



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: Community Development - Planning

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: April 17, 2023

Re: Fox Creek Subdivision Plat 2 - Preliminary Plat – Design Adjustment (Case #94-2023)

Executive Summary

Approval of this request would grant a design adjustment waiving the 600-foot maximum block length provision of Section 29-5.1 (c) (3) (ii) of the Unified Development Code (UDC). This request is being reviewed concurrently with a request to approve an associated revised preliminary plat to be known as, "*Fox Creek Subdivision Plat 2*", a request for annexation (Case #131-2023), and permanent zoning (Case# 97-2023). These associated cases will appear under separate cover on the Council's April 17, 2023 agenda.

Discussion

The applicant is seeking a design adjustment from Section 29-5.1 (c) (3) (ii) of the Unified Development Code (UDC) as it relates to the maximum permitted block length, given the site's topographical conditions. The UDC establishes a maximum block length of 600-feet and the proposed revised preliminary plat will result in a block length nearly double what is permitted. The applicant's justification for this request is attached and staff's evaluation of the request is outlined below.

Design adjustments are evaluated based upon the criteria of Section 29-5.2(b)(9) of the UDC. Council may grant approval of a design adjustment if it determines that the following criteria have been met.

1. The design adjustment is consistent with the City's adopted comprehensive plan and with any policy guidance issued to the Department by Council;
2. The design adjustment will not create significant adverse impacts on any lands abutting the proposed plat, or to the owners or occupants of those lands;
3. The design adjustment will not make it significantly more difficult or dangerous for automobiles, bicycles, or pedestrians to circulate in and through the development than if the Subdivision Standards of Section 29-5.1 were met;
4. The design adjustment is being requested to address a unique feature of the site or to achieve a unique design character, and will not have the effect of decreasing or eliminating installation of improvements or site features required of other similarly situated developments;
5. The design adjustment will not create adverse impacts on public health and safety.



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Section 29-5.1(c)(3)(ii) of the UDC states the following:

Streets shall intersect at intervals not exceeding six hundred (600) feet or less than two hundred fifty (250) feet. Blocks shall have sufficient depth to provide for two (2) tiers of lots of appropriate depth. The director may approve exceptions to block depth when blocks are adjacent to major streets, railroads, waterways, or other sensitive environmental areas (e.g., steep slopes, waterways).

The 2016 approved Fox Creek Subdivision Preliminary Plat (attached) included a partial loop street in excess of 600 feet in length. This street length was approved given a finding that it was necessary to address topographical conditions within the western half of the Fox Creek property. This initial loop street connected Webster Grove Road on the west to Forester Drive on the east. The proposed revision to the preliminary plat seeks to expand the development area southward onto approximately 12 acres allowing the existing partial loop street to be completed. The completed loop street will provide access options from both the north and south to Webster Grove Road and Forester Drive.

As presently approved, the length of the existing partial loop measures approximately 1,455 feet in length. This distance is broken down into two segments (east and west) using Goldfinch Court as the division point. The eastern segment, Forester Drive to Goldfinch Court, contains 820 feet of roadway. The western segment, Goldfinch Court to Webster Grove Road, contains 635-feet of roadway.

The proposed southern loop, the reason for this request, will measure a total of approximately 1,800 feet and is also broken into two segments also. The first segment, Webster Grove Road to Pheasant Street, is approximately 1,025 feet in length. The second segment, Pheasant Street north to Forester Drive, is approximately 785 feet. As noted above, the completion of a southern loop will provide two (2) routes of connectivity through the development east to west.

The applicant has provided the following rationale for approval of design adjustment:

- The loop street provides a solution to avoid significant grade changes on the property when connecting the existing stub of Forester Drive, west to the stub of Webster Grove Road.
- The proposed loop is a modification of an existing condition on the approved preliminary plat, which actually provides a second connection back to Forester Drive, improving access and connectivity in terms of both general traffic and emergency services.

Staff agrees that approval of the design adjustment is not in conflict with the Comprehensive Plan and mimics an approved condition of the previous preliminary plat on the property. Allowing a block length exceeding 600 feet in this instance does not pose any negative impacts to neighboring properties and, in fact, would diminish the likelihood of substantial



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cut-through traffic for motorists traveling between Hwy. PP and Wyatt Lane or Thompson Road by making the path more indirect. The gradual slope provided by the longer blocks and the loop street arrangement also mitigates safety concerns such as sight distances and accessibility during inclement weather. The design adjustment will not create any adverse impacts on public health or safety. Staff supports the waiver of the block length component of Section 29-5.1 (c)(3)(ii).

The Planning and Zoning Commission considered this request at their March 9, 2023 meeting. Staff presented its report and the applicant gave an overview of the request. No one from the public spoke on the requested design adjustment during the public hearing. The Commission questioned the excessive length of the proposed loops and their lack of pedestrian connectivity, stating that even if a direct vehicular traffic route was deemed undesirable, the Comprehensive Plan would support the promotion of other modes of transportation through the site.

Commissioners moved to approve the design adjustment as submitted resulting in a "tie" (3-3) vote, which by the Commission's Rule of Procedure, is a vote of "no recommendation". Following this vote, the applicant indicated willingness to add a pedestrian easement to the preliminary plat as a means of addressing the Commission's concerns with through the excessively long block. A second motion was made to approve the design adjustment with the added condition which passed with a vote of (5-1).

It should be noted that while discussing the proposed preliminary plat revision and related design adjustment pertaining to "block length", Commissioner Loe mistakenly referenced the maximum permissible block length of 600-feet as a "minimum" block length within the minutes. This statement was an error. Section 29-5.1 (c)(3)(ii) of the UDC states that "**maximum**" block length is 600-feet.

Since the Planning Commission meeting, the preliminary plat has been revised to shown the required pedestrian easement. The easement is located between Lots 259, 260, 274 and 275.

The Planning Commission staff report, locator maps, design adjustment worksheet, preliminary plat, 2016 approved preliminary plat, and meeting minute excerpts are attached.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None.

Long-Term Impact: Impacts may include increased costs associated with roadway and public infrastructure maintenance. Such costs may or may not be off-set by increased user-fees and property taxes.



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Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Reliable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
4/3/23	Set a public hearing for the annexation of the subject tract (R50-23)

Suggested Council Action

Approve the requested design adjustment to Section 29-5.1 (c) (3) (ii) subject to the condition that a pedestrian access easement be provided between the street segments, as recommended by the Planning and Zoning Commission (the access easement has been added).