



December 23, 2022

Jessica Jagoe – Community Development Director
City of Arden Hills
1245 West Highway 96
Arden Hills, MN 55112

Subject: Project Narrative – Lindey’s Prime Steakhouse, Arden Hills, MN

Dear Jessica Jagoe:

Overview

On behalf of both Ramsey County and Lindey’s, Inc. (Lindey’s Prime Steakhouse), SRF is assisting in the site development drawings and application involving the site parking modification of this restaurant parcel to the City of Arden Hills. The private property improvements are required due to operational changes as impacted by the County Road E / Old Snelling Avenue Roundabout project, led by Ramsey County.

The roadway project has removed one of the prime driveways along Old Snelling Road, which has caused restaurant semi-truck deliveries to be impacted. The existing driveway along County Road E is inadequate and will need to be enlarged and relocated further east to assist with the roadway geometry and on-site semi-truck circulation. Ramsey County has indicated that they will compensate the property owner for all qualifying easements and improvements, due to the impacts from the roadway. In addition to the required improvements from the roadway improvements, the parcel owner desires to provide a few Owner preferred improvements, as well.

Preliminary meetings with the City of Arden Hills have indicated that parking lot changes will need to adhere to the city code, thus a full Site Plan Review application will be required. Since the parcel is zoned NB – Neighborhood Business, modification flexibility to code requirements can be handled through Site Plan Review and does not require a Variance or Conditional Use Permit (CUP). There are a few code modification flexibility requests for approval, along with the full development improvements, as described at the end of this letter.

It is anticipated that the roadway project will occur primarily through 2023 and the site improvements would be toward the end of this period, anticipating fall 2023.

Existing Conditions

The site is zoned NB – Neighborhood Business, is around 1.5 acres which includes both a restaurant (Lindey’s Prime Steakhouse), a residential home (with garage), and a detached cottage. The old restaurant was constructed before many of the development codes were in place at the City, thus the existing parking and site has been a non-conforming, but allowed operation and use, generally termed as “grandfathered in”. The restaurant owner’s family used to reside in the house and cottage, but over the years, this has transitioned to a rental.

The property is generally surrounded by single family residents and Lindey’s Park, and at the intersection of two busy roads of County Road E and Old Snelling Avenue. The parcel has two

commercial driveways on Old Snelling Avenue and a smaller commercial/residential driveway on County Road E.

Site slope is noticeable from the northeast corner down to the west perimeter and has significant tree canopy over much of the property. The main parking lot is in the western and central areas of the lot, with more green areas on the southern and eastern portions of the property, and no trash enclosure. The buildings are on City sewer and water but has remnants of old wells on site. Overhead utilities on utility poles are evident within the adjacent roadway Right-Of-Way and within the site itself. There is a freestanding restaurant sign at the intersection but appears to be in the Right-Of-Way.

Site Plan, Access, Circulation, and Lighting

Buildings are not scheduled to have any changes thus the application indicates just site improvements.

An existing freestanding sign will be removed for the roadway project and Lindey’s will need to construct temporary and permanent signs in the future. This will be done by the property owner under a separate sign permit, but two potential sign locations are shown on the plans, near the driveway, for reference.

Driveway access locations, along with truck access (semi delivery, garbage truck, and fire truck) has been reviewed by Lindey’s Inc and Ramsey County to accommodate roadway layout and restaurant operations. A truck turning movement plan sheet shows these movements. Primarily semi-truck deliveries come from the east at CR 51/Snelling Avenue and will now have to traverse counter clockwise through the site from the new driveways, along with using the entire parking lot during non-restaurant service hours.

Parking is to be added and modified to address truck circulation and property demands. Existing parking is primarily to remain, just being resurfaced and restriped. However, ADA parking, drop-off, trash enclosure, and additional parking will be in the southeast area of the property. Additional parking along the relocated County Road E driveway assists with the Owner’s use requirements, while also developing better ADA parking and pedestrian areas. Select trees, south and east of the restaurant were preserved to continue to provide the shaded environment of the customer windows on the south side. A new trash enclosure is being added and located away from the restaurant and pedestrian areas. Bike racks are also added near the ADA parking/pedestrian area to accommodate this requirement.

There are no public roadway pedestrian sidewalks or connections adjacent to the site, but the roadway project is scheduled to provide a short public trail segment at the roundabout, complete with a connection to Lindey’s in their southwest area of their site. Pedestrians and bicycles will navigate from this point to the Lindey’s bike parking / front door through the existing resurfaced bituminous parking lot.

Existing parking lot lighting consists of two flood lights mounted on utility poles both on the property (central) and in the Right-of-Way (northwest). The existing and proposed parking is providing code compliant parking lot lighting as illustrated on the site plan, utility plan, and lighting/photometric plan, including the NB zoned 14’ high maximum light mount. Existing flood lights will be disconnected or removed when the new lighting is operational.

The project does not fully adhere to Neighborhood Business district 30’ buffer setback and better explained in the Neighborhood Business Modification Flexibility section for approval.

Grading, Drainage, and Erosion Control

The roadway will add a retaining wall to help preserve some of the older trees by the restaurant and the site will primarily drain similar to existing conditions. The existing parking lot will be graded slightly to improve drainage and will add a curb at the west side to better capture the existing surface runoff. Most of this will drain to new storm inlet structures, as installed by the roadway at the west perimeter of the parking lot. There will still be portions of the parking lot that will drain to the roadway, similar to existing, and the roadway design has accommodated this drainage into their calculations and design.

There will be appropriate temporary and permanent erosion control measures provided by the project, as identified on the plans. In addition to a City of Arden Hills grading permit, there may be a need for a MPCA NPDES and Rice Creek Watershed District permits for erosion control.

Stormwater

Numerous design discussions have occurred to understand stormwater design and regulations for the site. In the end, Rice Creek Watershed District is the local government unit for stormwater and it was identified that resurfacing the existing parking lot does not qualify as new or reconstructed impervious surface, as long as the subgrade is not disturbed. It is planned for the existing parking lot pavement to be removed or reclaimed, along with a new pavement section provided, without disturbing the subgrade. Thus, the new/reconstructed pavement will be under the 10,000sf threshold and not trigger storm water compliance or permit for rate control and water quality for the site. The site will still retain parking lot surface drainage to the roadway through the driveways but will also incorporate drainage to two new storm structure inlets at the new west parking lot curb perimeter. All has been coordinated and included within the roadway project.

Utilities

The restaurant and house/cottage are serviced by City of Arden Hills public water and sanitary sewer, but service line locations from the roadway to the buildings are not fully documented or identified but are described as known on the plans. However, it is anticipated that the site improvements would not disturb these service lines.

Electrical and communication (telephone/cable) service is provided as aerial lines to utility poles and connected to the buildings near the roof line. Generally, these are not being disturbed and to remain, however an Xcel Energy contractor has relocated one pole by the restaurant ramp and another by the house in the fall of 2022, and plan to replace a third one just east of the restaurant as part of the roadway utility pole relocation. The approximate new pole locations and aerial lines are depicted on the Utility Plan, for reference.

New site lighting and future freestanding signs will be under a new electrical circuit and controls at the restaurant building and existing parking lot flood lighting will be disconnected or removed from the utility poles.

It should be noted that the roadway project is relocating a hydrant from the southeast corner of the property area, further east. Preliminary discussions with the Lake Johanna Fire Department indicated acceptance of the relocated hydrant and distance to the restaurant Fire Department Connection (FDC), and this info is identified on the Utility Plan.

Tree Preservation / Landscape Plan

Site Plan Review requires a Tree Preservation and Mitigation Plan for any significant tree 8 inches in diameter or greater, documenting preserved and removed, but disqualifies diseased or nuisance trees from being calculated. Of the numerous existing trees on site, the project is only removing 7 significant trees, with 3 of these being a non-qualifying nuisance tree, growing into the parking lot or under overhead utility lines. The remaining 4 trees are large in size, thus the removed caliper inches are significant. Due to existing tree canopy and limited landscape areas, the project is roughly only planting enough trees to accommodate around 25% of the requirement and asking for cash-in-lieu for the remaining requirements.

Landscape Plan basically provides the required trees, shrubs, perennials, and ground cover for the project, as illustrated. The Owner may provide additional plantings in the future but are not shown. There are some landscape items, including NB 30’ wide buffer setback, that don’t meet the requirements and are better explained in the Neighborhood Business Modification Flexibility section for approval.

Neighborhood Business Modification Flexibility

Modifications to the requirements can be approved through the Site Plan Review if viewed favorably as to adhering to the spirit and purpose of the requirement intent and in the public’s best interest. The application is requesting four areas of modification flexibility.

- Minimum 30’ Buffer Setback – Code for the Neighborhood Business district indicates a 30’ buffer yard that is landscaped with evergreen and/or deciduous trees to substantially screen the adjacent residential properties. Upon review, the driveway and related new parking was specifically located to minimize conflict with the roadway round-about design so this location is not fully controlled by the site, but has tried to angle the drive aisle and parking away from the adjacent residence properties. In particular, the parking areas were located to preserve the existing trees southeast of the restaurant and the parcel’s east perimeter. The new trash enclosure will be a nice addition as the dumpsters currently just sit out on the site and was specifically located to the east side of the driveway to set it away from the pedestrian/ADA/restaurant viewing area, while having the noisy doors and collection be on the non-residential side of the structure, thus creating a screen wall, per se. The east perimeter already has significant existing deciduous trees and vegetation, so adding a row of large shrubs to sit under the canopy and blend into the natural vegetation seems more appropriate for landscape screening. In review, it is our perspective that we have provided the intent of the landscape buffer and the public’s best interest through appropriate site and landscape design.
- Minimum 35% Landscape Area – The code requires the Neighborhood Business district to provide a minimum of 35% of landscape area, but currently providing 29.6%. Generally, a commercial only property could provide the required greenspace, but since the existing parcel includes a house/garage, cottage, and related walkways, it takes up additional green area. Due to the numerous existing trees, additional landscape planting, and unique residential building area conditions, it is our perspective that the intent of a larger green area is adequately compensated through the overall landscape of the site.
- Tree Mitigation – Due to very large existing trees being removed, the total replacement caliper inches equates to many trees. But due to limited planting areas, some replacement tree, and numerous existing trees, it is our perspective that packing in more trees is not the

best practice and that providing cash-in-lieu for the remaining amount allows the City to fund planting trees in areas that would be better suited, thus this is a better benefit to the public interest of the code. In addition, and for your information, the 4-foot wide landscape corridor on the north side of the existing parking lot is scheduled to have a screen fence installed at a future time by the Owner, so this areas needs to be free of trees for future construction.

- Public Street Frontage Trees – Code indicates 1 tree per 50 linear feet of public street frontage. At 435 linear feet of frontage, this would equate to 9 trees required, but only providing only 5 total (4 existing, 1 new). Upon review, a significant amount of frontage does not accommodate tree plantings to officially qualify, but have numerous existing trees on site to compensate, thus requesting that the existing and proposed trees identified are adequate and no further street frontage trees be required. The grandfathered-in westerly existing parking lot is located at the roadway right-of-way edge, thus there is no green space is available on-site to plant any trees in this area. Future freestanding signs at the driveways and overhead utility lines also complicate potential tree planting areas. Lastly, there is a cluster of large existing trees, southeast of the restaurant, that is important to preserve from the Owners preference, and not desired to plant additional trees under the existing canopy. It is our perspective that adding more trees in limited landscape space along street frontage areas does not provide a noticeable benefit to the public interest, and that the numerous existing trees throughout the site provides the necessary context of the code intent.

Sincerely,

SRF CONSULTING GROUP, INC.



Paul D. Schroeder, PLA, ASLA, LEED AP
Project Manager - Site Development

PDS

Enclosure(s)/Attachment(s)

cc: Mark and Tracy Lindemer-Lindey’s, Inc, Tom Nash – Ramsey County