
TO: St. Francis Planning Commission
FROM: Beth Richmond, Planner
SUBJECT: First Baptist Church Expansion – Site Plan
DATE: 9-11-2024 for 9-18-2024 meeting
LOCATION: 22940 St. Francis Blvd NW (PIN 31-34-24-44-0008)
COMP PLAN: Public/Institutional
ZONING: R-2 Medium Density Detached and Attached Residential

OVERVIEW:

First Baptist Church has submitted a site plan request for an expansion of their existing facility at 22940 St Francis Blvd NW. This expansion would include the construction of an auditorium that is approximately 6,400 SF in size with seating for over 400 people and a 500 SF storage area. The existing auditorium would then be converted into new restrooms and a multipurpose-space to be used for a variety of functions. The project also includes the construction of additional parking to serve the expansion, the improvement of the southern access drive, and the replacement of the existing monument sign. Site plan review through the Planning Commission and City Council is required for an expansion of this magnitude.



REVIEW PROCEDURE

60-Day Land Use Application Review Process

Pursuant to Minnesota State Statutes Section 15.99, local government agencies are required to approve or deny land use requests within 60 days. Within the 60-day period, an automatic extension of no more than 60 days can be obtained by providing the applicant written notice containing the reason for the extension and specifying how much additional time is needed. The deadline for the land use request is October 20, 2024.

ANALYSIS

Land Use

The site is primarily guided for public/institutional use by the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and is zoned R-2 Medium Density Attached and Detached Residential. The proposed expansion is consistent with both the Comprehensive Plan and the R-2 District.

Site Plan

The proposed improvements include the construction of a roughly 6,400 SF auditorium on the south side of the existing building. A new monument sign will replace the existing sign, and additional parking will be provided to accommodate the expansion. The southern access drive will be improved to meet City standards.

Architectural Requirements

The proposed building addition meets architectural requirements for institutional buildings in the R-2 District. Building façade materials include stone, stucco, and exterior insulation and finish systems (EIFS). EIFS is a type of building cladding system, also known as synthetic stucco, which provides an insulated, water-resistant, and finished surface for exterior walls. Windows are proposed at regular intervals along the eastern façade of the church facing Hwy 47. The roof is proposed to be constructed with asphalt shingles, which is an acceptable material for an institutional structure.

Streets/Access

This site abuts Hwy 47 to the east. Two existing gravel drives provide access to the site. The northern drive accesses Pederson Dr NW while the southern drive accesses 229th Ave NW. MnDOT reviewed the proposed site plan and did not have concerns with the location of these drives and their proximity to Hwy 47 at this time.

The southern access drive is anticipated to experience the majority of the increase in traffic resulting from the proposed expansion. The applicant has provided a circulation plan which demonstrates adequate space for vehicle stacking during high traffic times (school arrival/departure, Sunday morning service, Wednesday evening programs). The southern drive is proposed to be improved with pavement, curb, and gutter in accordance with City standards. This drive will also be changed to a right-in/right-out access to improve safety within the intersection area. No improvements or changes are proposed for the northern access drive.

Parking

116 parking stalls exist on the site currently. The applicant is proposing to improve the existing eastern parking area with paving, curbing, and striping and increase the number of stalls to accommodate the proposed expansion. The following table shows the required and proposed parking spaces for the building expansion broken down by the uses occurring on the site:

Use	Requirement	New Occupancy	Required	Proposed
School	1 space for every 7 students	330 students	47 spaces	
Place of Worship	1 space for every 5 persons of building occupancy	644 persons	129 spaces	
Total				140 spaces

The number of proposed parking stalls is less than the number of total stalls required for the school and place of worship uses together. However, the school and worship uses do not overlap. The school use takes place during the weekdays while the worship use occurs on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Therefore, the most intensive parking requirement should be used to calculate required number of stalls. In this case, this is the requirement for the place of worship use. As more stalls are provided than required by City Code for the place of worship, (140 vs. 129), the proposed plan meets requirements for parking stalls provided.

Lighting

A lighting plan is required to be submitted with any site plan application. Exterior illumination casting light onto a public street may not measure more than 1 footcandle at the centerline of the roadway and 0.4 footcandle at the property line. The applicant has submitted a photometric plan demonstrating that this requirement is met. Specification sheets for each lighting type proposed must be submitted to the City to demonstrate that each light fixture contains a cutoff which directs the light at an angle of 90 degrees or less.

Landscaping

An individual landscaping plan for the site was submitted and reviewed by Staff. The applicant is proposing to plant 15 trees of varying species including maple, spruce, crab apple, and honey locust. The proposed tree mix meets requirements for overall number of caliper inches of trees required for the addition (22") and tree diversity.

In order to break up long expanses of parking areas, one tree is required to be planted for every 60 lineal feet of parking lot perimeter. The eastern parking lot perimeter is 600 lineal feet. Therefore, 10 parking lot perimeter trees are required. The proposed plan shows 8 perimeter trees, and so two additional trees are required around the perimeter of the parking lot.

Trees are required within parking lots at a rate of 1 tree per 10 interior parking stalls. 43 interior parking lot stalls are proposed within the eastern parking lot; therefore, 5 trees must be planted in islands within the parking lot. The proposed plan shows 4 interior parking lot trees. Therefore, one additional parking lot tree is required. The applicant must also provide documentation that each interior parking lot tree will have at least 200 SF of area in which to grow to ensure its survival and longevity.

Signage

The applicant is proposing to replace the existing sign with a monument sign located within the eastern parking lot. The proposed sign includes two, 20 SF faces and stands 9'4" tall. These specifications meet the City's requirements for institutional uses in residential zoning districts. A formal sign permit application is required for official sign approval.

Utilities/Stormwater

The site is proposed to be served by City utilities. The City has adequate capacity to serve a development of this size. A stormwater pond is proposed northwest of the principal building. The City Engineer has reviewed the proposed stormwater facility and provided comments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends approval of the site plan for the expansion of First Baptist Church with the following conditions and findings of fact:

Proposed Findings of Fact

1. The site plan is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan with proposed conditions.
2. The site plan meets the standards listed in the City Zoning Code with proposed conditions.

Conditions of Approval

1. All final plans shall be signed by the appropriate professional.
2. Any future addition(s) to this site will require a formal site plan review process.
3. All comments provided within the City Engineer's memo dated September 11, 2024 shall be addressed to Engineer's satisfaction.
4. Improvements to the existing parking lots west and south of the existing building are not included as part of the proposed site plan. At the time these parking lots are reconstructed, they shall be improved to City Code standards, including adding curb and gutter.
5. Specification sheets for each lighting type proposed shall be submitted to the City to demonstrate that each light fixture contains a cutoff which directs the light at an angle of 90 degrees or less.
6. The landscaping plan shall be revised to show the following:
 - a. A total of 10 parking lot perimeter trees are required. Two additional trees are required.
 - b. A total of 5 interior parking lot trees are required. One additional tree is required.
 - c. Applicant shall provide documentation demonstrating that at least 200 SF of space will be provided for each interior parking lot tree.
7. All signage shall meet Code requirements and shall be reviewed through the City's sign permit process.
8. Other conditions identified during the review process by Staff, the Planning Commission, or the City Council.

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED:

After discussion, the Planning Commission could take one of the following actions:

1. Recommend approval with the conditions and findings of fact as presented by Staff.
2. Recommend denial with findings of fact as presented by Staff.
3. Table the request to the next Planning Commission meeting and provide direction to Staff and the applicant as to the additional information needed.

Suggested Motion:

Move to recommend approval of the First Baptist Church expansion site plan with conditions and findings of fact as presented by Staff.

Attachments:

- City Engineer Memo dated September 11, 2024
- Applicant Submittals