City of Birmingham
A Walkable Community

MEMORANDUM

Community Development Department

DATE: **April 6, 2015**

TO: **Joseph A. Valentine, City Manager**

FROM: **Jana L. Ecker, Planning Director**

SUBJECT: **2015 Spring Screening for Bistro Applicants**

On September 12, 2011, the City Commission established a new process that altered the bistro application process from the previous "first come, first served" policy. The policy for the 2015 bistro license application process is now as follows:

1. Deadline for the initial review of 2015 bistro applications is October 1, 2014.

2. The City Commission will consider only those initial reviews that are filed with the Planning Department on or before October 1, 2014.

All bistro applications submitted for initial review must contain only the following information in 5 pages or less:

- A brief description of the bistro concept proposed, including type of food to be served, price point, ambience of bistro, unique characteristics of the operation, if any, and an explanation of how this concept will enhance the current mix of commercial uses in Birmingham;
- Proposed location, hours of operation and date of opening;
- Name of owner/operator and outline of previous restaurant experience; and
- Evidence of financial ability to construct and operate the proposed bistro.

3. All bistro applications received by October 1, 2014 that meet the requirements outlined above will be reviewed by the City Commission on October 13, 2014 for prioritization based on the proposed bistro concept, proposed location within the City, potential impact on the City, and the capability of the proposed owner/operator. Each applicant will be given a time limit to verbally present their concepts to the City Commission. No PowerPoint presentations, display boards or other visual aids will be permitted.

4. The City Commission will prioritize all initial applications received, and will direct the top applications to the Planning Board for full site plan and design review and Special Land Use Permit review.

5. All bistro applications forwarded to the Planning Board for full review will be required to provide additional information as required for review of the bistro as a SLUP including site plans, floor plans, sample menus, interior design details, evidence of financial capability, as well as any other information requested by the Planning Board.

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6. All detailed applications directed to the Planning Board from the City Commission will be reviewed during public hearings conducted during a single Planning Board meeting within 90 days of the initial review by the City Commission.

7. All bistro applications will be evaluated by the Planning Board based on the criteria set forth in Chapter 10, Alcoholic Liquors, Division 4, Selection Criteria, and up to two applications will be recommended for approval to the City Commission. All applications will be assigned a priority ranking by the Planning Board.

8. All bistro applications reviewed by the Planning Board will be forwarded to the City Commission for a detailed review and approval/denial in the order of the ranking assigned by the Planning Board.

9. The City Commission will conduct public hearings to review the selected bistro applications and determine which, if any, bistros to approve for 2015, up to a maximum of two approvals.

10. In the event that two bistro approvals are not granted as a result of the fall review period, the City will accept additional bistro applications for the current calendar year on or before **April 1st**.

11. All bistro applications received in this second round will be reviewed and ranked by the Planning Board using the same review process noted in steps 2 through 9 above.

On October 3, 2014, the City Commission, in accordance with the process outlined above, reviewed the following applicants for the initial review process, prior to the October 1, 2014 deadline established by the City Commission:

- The Factory Bistro;
- SHO; and
- The Park.

The City Commission selected The Factory Bistro and SHO to move forward for a full review by the Planning Board. However, a full and complete application for site plan and Special Land Use Permit review was not submitted within 90 days for either of the selected bistro concepts.

Accordingly, as outlined in the bistro process for 2015, the City Commission may consider additional bistro applicants who apply by April 1st, 2015. The following applications were received by the Spring deadline:

- Hillstone Restaurant Group, Inc.; and
- La Strada Dolci E Caffe.

Each of the two new bistro applications are attached for your review. Each applicant will be given a time limit to verbally present their concepts to the City Commission, without the use of PowerPoint presentations, display boards or other visual aids. A suggested time frame would be a five minute presentation of the concept by the applicant, with a five minute period for questions from the City Commission. The City Commission will then have the opportunity to

prioritize these Spring applications, and direct the top applications to the Planning Board for full site plan and design review and Special Land Use Permit review, if so desired.

Suggested Action:

To direct the following bistro applications, **in the priority order below**, to the Planning Board for full site plan and design review and Special Land Use Permit review:

1._____
2._____

Bistro License Application

189 W. Merrill Street, Birmingham, MI 48009

Hillstone Restaurant Group is pleased to submit this application for a bistro license for a proposed restaurant to be located at 189 Merrill Street at the corner of Henrietta. Our restaurant, name to be determined, would feature a concise menu of American classics in keeping with its other recent ventures of a similar scale. Among these, the White House Tavern in Aspen, CO, the Honor Bar in Montecito, CA, or R+D Kitchen with locations in Santa Monica, CA, Yountville, CA, Newport Beach, CA and Dallas, TX, all emphasize full service dining in modern yet warm spaces which are specifically designed for the unique communities of which they are a part.

A sample menu is attached, together with photos of certain other menu items. Hillstone has always focused on American cuisine which tastes delicious. While American cuisine is represented in Birmingham, we feel there is room for a menu where one can enjoy the best cheeseburger in town to a salad with unbelievably fresh combinations of ingredients. Our 35 years of experience operating restaurants and our desire to constantly learn and perfect our craft has given us the ability to realize restaurants which stand the test of time to become important gathering places for their respective communities.

The corner of Merrill and Henrietta is ideally suited for a small bistro. The natural beauty of Birmingham is on full display with Shain Park and historic City Hall adjacent. Providing an opportunity for residents and visitors to enjoy this beauty in a setting which is relaxing yet active would create an appealing transition point between the commercial core, areas off the core, and neighborhoods just beyond the park. The restaurant would be open for lunch and dinner approximately from 11:30am to 11:00pm. It would be our expectation to open Summer of 2016.

As we hope the accompanying images communicate, our restaurants provide comfort in an engaging way. This restaurant would have a display kitchen situated near the dining and bar areas which would be encountered upon entry. Seeking to be casual but refined, we focus on creating environments which are modern, warm, and which eschew theme or artifice. The approachable quality of the experience is enhanced by real finishes, artwork, and service which is attentive, welcoming, and graceful.

Family owned and privately held Hillstone Restaurant Group has grown from a single restaurant founded in 1977 to encompass nearly 50 restaurants operating under different names, some more well known like Houston's to individually named restaurants, all in the most vibrant communities in the United States. Distinguished by a management culture of excellence, Hillstone maintains a slow and steady growth, opening about one restaurant a year on average. Hillstone's financial viability to realize a first rate restaurant is guaranteed through both self financing and through a long standing revolving credit facility with Bank of America. Hillstone maintains offices in Los Angeles and Phoenix and a complete listing of our locations may be found at www.Hillstone.com.

It would be an honor to have the privilege to operate a restaurant in Birmingham and we hope you find the prospect as appealing as we do.

HILLSTONE
RESTAURANT4GROUP

Reference Menu

SANDWICHES

Our burgers are ground in house each morning for today's service

CHEESEBURGER 15
lettuce, tomato, onion & cheddar on a house-made egg bun

DING'S CRISPY CHICKEN SANDWICH 16
baby swiss, sliced tomato & vinaigrette slaw

VEGGIE BURGER 14
brown rice, mushrooms, almonds & melted jack

TODAY'S FEATURED SANDWICH AQ
selection changes daily

ENTRÉE SALADS

THE NEWPORTER* 16
roast chicken, mixed greens, bacon, cashews & chopped egg

MEDITERRANEAN SEARED TUNA SALAD 21
ahi tuna, mixed greens, cucumber & goat cheese

ASIAN CHICKEN & NOODLE SALAD 16
cucumber, mango, peanut & fresh herbs

NIGHTLY FEATURES

SPAGHETTI NORMA 15
classic tomato sauce with seasonal vegetables and fresh herbs

SALMON 27
mashed potatoes and seasonal vegetable

PAN FRIED FISH 24
with coleslaw and campari tomatoes

WILD MUSHROOM MEATLOAF 19
mashed potatoes & seasonal vegetable

GREEK STYLE CHICKEN 18
avgolemono sauce *(ahv•goh•LEH•moh•noh)* & tabbouleh

SPINACH & CHEESE OMELET 15
with griddled toast, tomatoes & mixed greens*

CAMPFIRE BARBECUE BEEF RIBS 24
Carolina barbecue sauce, served with coleslaw

FLAT IRON STEAK 29
with chimichurri, french fries & tomatoes

SIDES, EXTRAS & BAR FOOD

Dip Duo with warm tortilla chips 9
Pine Room Salad with café vinaigrette* 6

Tabbouleh	5	Chicken Meatballs	7
Deviled Eggs	5	Coleslaw	4
Hand-Cut Fries	4	Fresh Vegetable	5

Crispy Chicken Sandwich

Dip Duo

Shrimp Louie

Thai Steak Salad

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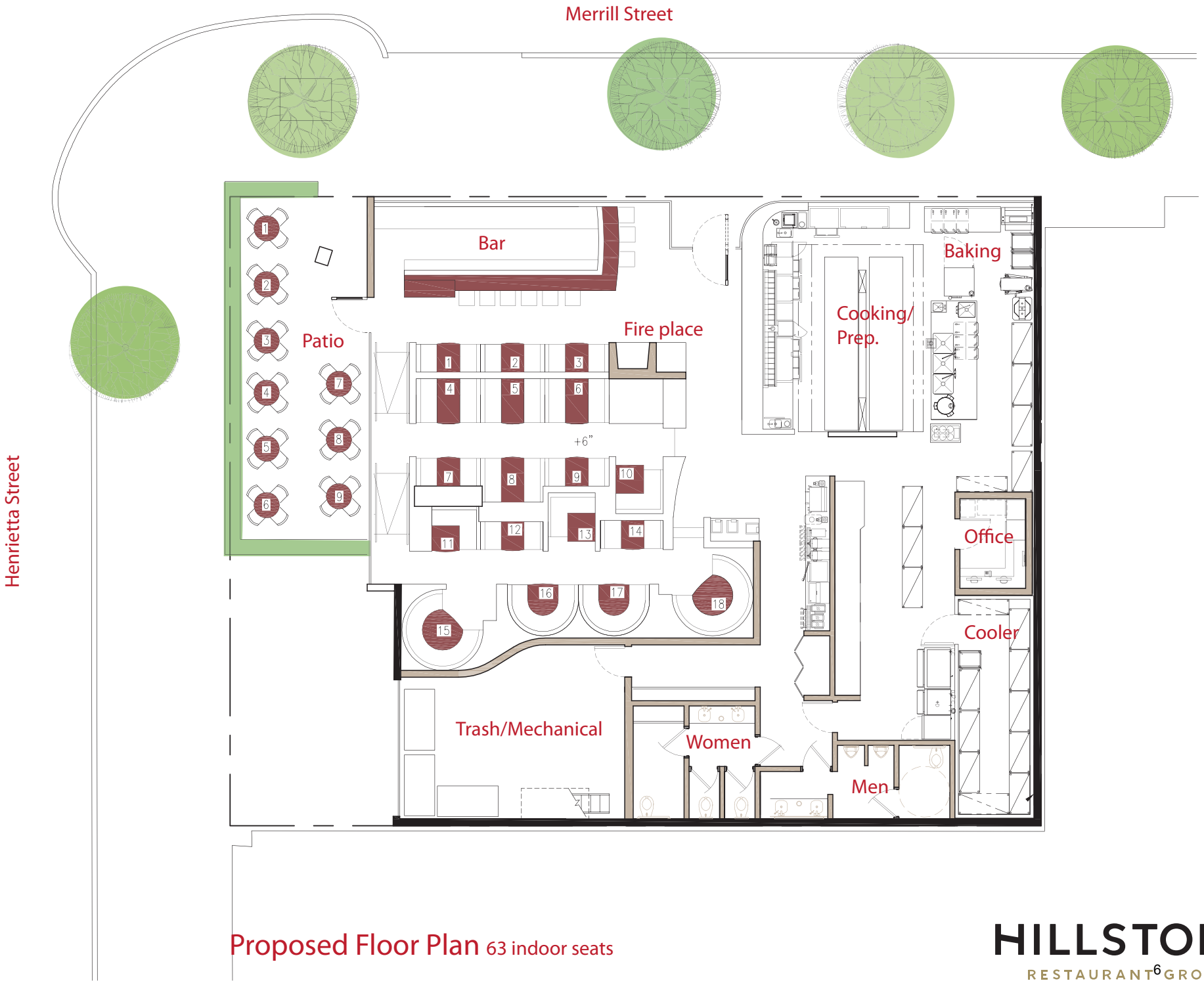

Proposed Floor Plan 63 indoor seats

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The Honor Bar, Montecito

R+D Kitchen, Dallas

The Honor Bar, Montecito

R+D Kitchen, Dallas

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The White House Tavern, Aspen

R+D Kitchen, Santa Monica

The White House Tavern, Aspen

R+D Kitchen, Santa Monica

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LA STRADA DOLCI E CAFFÉ

243 E. MERRILL STREET, BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN

COMING SUMMER 2015

AMBIANCE

La Strada Dolci e Caffé will be Birmingham's first old world European Café.

The concept and uniqueness of La Strada Dolci e Caffé is a perfect fit for the City of Birmingham. Bringing the culture of an old world Italian Café to the citizens of Birmingham and those in neighboring communities, La Strada's menu offerings will give customers a complete and authentic European taste experience to savor and enjoy.

La Strada Dolci e Caffé will not only be an experience for our guests but also an education on the Italian tradition of Coffee Art. From the long white marble barista caffé bar, specialty beverages will be created from freshly ground beans roasted to exact specifications and brewed on an extraordinary state of the art espresso machine – served by expertly trained baristas in tuxedos. Customers will delight their palates with specialty breakfast pastries with an old world flair, baked fresh daily. La Strada will also offer light meal items such as variations of the classic Italian panini, fresh salads and personal pizzas, made in our own unique (and state of the art) pizza oven.

To tempt the sweet tooth, La Strada will provide a selection of desserts and house-made gelatos, all with an old world flair. In addition to the food items our menu will offer daily fresh juices, along with European specialty and dessert beverages.

With a warm atmosphere of Marsala red walls, arches, antique-style framed mirrors, white marble tops, colorful bistro chairs, low seating settees and Old World inspired chandeliers shining over the French style doors overlooking Merrill Street, patrons will feel as though they are stepping off the streets of Birmingham and into a coffee bar on one of the lovely quaint streets in Rome.

IMPACT ON THE CITY

La Strada Dolci e Caffé will expand the diversity of the City's cultural restaurant offerings. Its uniqueness and ambiance will draw customers in from all over to

experience the true taste of a European Café in the comforts of downtown Birmingham.

Projected number of employees: up to 12.

ABOUT THE OPERATOR

La Strada Dolci e Caffé will be operated by the award winning and highly successful restaurateur Zharko Palushaj. Mr. Palushaj received his culinary arts diploma from Sergei Stanich University in Montenegro, before training extensively in Italy, and later in New York. For over nine years, Mr. Palushaj successfully owned and operated Mezzaluna Ristorante in Sterling Heights, Michigan, before becoming the operating partner and general manager of Troy's Tre Monti Ristorante – Hour Magazine's 2013 Restaurant of the Year.

His vision and creative culinary flair is well known, and La Strada will reflect the expert art this master creates in his kitchens. Not only will this bistro be a feast for the senses, under Mr. Palushaj exacting direction, it will also be a jewel for the City of Birmingham.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The owners have committed over $250,000.00 to bring La Strada to 243 Merrill and are fully committed to sustain the capital needed to keep this entity a viable and valuable part of the Birmingham business community.