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Additional Parking Planned for Forest Hill-Cascade Business District

Everything changes is a popular mantra— but Grand Rapids Township wants its residents to know that while change may be inevitable when confronted with potential development, it proceeds slowly and thoughtfully.

“These are not easy decisions,” said Supervisor Michael DeVries. “We want to be supportive of our successful businesses but also considerate of those folks who make their homes in those neighborhoods.”

After public hearings at both the planning commission and Township board meetings, a decision was reached that will allow for two former residences, located at 881 Kirk Dr. and 890 Delray Ave., to be replaced by additional parking for neighboring businesses.



Kennedy’s Floral, which has been located on Cascade Rd. for many years, purchased one of the properties a number of years ago in anticipation of a need for additional parking.

And Noco Provisions restaurant, which opened in the spring of 2017 on the site of the former Forest Hills Inn at the corner of Cascade Rd. and Forest Hill Ave., has experienced parking issues during peak times, despite contracting with Kennedy Floral for use of its parking during the hours which it is closed.

Owners of Noco Provisions and Kennedy Floral collaborated in a joint venture to increase parking for both businesses. After Noco Provisions purchased a second residential lot nearby, the two approached the Township for permission to demolish the homes in order to increase parking.

After careful consideration and meetings with affected neighbors, a plan was put in place that will result in an additional 56 parking spots and buffers of both fencing and landscaping to minimize encroachment on the residential neighborhood.

Designated parking may be preferable to the on-street parking options available before the rezoning decision, according to DeVries. “It is difficult to see children between cars parked on the street,” he said.

The two lots were formerly rezoned from single family residential to general commercial, since parking lots are not a permitted use in R-1 zones. Township planners also considered the Township Master Plan in their decision. It calls for “more intense uses” for the area in question in the future.



The need for more parking in the area has become more and more apparent since the opening of the new retail center on the north side of Ada Dr. But parking has been an issue for businesses in the area for some time, said DeVries. “This is nothing new. Years ago, when the Forest Hills Inn was the place to go, we had these issues as well.”