



City of Aurora

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Legistar History Report

File Number: 19-0857

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General Ledger #:

In Control: Building, Zoning, and Economic Development Committee

File Created: 09/20/2019

File Name: Aurora University / Final Plan Revision / Parking Deck - Removal of the Southlawn Gate

Final Action:

Title: A Building, Zoning and Economic Development Committee Resolution Approving a Revision to the Final Plan on Lot 1 of Aurora University 2nd Resubdivision to remove of the gate across Southlawn Place to allow vehicle access entering or leaving the Campus by means of Southlawn Place located at 1405 Prairie Street (Aurora University - 19-0857 / AU20/4-19.178-Fpn/R - TV - Ward 4)

Notes:

Agenda Date: 10/23/2019

Agenda Number:

Sponsors:

Enactment Date:

Attachments: Exhibit "A" Final Plan Revision - 2019-09-19 - 2019.178.pdf, Parking Deck Elevations.pdf, Appealable Sheet - 2019-10-17 - 2019.171.pdf, Land Use Petition and Supporting Documents - 2019-09-19 - 2019.178.pdf, Property Research Sheet 82463.pdf, Legistar History Report - 2019-10-08 - 2019.178.pdf

Enactment Number:

Planning Case #: AU20/4-19.178-Fpn/R

Hearing Date:

Drafter: tvacek@aurora-il.org

Effective Date:

History of Legislative File

Version:	Acting Body:	Date:	Action:	Sent To:	Due Date:	Return Date:	Result:
1	City Council	09/24/2019	referred to	Planning Council	10/01/2019		
	Action Text:	This Petition was referred to to the Planning Council					
1	Planning Council	10/01/2019					
	Notes:	<i>Representatives Present: Bruce Goldsmith and Carmella Moran</i>					

I'm Bruce Goldsmith for Aurora University with Carmella Moran. There is currently a fence blocking Southlawn that was originally put in when the University opened the parking lot to the east. There were a group of neighbors on this street that didn't want the traffic. Now the garage is opening up, it is

a double helix design, so the west entrance and exit takes half of the parking lot and the east entrance and exit takes the other half of the parking lot. We want the people to be able to get out on Southlawn and go west so they don't conflict with the traffic coming out the east entrance on what was Randall Road.

Mr. Sieben said how far west on Southlawn? As far as they want?

Mr. Goldsmith said well we expect they will go to Prairie.

Mr. Sieben said on Evanslawn. Is that the intent?

Mr. Goldsmith said right. To some extent it will dissipate too like it always has, but given the design of the garage, we really need to get rid of that gate so that we have the circulation.

Mr. Sieben said Tracey do you want to explain what type of meeting this is and the process?

Mrs. Vacek said so this will be a Final Plan Revision, so this will go to Planning Commission. It will be a public meeting, but not a public hearing. If people do come to Planning Commission they will have 3 minutes to speak at the beginning of the meeting. Then it will go on from there to our Building, Zoning and Economic Development Committee and then it will be appealable from there and then information only at COW. I believe that we are shooting for the October 16th Planning Commission.

Mr. Sieben said and one thing that I think should be stressed Bruce is the overall Master Plan for the campus does eventually show Southlawn being open. The gate was put in as a temporary measure while originally the 2 private homes were still there. Now there is 1 private home. This is not a change to the Master Plan. Do you want to explain that?

Mr. Goldsmith said so Southlawn was anticipated to be vacated by the city and deeded and transferred to the University. Half of Southlawn already has been done that from Randall to the house, which you see is that little squared out area. The house is the only property in this whole quadrant that the University doesn't own. As long as the homeowners wants to stay there, the homeowner can stay there, but we need to be able to use Southlawn as a public street. It can't be a private driveway for that house because we need to circulate cars through the campus and we can't just have them all go down to Prairie, which will cause all kinds of problems at Prairie and Randall.

Ms. Moran said and the fence will stay there. It is just the gate that will be removed.

Mr. Goldsmith said there is also a fence requirement between the house and the garage, so that is along the east property line of that property so that will remain. We are opening up Southlawn so it is a public street again.

Mr. Sieben said I think we were going to wait until next week to move this forward. Does anyone else have any comments or questions? We have been meeting with Bob Greene, our Traffic Engineer, so Bob is aware of this request. I think Bob would be at the Plan Commission meeting if there any questions or comments.

Mr. Goldsmith said I don't know if he knows, but we did do a traffic study.

Mr. Sieben said I think we have that. He is looking at this too, so we will get input from our Traffic Engineer.

Mr. Goldsmith said and we did ask Mike Werthmann at KLOA and he said this is the only way to disperse the traffic to avoid the congestion on Prairie.

1	Planning Council	10/08/2019	Forwarded	Planning Commission	10/16/2019	Pass
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Action Text: A motion was made by Mrs. Vacek, seconded by Mrs. Morgan, that this agenda item be Forwarded to the Planning Commission, on the agenda for 10/16/2019. The motion carried by voice vote.

Notes: Mrs. Vacek said there is really nothing to review on this one. I make a motion to move this forward to the October 16th Planning Commission. Mrs. Morgan seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2	Planning Commission	10/16/2019	Forwarded	Building, Zoning, and Economic Development Committee	10/23/2019	Pass
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Action Text: A motion was made by Mr. Cameron, seconded by Mr. Reynolds, that this agenda item be Forwarded to the Building, Zoning, and Economic Development Committee, on the agenda for 10/23/2019. The motion carried.

Notes: Mrs. Vacek said the Petitioner is requesting a Final Plan Revision. As you may recall, in October of 2018 the Petitioner did receive approval for a 503 space parking deck at the end of Southlawn, north of Prairie Street. At that time, the plan did show a gate across Southlawn Place just west of the deck's entrance/exit so that no vehicle can travel west. The intent was to filter the vehicles to the Prairie Street entrance, which aligned with Randall Road. As the parking deck has been built and they will be ready to open sometime in November, Aurora University is now concerned that without opening up Southlawn Place to vehicle movement that there will be backups of vehicles trying to enter and exit the parking deck. Therefore, they are seeking the removal of the gate across Southlawn Place to allow the access to be more evenly distributed. I just wanted to clarify one other thing. The Aurora University's Master Plan did show Southlawn Place as an access into the campus. The intent of the Master Plan was to eventually vacate the remaining portion of Southlawn Place for the use by the University. The vacation would not have taken place until such time that the one remaining house on Southlawn Place is acquired by the University. With that being said, staff has been working very hard with the University for several years. It's probably since I've been here, which is at least 15 years in regard to construction of a parking deck on the campus as well as the parking issues in the overall area of the University. We do feel that making the parking deck more easily available will definitely help in maximizing the use of the parking deck, as well as minimizing the issues of parking on the streets in the University area. I will turn it over to the University.

Mr. Sieben said we also have Bob Greene, who is our City of Aurora Traffic Engineer, so if there any traffic related questions Bob could also answer those.

Good evening. I'm Bruce Goldsmith representing the University. Tracey remembers 15 years. Ever since I have represented the University, which goes back farther than that, the neighbors all around the campus have been concerned about parking on the streets around the campus. I'm sure some of you have been at hearings where that came up. So over time, the University, which started with having about 500 spaces on campus now has over 1,000 spaces on campus and is out of room. So as the neighbors of the larger community kept seeing more cars on their streets, the cry back was to the University to please do something about the parking situation. The city has done various things along the way. They have put no parking on one side of a street. It just pushed the cars out farther into the neighborhood, so where we didn't used to see parking on Le Grand on the east side or out toward Buell and beyond on the west side, or farther north that that was all being observed. So the University did a parking study in 2015 and kind of showed where the distribution of parking was around the campus and it was substantial and it continues to be substantial. When the University could actually put the funds together to do something significant, they originally considered doing a 300 plus parking garage. The University finally decided to up it to 500 spaces, 503 to be exact. The idea was that the University could control its staff and its employees to maximize the use of the garage, which would give the students then the 1,000 surface spaces on campus to park and would relieve the pressure on the neighborhood. It used to be a problem because the students were actually not the most courteous parkers. That's not a problem anymore. We don't have any real complaints from the neighborhood about how students are parking. There were problems in the past parking over a driveway, parking onto the grass and most of the streets are a rural cross section as you may know, so there is no curb and gutter and they are fairly narrow because that's the way it was designed when those subdivisions were built, many in the 50's and 60's. In order to address the problem, the University has consolidated parking on campus with this deck, but to make it efficient we've noticed already that Prairie is getting stacked up and we haven't even opened the deck yet and to make a circulation pattern that makes sense, we need to open up that gate and have two way access. It is a public street. The one neighbor that's on the street has benefited from the fact that

because the gate is there it is really a private drive to their home. Well it is a public street in the Master Plan, which has been in place for years. That street was to be vacated and become University property. This is not the first time this has happened. This would be the fifth street where the city has vacated for the University. So Kensington on the east side, Calumet and Randall on the south side and Southlawn on the west side and then Evanslawn in the most recent expansion of the University campus is the designated to be available for vacation if the University acquires the homes on the west side of Evanslawn. This is nothing new. This plan has been in place a long time. We really need to think about the larger neighborhood, which is currently having 400 to 500 cars on the streets. Some of that is appropriate. We always had an arrangement in the Master Plan that the city recognized that students and faculty and employees would have the right to park in the street just like anybody else, but what we're trying to do is take as much of that traffic off the street and put it on the University campus and this is a major improvement which is totally intended to benefit the neighborhood, and I mean the larger neighborhood. I think it has been welcomed by the larger group in many meetings we've had over the last number of years and is responsive to many complaints over a longer period of time that the University should do more about parking. It is an investment that could have been a library that's a parking deck and it is being done to relieve overall parking problems in the neighborhood. We also know that about half the traffic comes from the east and half the traffic comes from the west, so in order to distribute the traffic, it makes sense to have them come out of the garage and be able to go in two different directions. It is in that framework that we are looking to remove the fence, which was really a courtesy some time ago that probably shouldn't have been done, just like right now there is no parking on either side of the street on Southlawn, which was a courtesy to the remaining neighbor by the city. That just means that those cars that could have parked there are parking out in the neighborhood now. We are trying to eliminate that problem and do something more beneficial to the larger community and that's the purpose of this change. I'd be glad to answer questions.

Ms. Tidwell said could you show, or could someone show, on the map where the gate is?

Mrs. Vacek said it is basically kind of where that numbering is.

Chairman Pilmer said that's a fence that goes along the westerly side of the parking deck and around that home and that continues across Southlawn.

Mrs. Vacek said correct.

Mr. Goldsmith said and the reason it's a fence and not a structure is that it is still an emergency access point, so we have to be able to open it if emergency vehicles have to come in. In the interim, that was the way it was handled. Now that we have already 1,000 cars coming to the campus, we are now going to have 1,500 cars coming to the campus and we need all the ways that we can get access to the campus to be successful. Otherwise, we'll have the same problem. People won't want to use it and then they will be back in the neighborhood. The University is absolutely committed to fully using the garage to minimize the impact on that larger neighborhood.

Ms. Tidwell said I'm not sure of whom I should ask this question, but since the parking ramp was approved last fall, was this not foreseen?

Mr. Goldsmith said it was probably an oversight at the time because it was a historical accommodation for what were at that point 3 or 4 neighbors on Southlawn and while we were at the surface level, we really didn't need Southlawn to get access. Now that we have a parking deck, we realize, and decided on how to circulate and maximize use of the parking deck. It is kind of an unusual structure. It is called a double helix. The ramps are like this. You come in and go up to the top and come down the other side. In order to get the best circulation, we need to be able to get people out and also go in a couple of directions. So if they come out and they all have to go back to Randall, you've got all the people coming in on Randall, all the people going out on Randall and it is going to be a nightmare. As we got more into how we were going to handle circulation we realized that we needed to deal with the fence.

Ms. Tidwell said and Randall is on the east side of the ramp?

Mr. Goldsmith said Randall is on the east side and it accesses Prairie. Just to give you a little history, just a one minute history, when the University decided to grow originally there was no right to expand. When I first got involved quite a few years ago, we started expanding to the south. The neighbors, generally, wanted the University to expand to the south and the city wanted the University to use Prairie as the main entrance to the campus. All of the development has been south of kind of the center of the campus down to Prairie. All the new buildings are basically in that new expanded footprint and now Prairie is the main access, but we can't come all at one point on Randall when Evanslawn is also a good point of access, especially since about half the traffic is going west or coming from the west it makes to disperse the traffic so some of it would come out of the garage going down Southlawn and some of it would go back to Randall and come out Prairie east.

Ms. Tidwell said this might be a question for staff. Staff also did not anticipate these traffic issues?

Mr. Greene said I don't know if I really have an answer to that because I recently got involved with it. Do you guys know?

Mr. Sieben said there was always, obviously, the two access points for the deck, one on Southlawn and one on what was Randall Road to the east side. At the time when this was approved, as Bruce states, it was apparently satisfactory to the University and the city didn't question that.

Chairman Pilmer said I think you mentioned it earlier, but eventually Southlawn will be vacated, but not until the one remaining property is acquired by the University. Is there any timeline?

Mr. Goldsmith said from the first time we had an expansion into Expansion Area #1, the city has always insisted and the University has always agreed, that no one would be forced to sell their home, that there would never be condemnation and that the owners could decide when and if they would move. So the University has bought 30 some houses over time, over many years, almost 20 years, only upon being approached by the owner. When we went through the construction process, I would say to you to show how much the University bent over backwards, the contractor was so kind to the neighbor that the neighbor invited the contractor to lunch at the end of the project. We've been doing everything we can to accommodate, but now we have to look at the larger good and we have to make this parking deck work and to make it work we need to have the circulation that we are talking about.

Mrs. Duncan said is there only one home now you are saying is left on Southlawn?

Mr. Goldsmith said there is. It is the only home in the expansion...

Mrs. Duncan said your home, okay. Let me ask you this. Seeing that you now, and hindsight is always 20/20, need the Southlawn entrance/exit point, when and how was this family notified of such a significant change in what they anticipated was going to happen? How was that done? As you said, you worked to be a good neighbor. I have a degree from Aurora University. I was one of those people that was parking who knows where, wherever I could find a spot for a number of years.

Mr. Goldsmith said when it first came up and we realized we actually needed a Final Plan Amendment, the University met with the homeowner.

Mrs. Duncan said and how long ago was that?

Mr. Goldsmith said several months ago.

Mrs. Duncan said it's been months?

Member of the audience said no, it's been weeks.

Mrs. Duncan said I understand the overall good. I understand everybody's points.

Chairman Pilmer said I'm sorry, this isn't a public hearing so I can't take any testimony.

Mr. Goldsmith said just be clear, before we filed for the Final Plan amendment, we met and tried to explore the options.

Mr. Chambers said I have a question for Bob. Has there been any consideration on increasing the visibility of sight once you are coming south on Evanslawn to Prairie then to go east? Currently the college students are parking all the way up to Evanslawn. Is there any consideration of making that curb yellow further down creating a no parking for those that are turning left, which will be heading east, to prevent any accidents there?

Mr. Greene said we can certainly look at that. I don't want to say it is a wait and see, but while the garage is being built, there are some existing parking restrictions, but we want to be sensitive to maximize the available street parking, but certainly that's one of the things we will be looking at.

Mr. Chambers said I would suggest, or recommend, that that's moved up highly on your consideration. I was in the area today looking at this area and I've been driving a long time and most of these kids, I was driving before they were born, and I almost got t-boned today making a left turn because I couldn't see the cars coming down Prairie. So that would be something I would very much consider a recommendation of making a better viewpoint of turning east on Prairie Street.

Mr. Greene said that is duly noted and we'll look into that.

Mr. Chambers said thank you.

Mr. Cameron said Bob, in general the parking really extends to the entrance to the Country Club. I live in that neighborhood. I usually get a chance to look at it twice a day.

Mr. Greene said I've seen it all the way back to Western.

Mr. Cameron said hopefully that will be gone, but maybe it needs to be encouraged.

Mr. Goldsmith said from the University's standpoint, we're asking for a little bit of time to see how this all works. Remember, there are 1,000 cars moving in and out daily. They are coming down Evanslawn now as you saw. They've been coming down Evanslawn for the last 30 years or more. We're mindful of that, but we also want to see how this flow is going to work. Are the traffic patterns going to follow what the study showed when we looked at this a couple of years ago? It is going to be a work in progress. Obviously, we are going to be in direct communication with the city and we'll see what needs to be done. I will say this though, there was no indication when we did the traffic study that people would use Southlawn going west as a bypass. If they are going west, they are probably going to Orchard and they are going to Prairie to get there because you can't zoom down Southlawn. As a practical matter, Prairie only has one stop at Edgelawn before you get to the stoplight at Orchard, so it is the preferred route to get there if you are going that way. Obviously, if you are going east like you described, there is a whole bunch of stop signs, but again, Prairie is still the best way to go east.

Mr. Chambers said no doubt. I agree. I think Prairie would be beneficial. I just think that creating a better visual for those that are turning east would be beneficial, especially when you are looking at the potential volume of cars that will be coming through Southlawn that potentially could be turning east.

Mr. Goldsmith said what has happened is as more no parking has been put on one side of the streets north, south and west of the campus, more people ended up parking on Prairie and that's why Mr. Cameron is seeing that. So when we get 500 cars off the neighborhood, I think you are going to see less parking on Prairie as well, or you may see no parking on Prairie because we'll be able to absorb the parking on the University campus.

Mr. Chambers said I think from a safety standpoint I think it would be very beneficial for the University and the City of Aurora to definitely consider this.

Mr. Goldsmith said there will be a number of intersection considerations. There is a question of whether we'll need a stop sign at Randall to control traffic, but because there is a new left turn lane being put in there, our Traffic Engineer says that that should function to allow people to queue until they can make the left turn in to Randall to go into the garage. I totally agree with you. The University is not resistant to making accommodations and working with the city on that. We have to see how it works.

Mr. Chambers said thank you.

Chairman Pilmer said I just have a question. I think you mentioned it earlier as well, but everyone is probably looking forward to the opening of a 500 slot parking deck as we've heard for a number of years about parking in the neighborhood, but we also now are hearing that I guess all the special architects and engineers missed that they need now a week away from opening that they need a second opening of egress in and out. That is a public street and I understand that, but what happens if we fast forward and cars cannot get in and out of deck so students chose to park back on the streets and the deck is only being utilized at 40% or 50% capacity and we will have 200 or 300 cars on the street? How are they going to promote use of the deck versus the parking in the streets?

Mr. Goldsmith said so the University controls a larger part of the population that parks and that is staff, professors, and general employees of the University. The University is confident that looking at that group, which is hundreds of people who come to the campus, that they will be able to maximize the use of the garage. The University is not spending \$10 million dollars to have a deck partially empty. Besides, the University had made a commitment to the neighborhood to make this work and whatever it takes to make it work, whether they have to make some of the students have stickers and they have to use the deck or whether we can do it by using their employees as the primary users of the deck, the University is confident it will be able to maximize the use of the deck. One thing I should note, because I wasn't aware of this, on this Friday the north side of Prairie from Calumet to the house that we own at the middle of the block is going to be no parking, so that's already one that's going to be done.

Ms. Tidwell said so this wasn't foreseen last fall. As I understand it, the ramp isn't open yet, correct?

Mr. Goldsmith said correct.

Ms. Tidwell said how do we know now that there will be this problem when we didn't last fall?

Mr. Goldsmith said it was not that there wasn't a problem. We overlooked the restriction on the fence. It should have come down probably a couple of years ago.

Ms. Tidwell said so how did it come up now?

Mr. Goldsmith said while you are building a deck, you are thinking about getting it done. When it starting getting to the point where it was close to being used, we started a more detailed discussion of how are we going to manage to maximize the use and then it became obvious that we need to use Southlawn, which is a public street, and take advantage of that as an additional way of getting in and out.

Mrs. Vacek said staff would recommend approval of the Building, Zoning and Economic Development Committee Resolution approving a Revision to the Final Plan on Lot 1 of Aurora University 2nd Resubdivision to remove the gate across Southlawn Place to allow vehicle access entering or leaving the campus by means of Southlawn Place located at 1405 Prairie Street.

MOTION OF APPROVAL WAS MADE BY: Mr. Cameron

MOTION SECONDED BY: Mr. Reynolds

AYES: Mr. Cameron, Mr. Chambers, Mr. Divine, Mrs. Duncan, Mr. Elsbree, Mr. Hull, Mr. Reynolds

NAYS: Ms. Tidwell

Mrs. Vacek said this will next be heard at the Building, Zoning and Economic Development Committee on Wednesday, October 23, 2019, at 4:00 p.m. on the fifth floor of this building.

Aye: 7 At Large Cameron, Aurora Twnshp Representative Reynolds, Fox Metro Representative Divine, SD 204 Representative Duncan, Fox Valley Park District Representative Chambers, SD 131 Representative Hull and At Large Elsbree
Nay: 1 At Large Tidwell
