

Burlington Development Review Board
Department of Permitting & Inspections
645 Pine Street
Burlington, VT 05401

RE: Rhino Foods – Additional Curb Cut and Parking Lot Discussion

Development Review Board (DRB) Members:

On 12/08/22 Rhino Foods and Food Tech met with the Technical Review Committee (TRC) to discuss the potential building addition at Rhino Foods' location at 179 Queen City Park Road. During this meeting there were two concerns brought up by the TRC relating to the proposed site plan and its compliance with the City of Burlington's Development Review Standards. We would like to address these two items with staff and the DRB in a Sketch Plan Review so we can come to an agreement on the approach to these items as they could have a make-or-break impact on our project.

Item 1: Curb Cuts

The first item relates to the Development Review Standard 6.2.2i – Parking and Circulation, which states, "Curb cuts shall be arranged and limited in number to reduce congestion and improve traffic safety."

We are proposing to go from one curb cut to two to enhance the safety for both employees and members of the public using the adjacent GMT bus stop. Rhino Foods currently has one curb cut that serves as a driveway for both passenger vehicles and larger trucks. After the building is expanded, a greater number of trucks will be present to serve the new warehousing space. Due to the increased number of trucks, we are proposing a second curb cut be allowed to reduce the amount of truck traffic through the employee parking lot. On our proposed site plan, trucks and passenger vehicles would both enter the existing curb cut at the front of the building. Passenger vehicles would also exit through this curb cut, but trucks would continue on the driveway around the perimeter of the building, and then exit out the new curb cut at the south end of the property. Providing a second curb cut dedicated to trucks exiting the site will (1) reduce the traffic through the parking lots and thereby provide a safer environment for employees and (2) reduce the truck traffic passing the bus stop located at the existing curb cut, reducing potential congestion and risks to citizens using that bus stop.

Item 2: Parking

The second item relates to the Development Review Standard 6.2.2l – Parking and Circulation, which states, "To the extent possible, parking should be placed at the side or rear of the lot and screened from view from surrounding properties and adjacent public rights of ways."

We are requesting that the DRB exercise the discretion permitted in the ordinance by approving the parking as proposed in our site plan.



At the time the existing Rhino Foods facility was built, the City standards allowed for parking lots to be located on the street side of the building. As this is an expansion of an existing facility, the proposed design complies with 6.2.2h, which states, "The introduction of new buildings and additions shall maintain the existing development pattern and rhythm of structures along the existing streetscape."

More importantly, in designing this addition to the facility, we have determined it is not operationally possible to place the parking to the side or rear of the addition. Imposing a condition to site the parking at the rear or side of the building would have a highly detrimental impact on both the proposed building expansion as well as the employee flow through the existing facility. Such a condition would render the proposed expansion infeasible and would result in this project not moving forward. Please consider the following points in evaluating the proposed site plan:

1. **Employee Safety** - The current and proposed parking lot provides direct access to the front entry of the building. Employees enter the front doors and have access to the administrative offices, break area, and locker rooms. It is not possible for some of Rhino Foods' employees to enter the opposite side of the building as they would have to pass through the production spaces which have strict sanitary requirements. And it is also not possible to reconfigure the employee entrance to any other location, as that would require a complete redesign of almost the entire building. Therefore, locating new parking to the side or rear of the lot would require employees to walk through areas of high truck traffic to reach the front entrance.
2. **Production Space and Product Flow** – Rhino Foods' current production space is at the rear of the current building, and the proposed expansion includes an extension of that production space at the rear of the building. If parking were located in the rear of the building, the production spaces could not be made contiguous, which would interrupt product flow in and out of the integrated production space. Also, the truck dock was placed on the south side of the building expansion to optimize product flow through the facility while still screening trucks from the road. And there is not enough space on the south side of the lot for both the truck dock and additional employee parking.
3. **Fire Department Access** - Eliminating the parking lot on the front of the building also creates challenges for fire department access to the new expansion. There will be a stormwater detention pond that needs to be placed along the street in order to connect to the existing stormwater system. Without a paved area on the other side of this pond, fire fighters would need to park on the street and navigate around the pond before they could access the building.

We appreciate your consideration of these two items. In summary, the second curb cut is intended to create a safer site by separating truck traffic from both Rhino Foods employees and citizens using the bus stop in front of Rhino Foods. Also, we hope we have adequately conveyed how locating the parking lot on the side or rear of the new expansion would make this project infeasible. We look forward to the opportunity to work with you and come to a resolution that suits the needs of both the City of Burlington and Rhino Foods. Thank you for your consideration.



Sincerely,

Nicholas Strube, AIA

Lead Architect, Food Tech, Inc.

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Owner and Founder, Rhino Foods

3/17/23