



City of University Park

3800 University Blvd.
University Park, TX 75205

Meeting Minutes Planning and Zoning Commission

Tuesday, November 11, 2025

5:00 PM

Council Chamber

4:30 - 5:00 PM - Work Session for Agenda Review

Chairman Mercer opened the work session at 4:30pm.

City Planner, Jessica Rees, presented Case PZ 25-006 via PowerPoint. Applicant and property owner GDTX Owner, LLC, requesting to amend the detailed site plan for Planned Development-22 (PD-22) to allow for the installation of a commercial solid-fuel smokehouse structure to support the Los Charros restaurant operation within the Graduate Hotel. The property address is 6101 Hillcrest Avenue. An image was shown of the two hundred (200) foot buffer around the property. Property owners within this buffer received notice of the public hearing by mail. Of eighty-seven (87) notices mailed out, thirteen (13) notices were received back, twelve (12) in opposition and one (1) in favor of the amendment request. There were also six (6) opposed responses received from outside of the two hundred (200) foot buffer.

Mrs. Rees displayed the plans for the proposed structure.

Jessica presented Case PZ 25-007 via PowerPoint. Applicant Mica Nix representing the YMCA, requesting to amend Planned Development-12 (PD-12) to change the hours of operation on Sundays from 2-5pm to 1-6pm. The property address is 6000 Preston Road. An image was shown of the two hundred (200) foot buffer around the property. Property owners within this buffer received notice of the public hearing by mail. Of forty-five (45) notices mailed out, four (4) notices were received back, two (2) opposed and two (2) in favor of the amendment request.

Mrs. Rees explained the request for the hour change.

Call to Order

Chairman Blair Mercer called the meeting to order at 5:01pm.

Introduction of Commission Members

Present: (6) Chairman Blair Mercer, Rusty Goff, Steve Hudson, Duncan Fulton, Thomas Russell and Ben Biddle

Seated: (5) Chairman Blair Mercer, Rusty Goff, Steve Hudson, Duncan Fulton and Thomas Russell

Excused: (4) John Walsh, James Bristow, Brian Smoot and David Delorenzo

City Council Liaison: (1) Melissa Rieman

Staff in Attendance

Jessica Rees, City Planner

Mary Oates, Community Development Technician

Rob Dillard, City Attorney

PZ 25-006

PZ 25-006: Applicant and property owner GDTX Owner, LLC, requesting to amend the detailed site plan for Planned Development-22 (PD-22) to allow for the installation of a commercial solid-fuel smokehouse structure to support the Los Charros restaurant operation within the Graduate Hotel. The property address is 6101 Hillcrest Avenue.

Chairman Mercer read Case PZ 25-006

City Planner, Jessica Rees, presented Case PZ 25-006 via PowerPoint. Applicant and property owner GDTX Owner, LLC, requesting to amend the detailed site plan for Planned Development-22 (PD-22) to allow for the installation of a commercial solid-fuel smokehouse structure to support the Los Charros restaurant operation within the Graduate Hotel. The property address is 6101 Hillcrest Avenue. An image was shown of the two hundred (200) foot buffer around the property. Property owners within this buffer received notice of the public hearing by mail. Of eighty-seven (87) notices mailed out, thirteen (13) notices were received back, twelve (12) in opposition and one (1) in favor of the amendment request. There were also six (6) opposed responses received from outside of the two hundred (200) foot buffer.

Mrs. Rees showed an aerial view of the property site that is being discussed and the surrounding area. The detailed site plan was shown. On the back of the building, there is an existing wall area that does have a wood fence. The proposed plan shows putting a smoker back inside that fenced in area. The smoker is on wheels so it can be moved off the property and back. There will be equipment for the smoker on top of the roof structure as well. A photo was shown of the existing wall and fence from the alley. The proposed plans that were shown show no modifications to the existing brick wall that is about three (3) feet off of the alley. There will be a roof added onto the structure, new doors on the front of it and equipment for the smoker. Because it is commercial use, there is some insulation and equipment that is required so a smoke zapper is being proposed to add to decrease the smoke from the smoker. The PD amendment is for the structure being added to the property to the detailed site plan.

Staff recommends that the Planning and Zoning Commission conduct a public hearing for the amendment of Planned Development-22, to listen to comments from the community and forward a recommendation to City Council.

Representing the applicant is Corby Ferrell, residing at 4226 Shenandoah. Corby apologized for not attending the previous public hearing regarding this item. He stated that the notification of the meeting was sent directly to the owners and therefore he was not aware of the meeting.

He stated that they are requesting a amendment to the existing planned development to allow a fully enclosed, code compliant smoke house that supports the restaurant operations. This enclosure will not only bring their equipment into full alignment with mechanical and fire codes, but also significantly improve the visual impact compared to what is currently there today. Several near by residents have raised legitimate concerns about smoke and odor and he wants to thank them for voicing those concerns and assure the commission that they have taken it seriously and professional grade solutions to eliminate those impacts. To directly address the issue of smoke, they are installing a smoke zapper system that has already purchased for twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000). It's a proven European filtration technology used at leading restaurants and bakeries across the country. The system uses a combination of water filtration and electro static precipitation to remove up to 95% particulate matter and odor before it exits the vent. It essentially converts the smoke to steam. It's the same system that is used by Terry Black's BBQ in Austin, which resolved all prior neighborhood smoke complaints and brought them into compliance with their city order. They are not smoking everyday at the restaurant . Typically it will be two (2) times per week, maybe three (3) at the most during busy times. They have also coordinated with the Fire Marshal, building inspector and environmental health departments to insure every element meets local and national safety codes. They will continue to operate under city inspection and maintenance requirements for this equipment. He stated that he lives here and raised his family here and cares about what this means for our neighbors. His goals isn't just to meet code, it's to exceed expectations for air quality and neighbor relations. He said he is happy to meet with any neighbor that is willing to talk more. Los Charros is not a corporate chain, it's a locally owned restaurant and his partner has a number of restaurants in the area already and they support local events. The smoke house investment ensures that they continue to operate sustainable, support the community and keep their culinary identity right here in the neighborhood.

Chairman Mercer asked Corby is they have already installed the smoke zapper. Corby responded that they have not, because the whole reason of building the smokehouse is to support the zapper on top of the structure.

Chairman Mercer opened the public hearing for anyone in favor of the item to speak.

With there being no one to speak in favor, the floor was opened to anyone in opposition to the item. Chairman Mercer limited the speaking time to two (2) minutes per speaker.

Curtis Downs, residing at 2426 Binkley Ave approached the commission to speak in opposition of the amendment. He stated that his residence is about two hundred ninety (290) feet away from the proposed site for the smoker. They canvassed the neighborhood on Binkley and Granada and the surrounding areas and came up with ninety-four (94) people that have

signed the petition to deny the request. The big concerns are the smoke that's going to be present. ninety-five percent (95%) is a great number and he appreciates that completely. They are not trying to cut Los Charros off at the knees but on the same token, there is a sixty (60) child daycare that is twenty-two (22) feet away from the proposed site and he cannot find one article on the internet saying that any amount of smoke for children is acceptable for young lungs. So this will in essence potentially shut down the school because parents will take their kids out move them somewhere else. That's one small piece. The rest of it are the people that signed the petition are worried about the way the smoke will make their houses smell. He stated that even though he loves the smell of bbq, they do not want it in their house and furniture or anything else. He asked in regards to Corby's statement about this making them compliant, have they been smoking meat outside of city code for the last nine (9) months. Mr. Downs stated that there is an existing smoker there that is portable and is assuming that is what they have been using since they opened. Corby stated that a fire has not been lit and it has just been there to store. Corby also stated that they have not been smoking in the City of University Park, it has been outside in city in Dallas. Mr. Downs asked to confirm that they smoke the meat off site at another site they own in Dallas and then bring it over to the University Park site. Corby stated that is correct. Mr. Downs asked if they are at full capacity at the other site where they currently use the smoker because if they are not, why would they want to have an additional smoking site if it is not needed. Corby and his partner responded that it would make it much easier at their restaurant to have the smoker and the meat on site. Mr. Downs asked if the meat they would be smoking at Los Charros would be just for the restaurant or if they would also be selling the meat off site. Corby answered stating that it would be only for the restaurant.

Melanie Rudebeck, the Executive Director of the Community School of the Park Cities at 3421 Binkley Ave approached the commissioners to speak in opposition of the request. She stated that the school is about twelve (12) feet away across the alley from the hotel and the kids play on the little porch that is directly by the smoker and on the playground that is a little bit further over. She is a graduate of Highland Park High School and has worked at the Community School for twenty (20) years and it is her mission to work with kids and to give appropriate care to young children of working parents. She is really concerned about the well being of these children. The age of children at the school starts from six (6) weeks to three (3) months and the youngest kids go out on that porch that is right by the smoker. Everything she has read is negative for those kids. She is also worried about her business smelling of smoke. She is for businesses but says that it is not appropriate for that location right there by the babies.

Jong Kim at 3415 Granada approached the commissioners to speak in opposition of the request. She stated that her and her husband love the restaurant, but want to know why they want to add the smoker there. She said that she is concerned for the little children as well as the elderly that live in the area. Also she said that over the years she has seen the restaurant change. It is currently a Mexican restaurant with smoked meat, but if this is allowed, how do they know that they aren't going to smoke meat for all their

other restaurants. How do they know if Los Charros in the next few years isn't going to change into a bbq place. Living there she believes that it will affect their property values. She stated that she loves the restaurant and supports local businesses which is why they are tolerant of the Los Charros delivery trucks that block the alley at times for their deliveries. She just doesn't want a commercial smoker.

Ellen Jeffis approached the commissioners to speak in opposition to the request. She stated that her son attends the Community School. She works for the American Heart Association and is well versed in the damages that carcinogens can cause to heart, lungs and other organs in our bodies and any amount of smoke produced by a meat smoker contain carcinogens. The zapper will not dissolve the carcinogens, they need to go somewhere. We are talking about smoke with carcinogens that are cancer causing floating around in the air that our children play in. Children's lungs are not fully developed until well into adulthood at the age of twenty (20) years old. She stated that she does not want her son playing in air that is polluted with carcinogens that can easily be avoided by not installing the smoker. She isn't sure that her son would be able to continue at the school if the smoker goes in and she knows that she is not the only parent that feels this way. She stated that if the health concern isn't enough then maybe the business concern that the school may be shut down.

Irina Kutnick at 3442 Binkley Ave approached the commissioners in opposition of the request. Her boys like to play all sports outside and have play dates outside near the restaurant. She stated that she likes the restaurant but does not want the smoker. Considering her sons like to play outside so much, she as a mom would be very concerned about the smoke for her boys and the kids at the daycare. She is strongly against the smoker.

Sue Brunz at 3417 Granada approached the commissioners in opposition of the request. She stated that her and husband strongly opposed. They have eaten there and love the food and certainly believe in supporting local business for sure, but she too is a retired elementary school principal and first and foremost she is a senior citizen and cannot tell you how much joy it brings her on a daily basis to see the teachers out on the second story deck out there with the little babies everyday and the preschoolers that attend that school. She too is very concerned in regard to the inhalation of the smoke from the smoker. She too enjoys Texas bbq needless to say but she doesn't understand either why it has to be built at the restaurant.

Paul Borhese, owner of 3411 Granada approached the commissioners in opposition of the request. He stated that he was not going to go over the same points that were previously brought up again. He stated that the city sent out notices to get feedback from the community and there was only one (1) in favor as opposed to everyone that came today to speak against it. He stated that he thinks the commissions job is to get the feedback from the community and make an informed decision based upon community feedback. He said he isn't sure how he can rule in favor of this based on his understanding on what the community feedback is.

Chairman Mercer called Corby back up to see if he could give any more assurance on what the zapper may do. Corby stated that the best case study he can give is the Terry Black's considering he hasn't gotten the zapped set up yet for his smoker. In the case of Terry Black's the city shut down all wood burning smokers across Austin and once they installed the smoke zapper, the lawsuit was settled, city council complied and Corby has been to the site and seen it. He stated that they are smoking twenty-four (24) hours a day seven (7) days a week on probably four (4) gigantic smokers and it is converting that smoke into steam which takes the odor away. His smoker, smoking two (2) to three (3) times a week and he would doubt they are even smoking during the times of the school so that would help that, they have done all they can to mitigate that smoke with this contraption.

Mr. Downs returned to the podium to state that the point isn't the smell, it's the carcinogenic's in the air.

Ellen approached again stating that after doing a Google search, the zapper does not dissolve any of the carcinogens from the air.

Corby stating that all the research he has seen on the smoke zapper and he has spoken to the owner of it who created it says that it pulls out ninety-five percent (95%) of the particulates that are in the smoke.

Chairman Mercer reminded everyone that this commission is not here to approve or deny the request, only to listen and pass on a recommendation to City Council so the item will be going to City Council one way or another.

Commissioner Hudson asked Jessica Rees and City Attorney Rob Dillard to confirm that the subject before them as he understands it, doesn't have anything to do really with the smoker, it's purely an amendment to the Planned Development to allow for the construction of the addition of the roof on the building.

Mr. Dillard and Mrs. Rees confirmed that is correct.

Commissioner Hudson stated that it's not to say that they don't understand the concerns, but it's not necessarily the purview of this hearing for what the concerns are. Putting a roof on the structure is all the PD amendment is.

Commissioner Fulton asked staff that this is a PD and a PD has specific uses that the Planning and Zoning Commission cannot override including a restaurant use. Staff confirmed that is correct. Mr. Fulton asked if there was anything in the ordinance that limits the equipment specific to prohibiting any kind of equipment for the restaurant. Staff said no, there is not. Commissioner Fulton stated that is the basis for the commission not having the latitude to even weigh in about the presence of the smoker as an accessory use to restaurant as allowed by the ordinance.

A motion was made by Commissioner Goff, seconded by Commissioner Hudson, that the applicant's request be recommended to City Council as requested. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

PZ 25-007

PZ 25-007: Applicant Mica Nix representing the YMCA, requesting to amend Planned Development-12 (PD-12) to change the hours of operation on Sundays from 2-5pm to 1-6pm. The property address is 6000 Preston Road.

Chairman Mercer read Case PZ 25-006.

Jessica presented Case PZ 25-007 via PowerPoint. Applicant Mica Nix representing the YMCA, requesting to amend Planned Development-12 (PD-12) to change the hours of operation on Sundays from 2-5pm to 1-6pm. The property address is 6000 Preston Road. An image was shown of the two hundred (200) foot buffer around the property. Property owners within this buffer received notice of the public hearing by mail. Of forty-five (45) notices mailed out, four (4) notices were received back, two (2) opposed and two (2) in favor of the amendment request.

Mrs. Rees showed a picture of the YMCA and stated that the hours of operation are stated in the PD for Sundays as 2-5pm and the YMCA has requested them to be changed to 1-6pm. The YMCA feels that this is going to help them better serve the patrons that go there and they have also spoken to the church about making this adjustment is going to negatively impact the community. Staff does not see an issue with it so is asking the commission to conduct a public hearing and forward it the City Council.

Mica Nix, Associate Executive of the YMCA on Preston Road approached the commissioners as the applicant. She stated that they are simply trying to extend the hours. It meets what the other YMCA locations around are doing as well. They know that a lot of the members has been asking for this in the last five (5) years that she has been there. It would help better serve the members in the community. They did ask the church about the change and they checked the traffic around 1pm and there was about twenty (20) cars maybe. They know that the service is at 9am and 11am so traffic usually dies down around 12:30pm from church, so the change would not impact their traffic.

Commissioner Hudson stated that the YMCA is not limited to the Park Cities residents, so his question is can any member of the YMCA come to the location in the Park Cities and also does Mica have a census on how many of the members are Park Cities residents.

Mica stated that they do not have a census of the local members for that location. They do allow access nationwide to any members. The Moody location members have stated that they have to go to the other locations on Sunday for the extended hours.

Commissioner Fulton asked how large the parking garage is and how many cars is holds.

Nick, the VP of operations for the Dallas Y stated that there are two hundred eighty (280) parking spots in the parking garage. Mr. Fulton asked how much of the parking is on the street.

Nick stated there is a small lot between the YMCA and the church that has twelve (12) spots total that the church has for the mobility impaired. No parallel spots on the street.

Chairman Mercer stated that he has seen from experience that the parking garage is used for the majority of the parking for the YMCA.

Reverend TJ Fitzgerald, the Administer of Community Caring Engagement at First Unitarian which are long term neighbors of the YMCA. The church pays the YMCA for some of the parking. The church would like to give there unbridled support of the request not only because is improves their access parking for events at the church, it keeps the garage open longer for community events but also members of theirs as well as himself go there everyday. He has heard from residents that they are not members of the Moody location because the only two (2) days they can actually work out are Saturday and Sunday and it's almost impossible to get in there because the density of the people between 2-5 on Sundays is quite something. So extending those hours will help with the members and the congregation.

Gail Schoellkopf at 4006 Shenandoah approached the commissioners in opposition of the request. She stated she also owns the property at 4014 Shenandoah and therefore has the most property around the Y and is the most impacted as well as lived there the longest and has the most history of the change that occurred that was very beneficial to the neighbors. This is a unique Y and is open to anybody that is a member of the Y. She asked to please not change the provisions of the PD. Because when they had the long process to build this new Y, the real desire was to have one (1) day of rest. In the PD there was also a provision to open from 2-5 on Sundays as a compromise from wanting a complete closure on Sundays. Another part of the PD was there was to be no outdoor planned activity on Sunday, but there is no way to monitor the PD and little by little there is an encroachment. There have been games scheduled and practices sometimes. There is also a gate that was suppose to be permanently padlocked to only gain access for service vehicles or landscape crew and that padlock is gone now and slowly but slowly, these little provisions are going away because there is no real way to monitor it. She is very grateful to the last City Council that was involved. They really worked hard to find an agreement to find the Y a place to operate but also to protect the neighborhood. She thinks that is the primary thing is that this is in a neighborhood and little by little these things are going to encroach. She like the PD 12 the way it is and does not want it to be changed.

Commissioner Russell asked if the concern of the neighborhood the parking or the noise or both?

Gail stated that the parking garage is great if people use it. What happens is for the games, many of the parents still park on the street. They have had to institute residential parking. If she were to have to have anyone over, she would have to get tags to put them out for parking. She has gotten a ticket herself for parking without the tag.

Nick clarified that they are just requesting to change the hours and not changing what activities can take place. They don't schedule any of the youth sports or outside activities on Sundays to respect the PD as it stands. He also stated that he would check on the lock on the back gate to get that back.

A motion was made by Commissioner Fulton, seconded by Commissioner Goff to recommend approval to City Council. The motion was passed by a 4-1 vote.

Consider the previous meeting minutes with or without corrections:

25-262 PZ Meeting Minutes - 10.14.25

A motion was made by Commissioner Fulton, seconded by Commissioner Hudson to approve the minutes. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

ADJOURNMENT: With there being no further business before the Planning and Zoning Commission, Chairman Mercer adjourned the meeting at 5:48pm.

Approved by:

Chairman, Blair Mercer

Date