

Department of Planning and Zoning

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TO: Design Advisory Board
FROM: Scott Gustin
DATE: November 24, 2015
RE: 16-0581SP, 85 North Avenue

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

Request: Sketch plan review of proposed four story, 56-unit residential building with associated parking garage.

OVERVIEW:

The applicant is requesting sketch plan review of a 56-unit residential structure with an associated underground garage 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 into the hillside with parking underneath and residences above. The existing surface parking lot would be partially reconfigured as well.

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 extent of clearing is not clearly depicted and will need to be upon permit application.

(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. The proposed construction will be built into the slope and will require excavation and grading work. A detailed topographic plan will be required as part of the permit application.

(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 and must be addressed as part of the permit application.

(g) Provide for nature's events

Stormwater management is not addressed in the sketch plans. The applicants are advised to work with the Burlington Stormwater Program to work out proposed stormwater improvements prior to permit application.

(h) Building location and orientation

The proposed building will take advantage of the expansive southerly and westerly views and will be set into 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. The east-facing front entry reinforces the continuation of that established street edge. The front entry is centrally located and clearly identifiable from the public street.

(i) Vehicular access

Vehicles may access the site from Lakeview Terrace or from North Avenue. Two-way circulation is depicted within the revamped surface parking lot. The underground garage entrance is located close to Lakeview Terrace and will provide two-way circulation 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. A bike lane runs along the edge of the parking lot and out to the top of Depot Street. A central front walkway and ramp will connect the primary entrance to this new sidewalk. The sidewalk and bike lane as proposed define the perimeter of the surface parking area and afford pedestrians a route separate from vehicular circulation.

(k) Accessibility for the handicapped

ADA details are not noted in the sketch plans. 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 parking area will apparently be reconstructed or at least revamped with new striping and a central landscaping island. No parking lot shading analysis is included in the sketch plans. This criterion establishes a target of 30% shading of the parking areas with new shade trees. At least 1 shade tree for every 5 parking spaces is required. Minimum caliper size at the time of planting is 2.5” – 3.5” and a mature canopy diameter of 35’ is expected. Such details will be required with the permit application.

(m) Landscaping and fences

Some general landscaping information has been provided in the sketch plans. It appears that new trees will be planted to the west and downslope of the proposed building. New trees are also apparent in the proposed parking lot landscaping island and around a trash enclosure. A detailed landscaping plan will be required as part of the permit application.

(n) Public plazas and open space

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

(o) Outdoor lighting

Little outdoor lighting information is included in the sketch plans. The permit application must include a photometric plan of the site delineating separate lighting environments (parking & circulation, walkways, and building entries) and fixture cutsheets.

(p) Integrate infrastructure into the design

No new outdoor mechanical equipment is apparent in the sketch plans. A trash enclosure is set to the side of the proposed building at the eastern end of the site. Enclosure details will be needed with the permit application. 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, seemingly the largest at this end of Lakeview Terrace. The sketch plans are basic but depict a structure that incorporates distinct building elements defined by varying materials, planes, and sections. The “L” shape of the building further offsets the perceived mass of the structure. Specific height information is not included in the sketch plans. Set into the hillside as it is, perceived height from the west is considerably taller than that as perceived from street grade to the east. From street grade, building height appears to be reasonably close to that of other nearby structures along North Avenue and Lakeview Terrace.

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

Only fenestration on the eastern elevations is shown in the sketch plans. That depicted consists of boxy windows in a pattern consistent with the boxy 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 central building entry is well defined and connects directly to this sidewalk and adjacent bikeway and vehicular circulation. There are no blank stretches of building wall facing the street. Ample glazing, projections and recesses, and a projecting front entry are employed to provide an active and inviting street presence.

(e) Quality of materials

The sketch plans note no building materials. The permit application must specify all exterior building materials.

(f) Reduce energy utilization

Energy information is not included in the sketch plans. 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 depicted in the sketch plans.

(h) Integrate infrastructure into the building design

No rooftop or other exterior mechanical equipment is depicted in the sketch plans. The floor plans note a “mechanical storage” room. Perhaps all mechanical equipment will be interior. If any outdoor mechanical equipment is proposed, it must be depicted and screened as part of the permit application.

(i) Make spaces safe and secure

The proposed building appears to be accessible by emergency service vehicles. The project will undergo technical review by Police, Fire, Building, etc. on December 10, 2015. Building entries will presumably be illuminated. An intercom system connecting individual dwelling units with the front entry is recommended.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

None required for sketch plan review.