

STAFF REPORT

Case Number: 18-SP-28
Request: Detailed Site Plan for a fire station consisting of two fire truck bays, 8 bed living quarter with a 740 square-foot community room, and open space improvements.
Acres: 3.85 Acres
Address: 13333 Alpha Link
Petitioner: City of Farmers Branch, Fire Department

Background:

In 2012, the City of Farmers Branch Strategic Plan-Commerce and Location Study was done to evaluate response time for Fire and EMS and repositioning Fire Station No. 2 from its current location at 3940 Spring Valley Road. This study was presented to City Council in 2013.

The 3.85-acre subject property, located on the south side of Alpha Road and at the intersection of Valley View Lane and Alpha Link, was identified as the future site for the fire station. After several months of deliberation and discussion with City representatives (i.e. City Council, Parks and Recreation Board, staff), the City purchased the subject property from Dallas County Community College in the summer of 2014. A community meeting was held later that summer where the community expressed support of the project. Although the relocation of the fire station was selected as a top priority for the City by the Citizens Bond Committee, the project was removed from the bond package and will be funded with a Certificate of Obligation as it is a public safety project.

In December 2017, City Council approved the selection of the project's architect and construction manager, PGAL Architects. Two community meetings (February and April 2018) were held on the design and scope of the project, in which City Council was in attendance. In May 2018, PGAL presented a conceptual design to City Council and were directed to continue with the design as presented.

Existing Conditions

The subject property is vacant and is commonly known as Holiday Park. The property has frontage along streets on all sides; to the northwest is Alpha Road, to the south of the property is Valley View Lane. Across Valley View Lane, towards the southwest are detached single-family residences located in the One Family Residential District-3 (R-3) and to the southeast are multi-family residential properties within the Multi-Family Residential District-2 (MF-2). To the west, across Alpha Link, is Granite Tower office building located in Planned Development No. 1 (PD-1). Brookhaven College is located to the north, across Alpha Road. The subject property and area to the north (Brookhaven College) are located within Planned Development District No. 20 (PD-20).

PD-20 was adopted in 1975, which also granted a Specific Use Permit (SUP) to allow for college uses and established conditions for development in the district. Those conditions require properties within PD-20 to obtain site plan approval by the City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission prior to any development or improvement. Additionally, PD-20 requires that development other than for college use comply with the One Family Residential District-2 (R-2) standards. The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO) classifies a fire station as a local government public facilities use which is allowed by right in R-2 zoning districts.

Site Design

The Detailed Site Plan proposes the development of the subject property in two phases. There is an existing drainage swale that bisects the property, which will be preserved and served as a natural barrier between the two phases. The first phase will be the construction of the fire station on the eastern portion of the property consisting of 10,372 square foot building and associated parking. The fire station will house two bays for emergency vehicles and fire engines, eight sleeping quarters for on-duty personnel, and a 740 square foot community classroom. Also proposed to the southeast of the property, is a seating area with a picnic table just south of the fire station building.

The fire station's primary access will be from Alpha Link. Emergency vehicles are anticipated to enter the site from Alpha Link and exit to Alpha Road. Due to need for emergency vehicles to travel east and west on Alpha Road, the existing raised median on Alpha Road will require modification to provide a median opening to enable emergency vehicles to turn left. The existing median on Alpha Link, near the intersection with Valley View Lane, will also need to be removed to allow for the turning radius needed for the fire engines onto Alpha Link.

The proposed fire station will be setback over 30 feet from all property lines. The building is one story with a 1,092-square foot mezzanine area on the northeast side of the building, above the vehicle bays. The community room is proposed to be located on the south side of the building, near the main entry and parking area.

The second phase of the development pertains to the west side of the property; these improvements consist of open space and sidewalks along the street frontage of Valley View Lane and Alpha Road. The sidewalks are intended to connect to the future trail on the north side of Alpha Road at the future pedestrian crossing at Alpha Road and Valley View Lane, which is currently in design. Other improvements proposed are two seating areas that will be accessible and open to the general public.

Elevations

The building is a one story with a mezzanine level and will have overall height of 24.5 feet in height. The highest portion of the building is oriented towards Alpha Road to allow for the storage of large fire engines within the bays. The scale of the building is reduced towards Valley View Lane, where visible from the residential areas. This portion of the building's height is approximately 19 feet.

All exterior building materials will consist of brick veneer, stone veneer and metal panel. The design of the building integrates window glazing and openings throughout all sides of the building to allow for natural light within the building. The combination of masonry materials and window glazing exceeds 75 percent for all exterior elevations, with the exception of the south façade (58 percent). The uniqueness of this facility combined with the need to design a fiscally responsible building that ensures public safety services is being provided to the community justifies exemption to the exterior design requirements. Additionally, the proposed building design has also been developed based upon extensive community feedback.

Parking

The Detailed Site Plan shows a total of 21 parking spaces accessible from Alpha Link. The fire station is intended to serve various functions and uses within the building. The portion that is proposed to serve as living quarters (eight dorms) and offices (368 square feet) for staff require 17 parking spaces. The area that is intended to serve as storage, including the storage of emergency vehicles, (4,064 square feet) requires 14 parking spaces. Thus, the CZO requires 21 parking spaces, which are proposed to be provided for on the property.

In addition to these required spaces for the fire station, a community room (740 square feet) is also proposed. The required parking for the community room is 11 parking spaces. The adjacent office building, Granite Tower, has agreed to provide the off-site parking required for the community room.

Landscape and Open Spaces

Properties in PD-20 that develop as a use other than a college use must be developed according to R-2 district standards. Furthermore, R-districts are exempt from the landscaping requirements provided within the CZO. Although the site is not required to have minimum landscaping standards, phase one (fire station) proposes to provide significant landscaping improvements, including installation of new berms to maintain the rolling landscape that exists today and preservation of large existing trees throughout the site.

Along the perimeter of the fire station and parking areas, shrubs and shade trees are proposed consisting of Crape Myrtle, Warren's Red Possumhaw, Yaupon, Nellie R. Stevens, Sea Green Juniper, Oakleaf Hydrangea, and Indian Hawthorne, to mention a few. The landscape plan shows the preservation of six trees and installation of large berms at each corner along Alpha Link. Additional shade and ornamental trees are provided throughout the site. Catawba Crape Myrtles are shown lining one side of the main walkway and entry to the fire station from Alpha Link.

Within phase two, additional trees will be provided along the streets to enhance the natural state of the area and near the proposed seating areas. Five existing trees will be preserved within this phase.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the Detailed Site Plan.