Site Plan Review for the Reconstruction of a Parking Lot at 121 Butler Avenue West (Heritage Middle School) – ISD 197

REQUEST:
On behalf of Independent School District 197, ICS Builds has applied for a site plan review for the reconstruction of the existing parking lot at 121 Butler Avenue West (Heritage Middle School).

PROPOSAL:
ISD 197 has plans in motion to repair some of the school parking lots this spring/summer, most include a simple mill and overlay. However, the Heritage parking lot is being reconfigured to reduce the size of the larger southwest parking lot to accommodate a parent drop-off and pick-up loop. The loop is intended to improve the process and overall safety of the drop off and pick up as well as creating separation between the loop and the regular parking lot.

Attachments:
Application
Engineering and WSB Memos
Staff Presentation
Submitted plans
CURRENT USES AND ZONING:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Property</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Zoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Properties to North</td>
<td>Residential (Heritage Middle School)</td>
<td>R1 – Single Family Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties to East</td>
<td>Residential (Harmon Park &amp; Single Family Homes)</td>
<td>R1 – Single Family Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties to South</td>
<td>Residential (Single Family Homes)</td>
<td>R1 – Single Family Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties to West</td>
<td>Residential (Single Family Homes)</td>
<td>R1 – Single Family Residential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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SITE PLAN ANALYSIS:

Parking Setbacks
The parking setbacks for Residential zoning districts are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Code Setbacks</th>
<th>Existing Setbacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front (Butler Ave.)</td>
<td>20 ft.</td>
<td>50 ft./20 ft.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rear adj. to “R”</td>
<td>20 ft.</td>
<td>16 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Harmon Park &amp; SFH)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side adj. to “R”</td>
<td>20 ft.</td>
<td>20 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(East)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side adj. to “R”</td>
<td>20 ft.</td>
<td>32 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(West)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*The property is not currently platted, however will be done so prior to construction of the parking lot. These two items are typically done together (site plan and platting), however the applicant’s surveyor estimated the timeline for platting this property to be abnormally long. Keeping the future platting process in mind, City Staff has noted both the existing setbacks (property line centered on Butler Avenue) as well as what the anticipated setbacks will be once the property is platted and has dedicated the necessary right-of-way. According to Dakota County Staff, the anticipated amount of dedicated half right-of-way for this section and area of Butler Avenue is 40 feet (feet from the centerline). Above City Staff has detailed the current (unplatted) setback and the minimum setback for the parking lot.

The rear yard parking setback varies, as the property is not a perfect square and has a rear yard drive aisle and the bus loading and unloading area that both sit adjacent to the rear yard. Both are approximately 16 feet from the rear property lines at the closest points. However, as the applicant is not alerting either of these two sections, they remain legal non-conforming (better known as being “grandfathered”). The side yard parking setbacks will remain unchanged as the parking lot alterations take place essentially within the footprint of the existing parking lot.

Parking Lot, Stall Counts, and Dimensions
The submitted plans show a total of 144 stalls. However, per code for the residential districts, there must be a curbed island at the end of every row of parking. This reduces the number of parking stalls,
specifically in the western most parking lot, from 118 stalls down to 110 stalls, 136 stalls in total for the entire site. (See image below detailing the required curbed islands, shown in yellow).

Code requires a minimum parking for schools as at least one stall for every seven students, as well as an additional parking stall of every three classrooms. The parking numbers are as follows,

**Minimum Parking:**
Code – 1 stall/7 students + 1 stall/3 classrooms
- 782 students/7 = 112 stalls + 42 classrooms/3 = 14 stalls
  - Minimum number of parking stalls required = 126

The site complies with the minimum parking counts as it offers 136 stalls after adding the curbed island in the western most lot.

The proposed parking stall dimensions are 9 feet wide by 18 feet deep, with a 24 foot wide drive aisle in between. The code requires parking stalls be at least 9 feet wide and 20 feet deep, with a drive aisle width of at least 22 feet. Therefore, City Staff is recommending as a condition of approval that the parking stall and drive aisle measurements are altered to align with the code. With the dimensions of the overall parking lot being unchanged by this requirement, it is a minor alteration.

Included in the pick-up and drop-off loop, are two angled handicap parking stalls. These stalls are to be used for the pick-up and drop-off, but will accommodate handicap students that may require additional time to get in and out of the vehicles. The district stated that they have teachers and other school staff out in the parking lot during peak times to assist with traffic, which will help to ensure optimal traffic flow as well as the appropriate use of the two stalls within the loop.

**Curbing**
The current parking lot has some full curbing as well as some surmountable curb. Code requires that all curbing in parking lots be B-6-12. Therefore, City staff is recommending as a condition of approval that
plans be altered to include B-6-12 curbing throughout as required by code unless otherwise approved by the City Engineer.

Site Access
Currently the site has four access points onto Butler Avenue, which is a County road; therefore, City Staff sent the site plan to Dakota County for review. While a more formal review by the full Dakota County Plat Commission will be done with the submittal of the plat, a few comments and recommendations were made by County Staff which have since been incorporated into the site plan.

With each individual access point serving a different purpose (from left to right, main parking, drop off and pick up, visitor parking, and bus parking) the school will utilize gates to limit and control access to different areas throughout different times of the day. Since this will limit the number of access points being used at any one time, the county is comfortable leaving the four curb cuts to remain as they are currently.

Aside from the four individual access points in and out of the site, there is also a connection between the main (western most) parking lot and the pick-up/drop-off loop that can be used as a right in only into the main lot as you are exiting the loop (see the yellow circle below). This was to avoid requiring vehicles needing to utilize Butler in the event that a driver needed to return to the school, but did not need to utilize the loop (the example provided was if a student accidentally left their backpack in the car).
Lighting
The submitted plans do show some lighting extending beyond the property line, as the code requires that all lighting to not exceed zero foot candles at abutting property lines. City Staff is recommending as a condition of approval that the lighting plan be amended to comply with this requirement.

Landscaping
As this scope of this project is limited to reconstructing the parking within the existing footprint, there will be no removal or replacement of trees. However, with the installation of the required curbed islands, code also requires at least one quality tree measuring at least 1.5 inches in diameter for each curbed island, as well as grass, ground cover, or shrubs. The islands cannot be filled in with additional impervious surfaces such as concrete or asphalt. Similarly, in order to facilitate the maintenance and longevity of these landscaped areas, the code also requires that these curbed islands be irrigated. Therefore, City Staff is including this as a recommended condition of approval.

Stormwater/Engineering Review
The proposed site plan was by the City’s engineering consultant at WSB. Further detailed in the memo, the review included storm water run-off, rate control, etcetera, as well as recommending specifics around types and sizes of storm pipes to be used for appropriate drainage. City Staff is recommending as a condition of approval, that the applicant comply with all items outlined in the WSB Engineering memo dated April 6, 2022.

Coincidentally, just before City Staff held their initial internal review of this plan, a City employee from Engineering was on site due to the single family homes to the west of the parking lot seeing some seasonal flooding. With the site plan and new curb and gutter being incorporated to the site, all drainage issues will be resolved as water will be directed to the east of the site before entering the City’s storm sewer system. Additionally, the district has also agreed to alter the location of the snow that accumulates after plowing the larger parking lot.

While the above items are going to fully address any previous drainage issues, this prompted a thoughtful discussion among City Staff to potentially decrease the western most drive aisle in order to decrease total amount of impervious surface. This is included in the Staff memo from Engineering in item number five. In response, the applicant stated that the longer length of the drive aisle is necessary due to longer queueing lines as staff and others exit this parking lot.

Plat Requirement
As mentioned above, since the existing parcel is unplatted, Staff is recommending a condition of approval requiring that the applicant submit a preliminary/final plat application for the property prior to the issuance of a building permit for the project.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:
Staff recommends APPROVAL of the SITE PLAN for the parking lot reconstruction at 121 Butler Avenue West, subject to the submitted plans and the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall apply for all necessary permits, including those from the City of West St. Paul as well as those from the Dakota County right-of-way permitting office.
2. The site plan shall be amended to show 20 feet deep parking stalls and 22 feet wide drive aisles,
3. The plans shall be amended to contain B-6-12 curbing throughout the site, unless otherwise approved by the City Engineer,

4. The site plan shall be amended to include curbed islands at the end of each row of parking, the curbed islands shall be irrigated and contain grass, ground cover, or shrubs,

5. The landscape plan shall be amended to include at least one 1.5 caliper inch tree measuring at least four feet above grade in each curbed island for the parking lot,

6. The plans shall be amended so that all lighting levels do not exceed zero foot-candles at abutting property lines,

7. The applicant shall comply with the conditions outlined in the West St. Paul Engineering memo dated April 5th, 2022,

8. The applicant shall comply with all items detailed in the WSB Engineering memo dated April 6th, 2022, and

9. The applicant shall submit an application for a preliminary/final plat for the property prior to the issuance of a building permit for the project.