# PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT NON PUBLIC HEARING ITEM Public Hearing on variance only

PC Staff Report 7/22/15

ITEM NO 6: PRELIMINARY PLAT FOR NORTH LAWRENCE RIVERFRONT

**ADDITION (SLD)** 

**PP-2-1-12**: Consider a Preliminary Plat for North Lawrence Riverfront Addition, located at 401 North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. This subdivision includes variances related to block length, right-of-way dedication for N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street as a principal arterial, and connection of a local street to an arterial street. Submitted by Paul Werner Architects, for North Mass Redevelopment, LLC, Douglas County Kaw Drainage District, City of Lawrence, Kaw River Estates, LLC, HDD of Lawrence LLC, D & D Rentals of Lawrence LLC, Jeffrey W. Hatfield, Exchange Holdings LLC, Loosehead Investments LLC, and Riverfront Properties of Lawrence LLC, property owners of record.

#### **VARIANCE RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. Staff recommends approval of a block length in excess of 800'.
- 2. Staff recommends approval of reduced right-of-way dedication for N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street as a principal arterial street.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the Preliminary Plat for North Lawrence Riverfront Addition subject to the following condition:

1. Provision of a revised drawing to include access around tower per staff approval.

# **Reason for Request:**

Purpose of this application is to clarify property ownership boundaries as a preliminary development step and position the property for transfers of land ownership as development of the property is planned. Existing development is intended to remain in the interim.

## **KEY POINTS**

- Platting required as pre-development step.
- Easements and rights-of-way serving existing development will remain in the interim.
- Unused or undeveloped right-of-way will be vacated through this subdivision process.
- Current ownership includes both public and private property owners.

# **SUBDIVISION CITATIONS TO CONSIDER**

- This application is being reviewed under the Subdivision Regulations for Lawrence and Unincorporated Douglas County, effective Jan 10, 2012.
- Section 20-810 Subdivision Design Standards
- Section 20-813 (g) Variances

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Preliminary Plat

Attachment B: development concept from TIS

Attachment C: North Lawrence Improvement Association boundary map

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Attachment D: Development ownership parcel map.

Attachment E: Existing Structures Map

# ASSOCIATED CASES/OTHER ACTION REQUIRED Associated Cases:

Note: Zoning has been approved by the City Commission May 1, 2012 subject to approval and adoption of design guidelines. The design guidelines have not yet been approved.

- **Z-12-29-11**: Consider a request to rezone approximately 1.38 acres from IG (General Industrial) and CS (Commercial Strip) to CD (Downtown Commercial), located at 401 & 415 North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Submitted by Paul Werner Architects, for Exchange Holdings LLC, property owner of record.
- **Z-12-30-11**: Consider a request to rezone approximately 2.14 acres from IG (General Industrial) to CD (Downtown Commercial), located at 0 & 100 Lincoln Street and 151 & 100 Perry Street. Submitted by Paul Werner Architects, for D&D Rentals of Lawrence, LLC, property owner of record.
- **Z-12-32-11**: Consider a request to rezone approximately .83 acres from IG (General Industrial) and CS (Commercial Strip) to CD (Downtown Commercial), located at 409 & 501 North 2nd Street. Submitted by Paul Werner Architects, for Jeffrey Hatfield, property owner of record.
- **Z-12-33-11**: Consider a request to rezone approximately .34 acres from OS (Open Space) and CS (Commercial Strip) to CD (Downtown Commercial), located at 300, 311, & 317 North 2nd Street. Submitted by Paul Werner Architects, for Riverfront Properties of Lawrence, LLC, property owner of record.
- **Z-12-34-11**: Consider a request to rezone approximately 1.61 acres from IG (General Industrial) to CD (Downtown Commercial), located at 139 Perry Street, 505 North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street & 141 Maple Street. Submitted by Paul Werner Architects, for HDD of Lawrence, LLC, property owner of record.
- **Z-12-35-11**: Consider a request to rezone approximately .55 acres from IG (General Industrial) to CD (Downtown Commercial), located at 133 Perry Street. Submitted by Paul Werner Architects, for Kaw River Estates, LLC, property owner of record.
- **Z-12-36-11**: Consider a request to rezone approximately 1.38 acres from IG (General Industrial) to CD (Downtown Commercial), located at 600 North 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Block 3. Submitted by Paul Werner Architects, for Abfield Investments, property owner of record.

#### **Other Action Required:**

- Submittal of final plat for administrative approval and recordation.
- City Commission acceptance of dedication of easements andvacations of existing right-of-way as depicted on the on the Final Plat.
- Submittal and approval of public improvement plans and provision of means of assurance of completion shall be submitted prior to the recording of the Final Plat.

#### **PLANS AND STUDIES REQUIRED**

• Downstream Sanitary Sewer Analysis – The understanding of the Department of Utilities is that this preliminary plat is only related to existing utilities at the site. Therefore, the Department of Utilities has no comments related to this submittal. For future improvements to the site, additional comments will be applicable. Per Administrative Policy 76, a downstream sanitary sewer analysis is required as part of this project. Sanitary sewer model results were provided to Landplan Engineering on September 24, 2014.

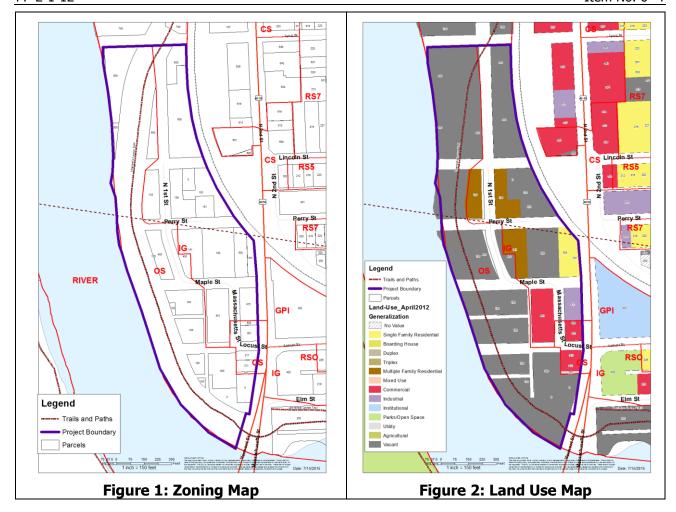
- Drainage Study A comprehensive drainage study is required for the future development of this area. The existing storm sewer network will not handle any additional stormwater runoff.
  All stormwater runoff generated by additional impervious surfaces will need to be collected and pumped straight to the Kansas River.
- *Traffic Study* Accepted by Staff. Additional review of a traffic study may be needed as development details are made available for this project.

# **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None received

Site Summary	
Gross Area:	16.116 Acres
Additional Right-of-Way (acres):	No new right-of-way proposed. Preliminary Plat proposes to vacate existing right-of-way for streets and alley and dedicate instead access easement.
Number of Proposed Lots:	1
Minimum lot size	16.116 Acres
Maximum lot size	16.116 Acres
Average lot size	16.116 Acres
Total Developable area	16.116 Acres

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Current Zoning and Land Use:	Existing zoning includes CS (Commercial Strip) District, IG (General Industrial) District and OS (Open Space) District. – Pending approval of CD (Downtown Commercial). Existing improvements include manufactured homes and commercial businesses.
Surrounding Zoning and Land Use:	
To the north; north of Lyon Street:	OS (Open Space) District; existing Riverfront Park.
To the east; east of the railroad tracks north of Lincoln Street:	IG (General Industrial) District and CS (Commercial Strip) District; existing automotive sales and services and contractor shop.
To the east; east of N. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street south of Lincoln Street:	CS (Commercial Strip) District; existing parking lot.
	IG (General Industrial) District; manufacturing use.
	GPI (General Public and Institution) District; Union Pacific
	Depot.
To the south:	OS (Open Space) District; existing Riverfront Park and River.
To the west:	OS(Open Space) District; existing levee and Riverfront Park.



#### **STAFF REVIEW**

This property is proposed to be platted as a single lot for the purposes of establishing a defined boundary between the levee and the development parcel. Existing access and utilities will be retained through easements. Interior right-of-way is proposed to be vacated through this development.

This property is located in what is generally known as North Lawrence. However, the mapped neighborhood boundary begins along the east side of N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, excluding this area. The area located along N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street between the river and Highway 70 is an existing commercial and industrial corridor.

The property includes multiple ownership including property owned by the City of Lawrence and the Kaw Drainage District. A separate map attached highlights the location of the publically owned parcels within the boundary of the preliminary plat. The developer has executed an agreement with the city to acquire certain properties to facilitate development.

#### **Zoning and Land Use**

This property currently includes multiple zoning districts. Zoning has been approved for CD (Downtown Commercial) zoning but is not effective at this time. The CD zoning was approved subject to a condition regarding the development and approval of commercial design guidelines. At this time, the guidelines have not been developed or approved; therefore, the CD zoning status is pending. The applicant desires to complete the land consolidation phase of the development while

the design guidelines are being developed. Design guidelines for the redevelopment of this property would be considered by the Planning Commission as a future agenda item.

Existing land uses include commercial and residential uses. Attachment E highlights the location of existing structures on the property. Much of the existing property is vacant.

Two significant structures are "Johnny's" located on the northwest corner of Locust Street and N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and the "Gaslight" building located on the southwest corner of Locust Street and N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. The intent of the development is to retain these two buildings. The locations of the buildings frame the intersection and provide an entry to the development. Most, if not all, of the remaining structures will be demolished prior to redevelopment of the site. There is no timeline for redevelopment of the property.

The levee (Riverfront Park) is also a significant land use within the immediate area of the subject property. This feature marks the western boundary of the development area and is intended to be significantly incorporated into the redevelopment of the site.

A related land use of this property is the regulatory floodplain. Much of the property is protected by the levee. However, a small area is designated in zone AH. This floodplain will require consideration in future development applications as the project is advances. The applicant has been working with City Staff regarding stormwater requirements for this project. Easements shown on the preliminary plat are intended to accommodate the existing development. Prior to redevelopment of the site; easements will be revised through a new subdivision plat of this property.

# **Lot Design**

This property is proposed, at this time, as a one lot subdivision with interior access and utility easement. The lot fronts along N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street along the length of the east property line. The irregular shape of the lot is a function of the levee, railroad right-of-way and existing highway/street configuration. Long term plans include future subdivision of the property. At this time the purpose of the subdivision plat is to establish clear and distinct boundaries to accommodate development planning.

This project retains existing easements that provide water and sanitary sewer service to existing development. Public streets and alleys are proposed to be vacated. The proposed Preliminary Plat complies with the minim lot design standards for subdivisions. However since the property is proposed as a single lot the block length exceeds 800 feet. The overall block length, measured across the length of the property is approximately 2,000 feet. Section 20-810 (d) (2) of the Subdivision Regulations states:

Block length for Local Streets within the City of Lawrence shall not exceed 800 feet in length (centerline to centerline of streets) unless the subdivider demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Planning Commission that:

- a. There ae pedestrian Ways at intervals of 700 feet or less, replacing the connection that would exist as a sidewalk along the street; and
- b. The proposed block must be greater than 800' in length because physical conditions preclude a block length of less than 800 feet. Such conditions may include, but are not limited to, topography or the existence of natural resource areas such as jurisdictional wetlands, floodplains, wildlife habitats areas, steep slopes or wooodlands.

The block length of the street frontage of  $N.\ 2^{nd}$  Street is 792.89', excluding the 95.46' that overlay with the railroad right of way.

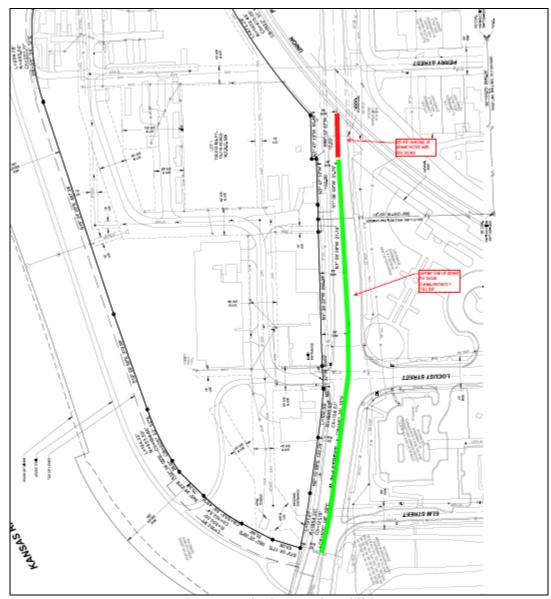


Figure 3: Block Length Exhibit

The green line in the above graphic highlights the street frontage used for measuring block length. The red line highlights that segment of the street right-of-way that overlaps with the railroad right-of-way. It is in that north 95' that the street continues north through an underpass. Conservatively, to comply with the subdivision regulations, a variance is needed regarding block length.

# VARIANCE NO. 1: Block length in excess of 800 feet per Section 20-810 (d).

The standard for the required block length assumes intersecting streets but allows for pedestrian easements. This property is uniquely shaped as a factor of the Kansas River, levee system, railroad right-of-way and location of N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street/Highway 24/40.

**Criteria 1:** Strict application of these regulations will create an unnecessary hardship upon the subdivider.

The purpose of this application is to consolidate multiple parcels into a single lot to facilitate future redevelopment. Existing improvements will remain with access easement providing interior circulation. At this time access easements are provided between N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and the interior of the site. Separately dedicated pedestrian easements are not included at this time. It is anticipated that the property will be re-subdivided in the future when development plans are more refined. The dedication of any pedestrian easements would not necessarily be meaningful.

There are no existing pedestrian facilities in the area other than the levee trail located in Riverfront Park. No changes to that trail or the boundaries of the levee are proposed to be altered with this application.

**STAFF FINDING:** Strict application of the regulations would result in dedication of easements that may or may not be useful with the future development plans. General access circulation is retained though access and utility easements.

**Criteria 2:** The proposed variance is in harmony with the intended purpose of these regulations.

This design standard is intended to provide pedestrian access and connectivity as part of a development or redevelopment project.

The intent of this Preliminary Plat is to combine multiple lots into a single lot to facilitate redevelopment of the property. This is an interim development application to accommodate the applicant's desire to define the development boundaries and retain existing development in the interim.

**STAFF FINDING:** Granting this requested variance from the required block length is not opposed to the purpose and intent of the regulations and does not impact this design principle.

**Criteria 3:** The public health, safety, and welfare will be protected.

The current frontage for N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is unchanged with this application. As future development plans are refined additional connections and pedestrian facilities will be provided.

**STAFF FINDING:** Granting this requested variance from the required block length will not harm the public health, safety or welfare. These public aspirations will continue to be protected though the planning of corridor improvements and future re-subdivision of this property.

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#### **Streets and Access**

This property includes a number of existing public streets and alleys though not all have been constructed. The following table summarizes the affected streets within the boundary of the preliminary plat.

**Table 1: Street Vacation** 

# **Proposed Street and Alley Vacation**

- Locust Street
- Maple Street
- Perry Street
- Lincoln Street
- Massachusetts Street
- N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street
- Various alleys located south of Maple Street



Figure 4: Right-Of-Way Map

The vacation of the right-of-way for these streets will provide more buildable area as the property is redeveloped. Access to structures will be retained with internal access easements as shown on the attached exhibit.

Access to Bowersock Dam, Riverfront Park and the KP&L tower are located at the south end of the property. Access to these facilities must be maintained. The access easement, as proposed, provides connectivity but much of the access is obstructed by the KP&L tower. The easement will need to be adjusted to comply with this design requirement. This requirement is reflected as a condition of approval.

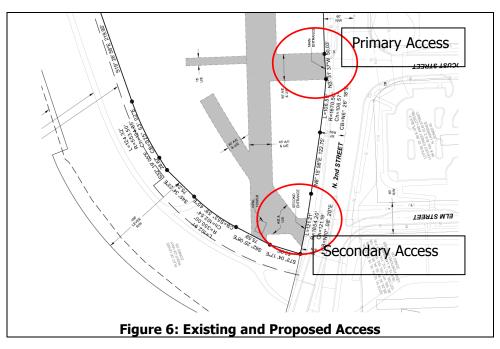


Figure 5: N. 2nd Street Bridge and Bowersock Dam Access

This project includes an additional access to N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street at the north end of the bridge. Across from Elm Street. The design intent is for a "right-out" only and for use by emergency responders as needed. Access to the site is complicated by the location of the existing railroad corridor along the eastern side of the property. Maple Street is not sufficiently north of the Locust Street intersection to provide street separation to function as a viable second point of full access. Intersections farther north would require crossing over or under the existing rail corridor. These options for various reasons are not feasible. To off-set the creation of a new at-grade rail crossing, multiple existing at-grade crossings must be eliminated. There are no reasonable candidates for at-grade crossing closures in the immediate vicinity of this proposed development. Bridging over or tunneling under the rail corridor is economically infeasible at this time.

This fact limits the full property to one access point at the intersection of Locust Street and N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. intersection This recently reconstructed. No intersection improvements are proposed at this time.

N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street provides the primary access to this area. N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is a designated as a principal arterial street. As such, N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street requires 150' of right-of-



way to comply with the subdivision design guidelines. Right-of-way along this corridor varies widely from 130' to 80' between the north end of the bridge and the south side of the overpass. This project does not include the dedication of any new or additional right-of-way along N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. There are no plans to widen the right-of-way along this street segment.

Per section 20-810 (E), local streets should not intersect with arterial streets. As noted N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is an arterial Street. Locust Street, however, is a local street. The Subdivision states:

Local Streets generally should not intersect Arterial Streets. The Planning Commission, with The City Engineer's recommendation, may approve a new connection of a Local Street to an Arterial Street:

- a. Where it finds that such connection is part of the best traffic solution for the new Subdivision; and
- b. Where the Subdivider will add turn lanes or other Improvements recommended by the City Engineer to the Arterial Street to minimize the impact of the connection on the functioning of the Arterial Street.

In this application the existing Locust Street intersection is an existing condition. Additionally, the applicant proposes to vacate the west leg of the Locust Street intersection making it an access

drive. Early plans included retaining the west leg of the intersection as a public street, therefore requiring the variance as advertised. The secondary access discussed previously would also be an access drive rather than a public street. The City Engineer has accepted the proposed design. City Staff will continue to review access and interior circulation as site development plans are made available.

# VARIANCE NO 2: Reduction in the width of right-of-way from 150' to variable as required for a Principal Arterial Street (N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street) per Section 20-810 (e) (5).

The standard for the required right-of-way width changed in 2006 from 100' to 150'. The 150' of required right-of-way is more applicable to new greenfield development rather than existing corridors. There are no plans to widening this segment of the corridor.

N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is a developed corridor with an existing bridge structure crossing the Kansas River at the south end and a railroad underpass located north of the Locust Street intersection. These two features are fixed. The city owns property on the east side of this segment of the corridor.

**Criteria 1:** Strict application of these regulations will create an unnecessary hardship upon the subdivider.

The purpose of this application is to consolidate multiple parcels into a single lot to facilitate redevelopment. Existing buildings are located along the east property line of the property and are intended to remain. Widening the right-of-way would result in these building encroaching into public right-of-way. The buildings would need to be either demolished or relocated outside of the right-of-way to avoid the encroachment. This location change of existing buildings is considered to be a material loss to the historic context of the immediate area.

**STAFF FINDING:** Strict application of the regulations would limit the owner's ability to retain existing development along N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

**Criteria 2:** The proposed variance is in harmony with the intended purpose of these regulations.

This design standard was adopted in 2006 with the Land Development Code. The wider right-of-width accommodates street design with boulevards, multiple lanes and amenities that may or may not exist along developed street segments within the community. Similar variances have been granted for other projects located along developed urban corridors designated as arterial streets.

The intent of the preliminary plat is to combine multiple lots into a single lot to facilitate redevelopment of the property.

Section 20-810 (e) (1) provides general design criteria for streets. Subsection iii *states* "*Arterial and collector streets shall be laid-out, arranged and designed in accordance with any adopted Major Thoroughfares Map or corridor plan."* N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is identified as a Principal Arterial Street and is an existing street.

**STAFF FINDING:** Granting this requested variance from the required right-of-way is not opposed to the purpose and intent of the regulations and does not impact this design principle.

**Criteria 3:** The public health, safety, and welfare will be protected.

The current width for N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is variable. The current right-of-way is an existing condition of the corridor.

**STAFF FINDING:** Granting this requested variance from the required right-of-way will not harm the public health, safety or welfare. These public aspirations will continue to be protected through the planning of corridor improvements.

# **Public Space and Green Space**

Several properties within the project boundary are owned by the City of Lawrence or the Douglas County Kaw Drainage District. The development group has executed a development agreement with the City and the Drainage District that allows for land transfers to sell the properties. These properties are located adjacent to the levee that is also part of the Riverfront Park. There is an existing trail along the riverfront that also provides vehicular access to the levee as needed.

The area at the south end of the project represents the lowest level of the site making the levee trail accessible. This accessibility will need to be maintained. Additionally, the KP&L tower located at the south end will also remain. The Preliminary Plat, as proposed, shows access to the public levee trail aligned with the tower. As noted earlier this access will need to be adjusted.

Early review comments from the Parks and Recreation Department indicated a recommendation to retain city properties as open Additionally, space. landscape treatment along the N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street corridor should be designed and installed in a manner that is compatible with the adopted landscape plan along N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Redevelopment of this property will include changes in ownership and the transfer of City owned parcels to the development group. Development of the site must include appropriate landscape treatment of the N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street corridor and non-motorized connections between the levee path and the development.

Figure 8 shows the existing access to the levee trail at the south end

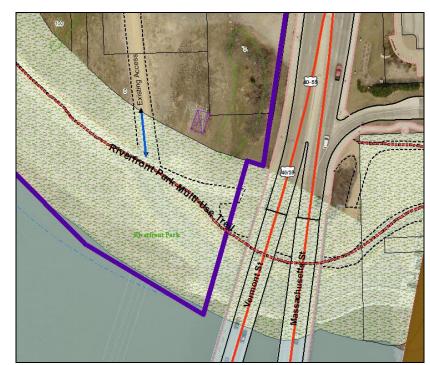


Figure 7: Image shows location of trail, tower and existing access to trail.

of the subject property. Access is accommodated through tracts of land owned by the City of Lawrence. The existing KP&L tower is proposed to remain in the redevelopment plans for this property. Access to the tower, levee and Bowersock Dam must also be maintained.

Figure 9 shows existing public open spaces that have been enhanced by the City along the east side of N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Similar and/or complementary landscape treatments will be expected along the corridor as the site redevelops.

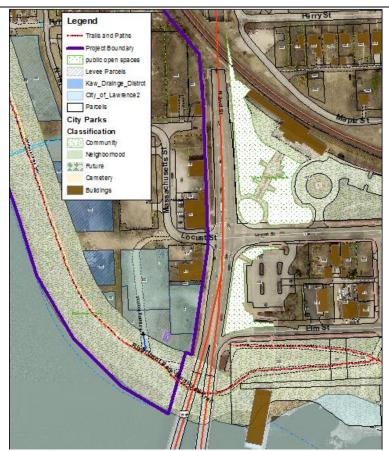


Figure 8: Location of existing buildings located on the northwest and southwest corner of Locust Street and N. 2nd Street.

#### **Utilities and Infrastructure**

At this time all existing utilities will be retained and maintained within easements to serve the existing development. The applicant has been working with city staff to define specific requirements that will be applicable to redevelopment of this property in the future. Expectations include providing adequate easement or right-of-way to accommodate a looped water line for two points of feed to the system. Existing utility lines will be replaced when the property is redeveloped. The applicant has been advised that the water lines must be replaced. Similar infrastructure improvements will be needed for the sanitary sewer service for this property with redevelopment. A future development application will require a full downstream sanitary sewer analysis as part of the submission application documents.

#### **Easements and Rights-of-Way**

Redevelopment of this property will include additional subdivision plat applications that will further revise and refine easements and interior right-of-way as applicable to support the intended design, building placement and necessary access. Access to N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street will remain at Locust Street and will remain as the primary entrance into this development.

#### **Conformance**

With the exception of the variances noted above, the proposed preliminary plat complies with the applicable subdivision regulations.

