

Department of Planning and Zoning

149 Church Street
Burlington, VT 05401
Telephone: (802) 865-7188
(802) 865-7195 (FAX)
(802) 865-7142 (TTY)

David White, AICP, Director
Meagan Tuttle, AICP, Comprehensive Planner
Jay Appleton, GIS Manager
Scott Gustin, AICP, CFM, Principal Planner
Mary O'Neil, AICP, Principal Planner
Ryan Morrison, CFM, Associate Planner
Anita Wade, Zoning Clerk
vacant, Department Secretary



TO: Design Advisory Board
FROM: Scott Gustin
DATE: March 14, 2017
RE: 17-0825CA/MA, 85 North Avenue

=====
Zone: NMU Ward: 3C
Owner/Representative: Catamount/Lakeview, LLC

Request: Construction of 43-unit residential building with associated parking and site improvements.

OVERVIEW:

The applicant is seeking approval to construct a 43-unit residential structure with associated parking and site improvements. The parcel presently consists of a parking lot at the bottom of Lakeview Terrace and a vegetated bluff with steep slopes to the south and west. As proposed, the building would be set atop the hillside at the western edge of the present parking area. Parking will be provided on the first level with apartments above. Associated surface parking and site improvements would be located generally to the east of the proposed building.

This project underwent sketch plan review with the Design Advisory Board on November 24, 2015 and with the Development Review Board on December 1, 2015. At the time, the project was larger with 53 apartments, and the building was to be set into the hillside. It is now 43 apartments, and very little earthwork is now proposed. Where the slope falls away to the west, the building will be held up by columns rather than set into the grade. Sketch plan comments were generally favorable as to the building design. Suggestion was made to increase the usable space around the building, particularly along its primary frontage. Recommendation was also made to improve access to the public sidewalk and the street.

ARTICLE 6: DEVELOPMENT REVIEW STANDARDS

Part 1, Land Division Design Standards

Not applicable.

Part 2, Site Plan Design Standards

Sec. 6.2.2, Review Standards

(a) Protection of important natural features

The site contains no significant natural areas as identified in the Open Space Protection Plan. The slope is vegetated with a variety of vegetation, including trees, shrubs, and ground cover. The project plans denote the proposed limits of clearing.

(b) Topographical alterations

The existing surface parking lot is flat. The slope precipitously drops away to the south and west beyond the edges of the existing asphalt. Rather than alter the slope and set the building into it, the proposal calls for setting the building at grade along its primary façade and holding it up with columns as the slope falls away to the south and west. Little in the way of topographical alteration is evident in the topographic plans.

(c) Protection of important public views

There are significant views from the project site across the lake and towards the Adirondacks. These views, however, are not part of any defined view corridor (such as those along Main, College, Pearl, and Cherry Streets) and are not protected under this criterion.

(d) Protection of important cultural resources

The project site consists of a surface parking lot and steep slopes. The site has no known archaeological significance. It contains no archaeological site points, nor is it located within an archaeologically sensitive area.

(e) Supporting the use of alternative energy

See Sec. 6.3.2 (f).

(f) Brownfield sites

The site is included on the Vermont DEC Hazardous Site List. Contaminants related to fill and dumping include asbestos, coal tar, lead, and PAH. A corrective action plan with VT DEC will likely be required prior to construction. The applicant should be prepared to address this criterion and status of a CAP, if applicable.

(g) Provide for nature's events

Present site conditions include no stormwater management. As proposed, stormwater runoff from the building's roof and associated parking area will be captured and directed into an onsite system for attenuation and infiltration into the ground. Overflow will be directed into the separate storm sewer. No stormwater from this project will enter the combined sewer system.

Both pedestrian entryways are sheltered under projecting canopies.

(h) Building location and orientation

The proposed building will take advantage of the expansive southerly and westerly views and will be set at the top of the bluff, set back from North Avenue. The Depot Street right-of-way effectively precludes setting the building up along North Avenue. As proposed, the building will continue the street edge set by existing homes along Lakeview Terrace. Two east-facing front entries reinforce the continuation of that established street edge. The front entries are clearly identifiable from the public street.

(i) Vehicular access

Vehicles may access the site from Lakeview Terrace or from North Avenue. Full size true-to-scale application plans are needed in order to confirm the adequacy of circulation within the parking areas. A single doorway affords access in and out of the garage.

(j) Pedestrian access

The project includes an apparent continuation of the sidewalk from Lakeview Terrace across the front of the proposed building. Confirmation as to whether this feature will indeed be a public sidewalk is needed, as it has implications for measuring building height. Dept. of Public Works' standards will also need to be adhered to. Both building entries will afford direct access onto the sidewalk. As depicted in the sketch plans, the sidewalk continues to dead-end east of the proposed building. Seemingly, the parking easement precludes extension of the sidewalk to North Ave. Confirmation from the applicant is needed.

(k) Accessibility for the handicapped

Handicap parking spaces are depicted in the project plans. They are located within the garage adjacent to the lobby. It is the applicant's responsibility to comply with all applicable ADA requirements.

(l) Parking and circulation

This criterion calls for placement of new buildings in front, or to the side, of parking areas. The idea is to avoid parking in front of structures. In this case, the parking lot is already in place. As noted previously, the Depot Street right-of-way effectively precludes construction of a building along North Avenue (with parking behind). As proposed, the building will be set towards the western end of the property and will continue the street edge established along Lakeview Terrace.

The existing surface parking area will be reconstructed and restriped. A center landscaping island will also be installed. As revamped surface parking associated with this project amounts to only 11 spaces, no shade trees are required. As proposed, however, 4 new shade trees will be installed in the new landscaping island.

As noted previously, full size true-to-scale project plans must be provided in order to confirm adequacy of parking and circulation dimensions.

(m) Landscaping and fences

A landscaping plan is included in the project plans. It depicts several new shade trees in the surface parking area as noted above. In addition, landscaping is concentrated along the eastern frontage of the new building and includes a variety of shrubs and flowering plants in addition to new grassy turf.

The trash area to the side of the new building will be screened with a wood slat enclosure.

(n) Public plazas and open space

No public plazas or open space are included in this proposal.

(o) Outdoor lighting

Outdoor lighting information has been provided, including a photometric plan and a fixture cutsheet for the surface parking area. The specified fixture is acceptable – a cutoff LED luminaire. Illumination levels; however, are too bright in places. There are several hot spots exceeding the 4.0 footcandle limit for surface parking areas. Lamp mounting height is acceptable at 20.'

What appears to be a bollard-type fixture will illuminate the sidewalk in front of the building. It qualifies as a low-output fixture producing just 128 lumens. Whether there are any wall-mounted

building entry lights is unclear. If any are proposed, fixture cutsheets and illumination levels must be provided.

No information about the illumination of the garage is included in the application and must be. A fixture cutsheet must be provided along with illumination levels in order to confirm compliance with the applicable IESNA standard.

(p) Integrate infrastructure into the design

No new outdoor mechanical equipment is apparent in the site plan. A trash enclosure is set to the side of the proposed building at the northeastern end of the site. Screening will consist of a slatted wood enclosure with a gate. Any new utility lines must be buried.

Part 3, Architectural Design Standards

Sec. 6.3.2, Review Standards

(a) Relate development to its environment

1. Massing, Height, and Scale

The proposed building is large, larger than the homes along Lakeview Terrace, but not dissimilar in scale to the newly renovated COTS building or the apartment building below Depot Street. The proposed structure incorporates distinct building elements defined by varying materials, planes, and sections. The slight “V” shape of the building further offsets the perceived mass of the structure. Perspective drawings as viewed from the south and west are lacking. Given the unusual proposal to sit the building atop tall columns as it faces south and west, such perspective drawings are needed to better appreciate the building’s visual impact from Burlington’s downtown waterfront. Height as perceived from North Avenue is unremarkable. The building is a full 3 stories with a partial 4th story set back from the front facade. A mechanical enclosure sits atop the 4th story.

2. Roofs and Rooflines

The proposed building will include angular shed roofs and flat roof components. Flat and pitched roofs are common in the neighborhood.

3. Building Openings

Fenestration is consistent throughout the building. It consists of boxy windows in various formations that repeat around the structure. The fenestration is consistent with the geometry of the proposed building.

(b) Protection of important architectural resources

There are no structures onsite. Other structures nearby are historically significant. The proposed building is offset from these existing buildings and will have no direct impacts on their historic significance.

(c) Protection of important public views

See 6.2.2 (c) above.

(d) Provide an active and inviting street edge

Lakeview Terrace ends at the northern end of the site. Depot Street and North Avenue lie to the east. The proposed development aims to continue the street edge from Lakeview Terrace out towards North Avenue. In doing so, it continues the Lakeview Terrace sidewalk across the front

of the building. The building entries are well defined and connect directly to the sidewalk. The change from sketch plan to eliminate below grade parking and to, instead, provide it at grade is significant. Doing so introduces a fairly monotonous street-level face. While at-grade parking is certainly possible, it brings about a particular challenge to provide a lively, activated street presence. As proposed, pedestrian activation is limited to the two entries. Greater attention is needed for the street level of this building. Within this Neighborhood Mixed Use zone, provision of an active, pedestrian-oriented street presence is especially important.

(e) Quality of materials

Exterior building materials are not entirely clear. Windows will be fiberglass, and membrane roofing will be installed. As noted previously, screening for the dumpster and rooftop mechanicals will consist of wood slat material. The elevation plans note siding types 1-5. Just what they are is not clear. A materials cut sheet suggests that perhaps all of the siding types are metal siding. Clarity is needed.

(f) Reduce energy utilization

Cold air heat pumps will be installed for the apartments. Gas will provide heat in common spaces. The application plans assert that the building will meet or exceed applicable energy efficiency codes. At a minimum, the new building must comply with the current energy efficiency requirements of the city and state.

(g) Make advertising features complimentary to the site

No signs are included in the project plans.

(h) Integrate infrastructure into the building design

The aforementioned heat pumps will be installed on the rooftop. They will be set back from the front of the building and surrounded by slatted wood screening. Provision for mailboxes is not evident and must be included in the project plans.

(i) Make spaces safe and secure

The proposed building appears to be accessible by emergency service vehicles. The project underwent technical review by Police, Fire, Building, etc. on December 10, 2015. Comments from that review have been provided to the applicant. No dedicated building entry lighting is evident on the project plans and is recommended. An intercom system connecting individual dwelling units with the front entry is also recommended.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

As proposed, several key aspects of the application need additional detail and/or revision:

- Perspective drawings from Burlington's downtown waterfront
- Activated, pedestrian-oriented street level
- Building cladding, lighting details, and full size project plans

Continued review by the Design Advisory Board is recommended prior to moving along to Development Review Board.