



GLPC AGENDA ITEM # 5

SEPTEMBER 25, 2023

Conditional Use Request by Kristie Jenkins File #: CU-2023-03

Ms. Kristie Jenkins is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for an “Event Center” in a Highway Commercial (C-H) zoning district. The subject property consists of 3.77 acres located at 2525 North Ashley Street. This is the “Garden Plaza” commercial center located along the east side of North Ashley Street, south of Emory Street and directly across from the North Campus of VSU. The applicant is leasing Suite “M” and Suite “O” (combined adjacent tenant spaces) which are located near the middle of the Plaza, and which were previously occupied by the “25 North” restaurant/nightclub.

The subject property is located within an **Institutional Activity Center (IAC)** Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The property is also located within the Urban Commercial Corridor Overlay District (UCCOD).

The applicant has stated she would like to use this as a home base (business office) for her existing mobile “Fun Time Party Rental & More” business, as well as hosting events on the premises. The applicant has submitted a very well-written Letter of Intent (see attached) which adequately describes the scope and operation of the proposed venture. However, the submitted floor plan/sketch indicates a bar area with an adjoining kitchen, a stage, and seating for 50+ persons. This gives the impression of a facility that is a little more intensive and with more of a focus on nighttime activities, than what the Letter describes.

Nonetheless, staff’s major concern with the proposed use is with the deficiencies of the site itself, particularly with its general lack of adequate on-site parking and lack of available overflow. This overall commercial center is non-compliant in terms of minimum required parking (that is available), and functional design of the parking layout, etc.. The commercial “plaza” portion of the site (excluding the motel portion) contains 16,000-sf GFA which requires a minimum of 72 parking spaces. There are only 49 spaces in this portion of the site, and some of these have sub-standard dimensions. The existing ingress and egress from the street, and to the buildings themselves, is adequate. However, the site layout in terms of parking space dimensions and access aisles is substandard in places, and this overall layout design has a high potential to cause on-site congestion. Even with 3-4 of the existing storefronts being currently vacant, staff has witnessed the parking lot being 100% full on multiple occasions. Adding another commercial use that has the potential for greater occupancy than a typical business in this complex, could be very problematic.

It should also be pointed out that the applicant currently has two (2) active Business Licenses for their party rental business at 1412 East Park Avenue, and also at 2157 Bemiss Road. Each of these locations is within an existing larger commercial center, with significantly MORE parking available and overall better site access than the subject property. Either of these locations, or another similarly conducive location in the City, would seem to be a much better choice. Staff believes that the proposed use, as described in the Letter of Intent, is a very good business model and proposal, but it needs to be in a location where such a business can flourish without potentially overloading its site capacity. Staff did consider recommending substantial conditions of approval (such as very limited occupancy and hours of operation) in order to mitigate the potential impacts. However, such limitations seemed unduly extreme for the proposed use, when the simpler solution would be to find a more suitable location.

Staff Recommendation: Find inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommend **DENIAL** to the City Council.