

# Panera Bread looks to grab a slice of business

The likelihood of Panera Bread grabbing a slice of Farmington's restaurant business is heating up.

Except for a few minor details, Panera looks to be a lock to open up a bakery-cafe, following the Farmington Planning Commission's conditional site plan approval Monday night.

Property owner Steve Kalabat and architect Serra & Associates of Troy must return at the Monday, Aug. 10, commission meeting and address commissioners' concerns about the original site plan, said Margaret Stirling-Hamilton, who last week became chairwoman of the planning panel.

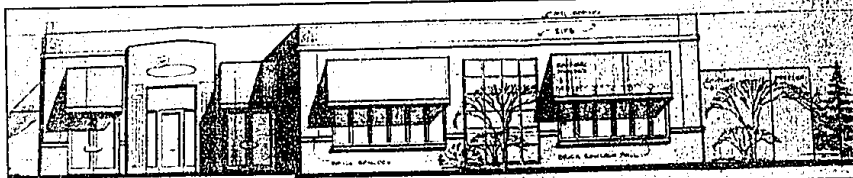
Those concerns include making the exterior color of the proposed 3,700-square-foot facility compatible with the area and the addition of landscaping at the south end of the property, near

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**David Gronbach**  
—Planning commissioner

residents. Panera would open the restaurant on the southeast corner of Grand River and Whitaker, a corner now featuring Glass Craft and the Betty Johnson Dance Studio. Both businesses lease from Kalabat, as would Panera.

The commission also asked the architect to lower parking lot light poles from 20 to 15 feet,



**Drawing:** This is an artist's rendering of what the new Panera Bread will look like in downtown Farmington. The planning commission gave its blessings — except for a few minor details — recently. Two businesses will be displaced to make way for the new store.

screen a trash bin and provide irrigation in all planting areas, including the right-of-way, said Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff.

"I think, in general, the planning commission was excited to see the plan," Stirling-Hamilton said. "There are some issues that still need to be resolved."

But, overall, she continued, "It will be a good addition to the Farmington business mix."

Concurring was Lauhoff, who also said he hoped the two about-to-be-displaced businesses

would consider relocating elsewhere in the city.

"It (Panera) is a business that's very desirable in the area," Lauhoff said. "All around it looks like a good plan."

With the preliminary approval, Stirling-Hamilton said the property owner and architect can apply to the city building department to receive permission for site work, such as demolition of the two existing buildings.

Planning Commissioner David Gronbach, who last week ended

three years as chairman of the panel, said Panera would be "a nice upgrade" of that area.

"We feel it's a very good improvement to the site," Gronbach said. "It's replacing two older buildings ... The new business (will) look like a good upscale neighborhood-type business. It should be an asset to the neighborhood."

According to Lauhoff, most of the changes that the commission wants to have done are to make sure Panera is compatible with the neighborhood.

About the provision that the light poles be lowered, Lauhoff

said it is "so that the light doesn't transfer into residential areas."

Lauhoff added that the site plan's inclusion of 47 parking spaces was a plus that didn't escape the commissioners. "They are only required to have 30 (spaces) for that size of a building. The planning commission was pleased with the provision that 47 spaces will be provided."

The city manager earlier said he hopes that the Panera project might spark renovations and improvements to other nearby businesses, including the World Wide Center.

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