

Department of Planning and Zoning

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TO: Design Advisory Board
FROM: Scott Gustin
DATE: December 8, 2015
RE: 16-0612SP, 453 & 501 Pine Street

Zone: ELM Ward: 5S
Owner/Applicant: 453 Pine Street, LLC

Request: Sketch plan review of proposed 4-5 story, 100,000 sf commercial building and associated site improvements.

OVERVIEW:

The applicant is requesting sketch plan review of a new commercial building and associated parking and site improvements on the vacant property at 453 Pine Street. A new surface parking lot is also proposed on the adjacent property at 501 Pine Street. Prior development proposals have been made for these properties and have not been constructed, due in large part to the adjacent superfund site in the barge canal. The present proposal reflects extensive work through BRELLEA (Brownfields Reuse and Environmental Liability Limitation Act) administered through the VT Agency of Natural Resources. This effort has involved collaboration between city, state, federal, and private entities and is the basis for this newest proposal.

Note that two properties are involved: 453 Pine Street and 501 Pine Street. At the time of permit application, two applications will be required – one for each property.

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 two properties do not contain any important natural features as identified in the Open Space Protection Plan or as outlined in Sec. 4.5.4, *Natural Resource Protection Overlay Districts*. The properties are, however, affected by the buffer zones for several such natural resource overlays. Specifically, wetland and natural area buffer zones originating on properties further west extend onto the subject properties. The site plan depicts a 50' wetland buffer (i.e. the state buffer width); however, the city's wetland buffer is 100' wide and must be depicted for an accurate evaluation of buffer impacts. The site plan does not depict the 100' natural area buffer zone at all and must.

The Special Flood Hazard Area also extends into both properties. It is depicted on the sketch plans. As proposed, no construction extends into the flood zone.

(b) Topographical alterations

The existing properties are fairly flat and will essentially remain so. Fill and grading work will be required for construction, and the sketch plans depict some topographic information. The permit application must include a detailed topographic plan.

(c) Protection of important public views

There are no significant public views from or through the subject properties. The proposed construction will not adversely impact any identified public view corridor.

(d) Protection of important cultural resources

The properties have no known archaeological significance. They contain no archaeological site points, nor are they located within an archaeologically sensitive area.

(e) Supporting the use of alternative energy

See Sec. 6.3.2 (f).

(f) Brownfield sites

The Vermont DEC Hazardous Site List specifically lists 453 Pine Street as a contaminated site. Presumably, 501 Pine Street is included in this listing but not specified separately. Both properties contain coal tar contamination associated with the superfund site. The site plan depicts the known limits of the subsurface NAPL (coal tar). As noted previously, this project is the result of extensive work through BRELLA. The proposed construction avoids encroachment into the NAPL. While details are not contained within the sketch plans, significant geotechnical analysis has been employed to avoid disturbance of the coal tar contamination.

(g) Provide for nature's events

Some basic stormwater information has been provided in the sketch plans. Areas of permeable pavers are proposed along with linear stormwater attenuation structures alongside the surface parking areas. Performance details must be included in the permit application. 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 be set close to Pine Street, consistent with the street edge established by existing buildings. A central front entry will face the street and will be embellished with a front courtyard of sorts.

(i) Vehicular access

Two access points are proposed for 453 Pine Street, one on either side of the proposed building. The northerly driveway looks as though it could be the existing driveway serving the Maltex building and would provide access to both properties. This driveway lines up with Howard Street on the opposite side of Pine Street. Details are not articulated in the sketch plans, but it appears that both access points could provide entrance and exit from the site. A singular driveway is proposed for access to the surface parking lot at 501 Pine Street. As contemplated by this criterion, a traffic analysis will be required as part of the permit application.

(j) Pedestrian access

A new or reconstructed sidewalk appears to run across the length of 453 Pine Street. The sketch plans are unclear as to whether it would extend across 501 Pine Street as well. Such continuation is recommended for ease of pedestrian access. In any event, work within the Pine Street right-of-way will require the approval of the City Council in consultation with the Department of Public Works.

The space between the building and the sidewalk will be hardscaped with pavers to form an entry courtyard with sitting benches and artwork. This hardscaping will provide a strong connection between the building's front entry and the public sidewalk. Sidewalks must continue across the driveways. The sketch plans appear to depict as much, but details are lacking. Perimeter walkways hug most of the building foundation, and a new central walkway is proposed through the center of the surface parking area on 453 Pine Street. Additional walkways interior to the surface parking areas are recommended for improved pedestrian circulation and safety.

(k) Accessibility for the handicapped

Little in the way of ADA details are noted in the sketch plans. It is the applicant's responsibility to comply with all applicable ADA requirements.

(l) Parking and circulation

The proposed building is set close to Pine Street with parking placed to the side and rear of it. Site conditions related to peat soils and coal tar contamination effectively prevent placing all of the parking behind the building. Surface parking areas are broken into several sections, and the parking next to the proposed building will receive a surface paver treatment aimed at enabling alternative uses during weekends. The sketch plans depict landscaping between the parking and the sidewalk. Details as to the proposed landscaping and its effectiveness for screening will be required with the permit application. Little detail is provided for the surface parking at 501 Pine Street. It is placed up close to the street with no screening depicted in the sketch plans. If this parking area is to be constructed, it should be heavily screened.

This criterion recommends connectivity between parking areas. There is no link between the parking at 453 and 501 Pine Street. Surface grades may preclude doing so, but the applicants should be prepared to address whether connectivity can be achieved.

In light of the reduced-size sketch plans, the dimensional adequacy of the proposed parking spaces and associated circulation cannot be assessed. The permit application will require full size true-to-scale drawings to enable such assessment. While not within the purview of the Design Advisory Board, it bears noting that the number of parking spaces proposed, 332 (258 at 453 Pine St + 74 at 501 Pine St), is far above the minimum parking requirement of 200 spaces (2 spaces per 1,000 sf for 100,000 sf office building). This many parking spaces may exceed the maximum parking limitation of 8.1.9, *Maximum Parking Spaces* and may, therefore, require a waiver under criterion 5 of that section. Reduction in the number of parking spaces is strongly encouraged and may be required depending on the maximum parking waiver provisions.

All of the proposed surface parking will require the installation of new shade trees. 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.

No bike parking details are included in the sketch plans and must be provided as part of the permit application.

(m) Landscaping and fences

Some general landscaping information has been provided in the sketch plans. It appears that new trees will line much of the new surface parking at 453 Pine Street. New trees are also proposed within the front yard. It appears that new gardens will accent the building foundation as well. No landscaping is depicted for 501 Pine Street. Landscaping consistent with that at 453 Pine Street should accompany construction at 501 Pine Street. 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. The side parking area at 453 Pine Street notes potential use as “event space” on weekends. Details as to this potential use, and whether it will be publically accessible, should be included in the permit application.

(o) Outdoor lighting

No 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, nor is any outdoor trash/recycling enclosure. Such details will be required as part of 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 existing built environment along this stretch of Pine Street includes a variety of building shapes and sizes. Most are relatively large, such as the neighboring BED and Maltex buildings. The Dealer.Com building is one of the largest structures along Pine Street and sits across the street from the proposed commercial building. The proposed building is large at ~ 100,000 sf and up to 5 stories but fits within the context of the existing built environment.

The massing of the proposed office building is split into two distinct components. The smaller of the two building sections sits up close to the street, whereas the larger section sits behind it. This bifurcation and siting effectively reduces the perceived building mass.

Exact building height is not specified, but at 5 stories, the proposed building presumably exceeds the 45’ height limit in the ELM zone and will be one of the taller structures in the South End. Though not articulated in the sketch plans, the applicant is expected to seek the increased height under Sec. 5.4.9, *Brownfield Remediation*. This provision allows waiver of standard dimensional requirements (including height) on brownfield properties. The idea is to allow for flexibility in building design to enable development on sites constrained by

contamination. The permit application must specifically address the requirements of Sec. 5.4.9.

2. Roofs and Rooflines

The proposed building will include flat roofs on both building segments. Flat roofs are common in the neighborhood and acceptable as part of the proposed building design.

3. Building Openings

A sheltered front entry will face Pine Street and is readily identifiable. Fenestration between the two building segments differs but is consistent within each segment. Window patterns are reminiscent of that typically found in old mill buildings and fits well within the context of this neighborhood. The fenestration along the street level of the front building section differs from the rest and brings a pedestrian scale to this street front.

(b) Protection of important architectural resources

There are no structures onsite. The adjacent Maltex building is historically significant. The proposed building is offset from this building and will have no direct impact on its historic significance.

(c) Protection of important public views

See 6.2.2 (c) above.

(d) Provide an active and inviting street edge

The front building section provides the primary interface with the street. As noted above, it has a well-defined front entry linked to the public sidewalk. The street level is differentiated from upper levels with distinct fenestration. The front entry is sheltered by a projecting canopy, and storefront fenestration on either side is likewise accented by overhanging canopies. Ground level windows provide visual access into the building interior. Window mirroring or frosting is not noted and would not be permitted. The building/street interface is further strengthened by the front swath of hardscaping, sitting benches, and artwork.

(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

A large “453” is depicted within the 4th story of the front façade. While its size might be acceptable (but no dimensions are noted), its height is clearly not. The height limit for parallel building signs in the ELM zone is 14’ or the ceiling height of the first floor, whichever is less.

(h) Integrate infrastructure into the building design

While not specifically noted, the sketch plans appear to depict a rooftop mechanical enclosure and elevator penthouse. The permit application must specify these features and their materials and dimensions.

(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.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

None required for sketch plan review.