



## ***BLOOMFIELD-BIRMINGHAM EAGLE***

### **Board endorses second new bistro, Forest Avenue Bistro**

MARY BETH ALMOND; C & G Staff Writer

Published: October 3, 2007

BIRMINGHAM - The **Triangle District** is one step closer toward getting its first bistro. The Planning Board voted 4- 2 to recommend approval of the site plan and special land use permit application for Forest Avenue Bistro at their Sept. 26 meeting. Planning Board members Mark Nickita, Robin Boyle, Sam Haberman and Bryan Williams voted in favor of the bistro, while George Dilgard and Brian Blaesing voted against it. Gillian Lazar was absent.

The bistro - designed by architect Victor Saroki and run by chef Brian Polcyn - will be located at 310 Forest Ave. in the mixed-use building that is currently under construction at 735-783 Forest Avenue in the **Triangle District**.

The overall project was originally reviewed and approved in March 2006, prior to the creation of the **Triangle District** Master Plan. Originally the owners proposed having offices on the first floor and second floor and residential units on the top floor, with parking integrated on the bottom level and in the rear alleyway.

The applicants appeared before the Planning Board on Sept. 26 with a revised plan, hoping to open a bistro with an outdoor café where the office space on the first level was originally proposed.

"It gave us a real opportunity to bring a mixed use building to this **triangle** area - a restaurant, office uses and residential uses all in the same building. It's what we think the **Triangle District** is looking for, it's presented in a very urban way, and we believe that it's a good practical use," Saroki said at the meeting, speaking on behalf of the project.

The proposed layout for Forest Avenue Bistro includes a dining area featuring seating for 64 people - including 10 seats at a bar. The 684-square-foot outdoor café, which will be enclosed with a 32-inch continuous removable metal railing secured directly into the sidewalk, will have seating for approximately 30 people directly adjacent to

the building along Forest Avenue. The applicant intends to have business hours of 11 a.m. to midnight Monday- Sunday for both the indoor and outdoor areas of the bistro, and mentioned they may feature some form of occasional entertainment in the form of smooth jazz.

The plan includes 48 parking spaces on the site - on the first floor, as well as behind the building in the alleyway- eight spaces along Forest Avenue and two spaces along Elm Street for a total of 58 parking spaces.

"We're convinced they might be able to get a couple more squeezed in there because we're not requiring the two-foot buffer zone that you see in the downtown area," said City Planner Jill Robinson. Forest Avenue Bistro proposes to have a full-service kitchen serving a wide variety of American cuisine for lunch and dinner. Current proprietor of the Five Lakes

Grill in Milford chef Polcyn, who Saroki referred to as "the best-known chef in the state," will act as the proprietor of Forest Avenue Bistro. Polcyn said the food will be contemporary, but moderately priced, with appetizers between \$5 and \$11 and main courses for \$15 to \$23.

"The bistro is going to be a take on a classic European-style bistro," Polcyn said. "Part of my philosophy for this place will be high-quality food, high-quality service, but moderately priced, because I think good food should be accessible to everybody. I hope to have a place for a brick oven for thick-crust pizza."

Robinson said there are currently no other restaurants comparable to this proposal within the **Triangle District** - which currently houses Kentucky Fried Chicken, Papa Joe's and Primo's Pizza.

Because the building abuts some residential and commercial properties, a few members of the public who live in the area spoke up at the meeting to share their concerns that the bistro would increase traffic and parking congestion and noise in the area. The plan will now head to the City Commission, which has the final say on whether the plan will be approved or rejected.