've gone back and taken a look at those pieces, and the information you have in your packet reflects what we have come back with, a basic design.

The front of the building, the northeast view, is still essentially the same. We've taken off the signage that was on the awnings in response to the last meeting here. We've added brick and some more fenestration underneath the hotel. It was stucco before, so we picked that up to make all the way around the hotel. On the south and east, as we brought the hotel down to the ground, even though it is part of the Morton space, we've carried the window patterns onto the ground and used the finishes that the hotel has [*inaudible*] the finishes the hotel and grounds that. Morton's building to be received by it, so it has buried our Morton's building up against the hotel, brought the hotel finishes out. I've carried the stone base around just to provide some continuity around the building. The previous iteration, if you recall perhaps, had the Morton sign in the center of the space more. We've pulled that to the corner. We've raised the corner to give some more impact to the southeast corner, which is the entry piece going in. A strong identity there is some good height in material out to going in the corners there.

On the back of the building, the area is depressed by at least six feet. There is a fence that runs around the outside, plus there's a screen of some landscaping in this area and a fence that runs around the back there. You really don't see down in there very much. We wanted to make sure that it looks good all the way around.

We first proposed doing this face, which is the northeast back They're just brick. They have horizontal lines. I talked to Jeff a little bit about it. He thought that we could do a little better with that, so we came back and introduced, again keeping the same brick as the hotel, bringing that down to the ground but adding some of the design elements in the form of awnings and shutters similar to these across the back just to break that face up, and again keeping the same materials as the hotel but also adding those elements which will tie back into the Morton's façade, finishing all four sides. We've gotten rid of the stucco. We have brick all the way around. We've carried the hotel to the bottom. If you use the hotel coming down on the face, and we've punched up the corner that we've answered the issues. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Chairman Rohlf: I'm glad you put that west view up there. Our renderings in our packet did not have those awnings shown, and after reading the staff report I kept looking at that thinking, where are they? So hopefully everyone can see that now. That's where the windows.

Mr. Haasl: This is the service door in back. This is basically a service area of trucks loading and things going in the public area, but there may be some view to it, so this will complete the box all the way around.

Chairman Rohlf: And where is the patio? I think it's on the southeast now?

Mr. Haasl: They are off to the side here. Living within the confines of the landscaping has been a post-traumatic event. To answer your question about top screening, that is an issue that we took a look at. These are part of your packet, but all of our mechanical equipment is being clustered in the center of the roof, so much of the screening is being handled by the parapet walls up here. And the part that's not, we've got a rooftop screen that will be applied back there along the edge of the building. All roof drainage is internal.

Comm. Williams: Thank you for addressing that because that was going to be the first one out of the shoot here. I don't recall that this got much discussion at the last meeting, but I wonder if you could clarify for us. On the west side of the building, you have a retaining wall that comes from Nall down 117th Street to the Morton's building or to the hotel building. It goes all the way down to the edge of your building? Okay, and so the portion of ground that's right behind that towards the parking lot, is that just all paved?

Mr. Haasl: You mean this area?

Comm. Williams: Yeah, just on the other side.

Mr. Haasl: It's brick.

Comm. Williams: Parking? Okay.

Mr. Haasl: That's all part of the original.

Comm. Williams: Okay. Then on the south side of the building, that's all landscaped up to the sidewalk?

Mr. Haas: Correct. It's all landscaped through here. We're fitting our building within his landscaping plans.

Comm. Williams: Okay. Just one more comment. I'd like to thank you for your efforts to ground the hotel. I think you've made an improvement from what we saw the last time. Thank you.

Comm. Reynolds: Likewise, terrific job on responding to the comments. On the east side is where the patio is, and I just want to be sure that we're requiring that you have a fence around that area. Will the public be able to circulate without stepping into the street then when they move by this east side of the building?

Mr. Haas: That's a good question. We've been struggling with that one. Looking at the building, the front door is here. Our patio area is off to the side. Our bar lounge is here. The patio expands off of that. There's large banisters in scaped areas that occur along here. We don't have the final plan yet, but we understand we have to maintain pedestrian access through this way. So fencing that we do has been more decorative in nature.

Comm. Reynolds: I'll wait until later, I guess, to follow up on that then.

Comm. Jackson: Where's the parking in relation to this? I don't see the whole layout of the area. I can't remember how the parking matches up.

Mr. Haas: That small parking area is back here that we talked about.

Comm. Jackson: But that was just service?

Mr. Haas: Then the main body of parking is throughout.

Comm. Jackson: But there's no access from the hotel to Morton's, correct?

Mr. Haas: Correct. There's no internal access.

Comm. Jackson: Do you have to go from the parking garage through the hotel and then out?

Mr. Haas: Yes, you would. Or you can park on the surface lots that are over here in front of [inaudible]. There's purpose lots over there. Most of Morton's valet parks. Very few people self park for Morton's.

Comm. Jackson: Oh, there's going to be the valet parking. Okay, that's right.

Mr. Haas: That's what this curb is for, specifically for valet.

Chairman Rohlf: Anyone else have questions for the applicant? All right, thank you. This takes us up to our discussion.

Comm. Reynolds: I just need the clarification. Jeff, I assume we're requiring a fence that's to sort of keep the public from kind of meandering with people drinking liquor.

Mr. Joseph: Correct, with the liquor, yes.

Comm. Reynolds: So just help me out. I don't think our intent would be to have the public use a gate and walk through this fenced area to get north and south, correct?

Mr. Joseph: Correct.

Comm. Reynolds: So I just want to be sure the applicant would be clear. I would think what we would require is a minimum width and pick a five foot or whatever clear public pathway that does not require you to walk through the fenced area.

Mr. Joseph: Yes.

Comm. Reynolds: Okay. So we may need to add a stipulation to make sure that's clear.

Comm. Jackson: That's number three, isn't it?

Comm. Reynolds: I'm sorry. Brilliant, good.

Chairman Rohlf: It looks as if maybe we are ready to make a motion remembering that we need to add a stipulation to include the stipulations from the Aloft Hotel staff report.

Motion to approve Case 107-07, with revised stipulations, was made by Reynolds and seconded by Elkins. Motion approved unanimously.