

Rare mixed-use site is proposed

Location is away from Ann Arbor's core

BY MIKE RAMSEY
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In downtown Ann Arbor, there are condos and apartments built over retail shops on nearly every street.

But outside the urban core, where more land is available and buildings are more spread out, it's much rarer to find that arrangement.

With Plymouth Green Crossings, developer David Kwan has proposed such a suburban complement to the mixed-use buildings downtown. It would be a five-building complex at the northwest corner of Green and Plymouth roads featuring a bank, a free-standing restaurant and three buildings with retail shops on the first floor and 23 condominiums above them.

Currently that site, located in front of Ave Maria School of Law, is empty.

"Hopefully, it creates a vitality that's a little more around the clock," said Kwan on Monday.

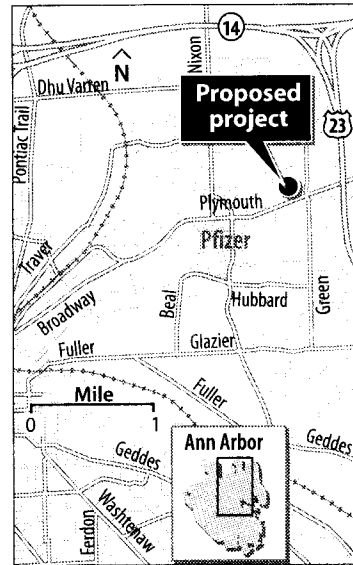
The project is on the Ann Arbor Planning Commission agenda tonight at 7 p.m., when Kwan will ask for a rezoning to make the project possible. The land is now zoned for research uses. Kwan has asked for a zoning change to planned-unit development, which creates a specialized zoning category for an individual development.

Other similar projects, including Scio Town Center just west of Ann Arbor, have popped up in southeast Michigan in Canton, Macomb Township and Novi, but they are still relatively uncommon.

Kwan said the project initially was envisioned as straight retail, but city planners said it would have a better chance to be approved if it had a residential component. The city has a plan that calls for that area of town to be developed with projects that mix together different uses, like retail, office and residential.

So Kwan and his partners made a proposal that included condominiums, a measure they hope will allow the project to go forward.

The purpose of mixing uses is to promote walking between uses instead of driving. Proponents of this approach say not only does it cut down on traffic, it makes better use of land. Furthermore, less parking is required because residential



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users typically park in the evening when shops are not as busy and are gone during the day when they are.

Kwan said the area, which is dominated by large employers such as drug maker Pfizer Inc. and the nonprofit research group Altarum Institute, has a lack of retail and eateries. And although the 7.5-acre site is zoned for research uses, it stands along a busy commercial corridor where retail wouldn't be out of place.

Although the plan mixes uses, it has raised a few concerns among city planners.