

One Burlington Square Rehabilitation: Major Impact Development Report



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Overview:

Investors Corporation of Vermont owns and operates an existing three-story, 42,000 square foot office building at One Burlington Square. The structure was constructed in 1969 and consistent with buildings of this vintage was not well insulated. The overall energy performance of this building is not good. The owner / applicant proposes a renovation of the building shell to correct this condition. As part of this undertaking, the owner also proposes the addition of a 12,700 square foot penthouse level, and conversion of a portion of the ground floor to enclosed parking. The net increase in building area is 5,700 square feet. This is not a substantial increase of area in the City Center District.

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The project site is fully developed today, and with frontage on both College Street and Pine Street, will not require the creation of new roads or any substantial reconfiguration of city utilities. Our goal is the improve building performance and aesthetics so as to bring One Burlington Square up to contemporary standards for Class A office space.

CONDITIONAL USE AND MAJOR IMPACT REVIEW

Major Impact Review Standards:

1. Not result in undue water, air or noise pollution;

The proposed project does not entail any commercial or industrial processes that would create water, air, or noise pollution. The proposal does not increase impervious surface area significantly above current conditions and so is neutral with regard to urban run-off into Lake Champlain. The potential for air pollution is limited to the exhausts related to building heating equipment, and since the stated goal is to reduce fuel consumption, it is our opinion that the project will reduce emissions related building operations substantially. Office uses are not significant sources of noise, and the typical hours of operation are during business hours (M-F 8 am to 5 pm.)



2. Have sufficient water available for its needs;

The 5,700 square foot net increase in building area will incrementally increase water demand for building occupants. The building code allows 100 square foot per person in business occupancies. Therefore, the net increase will generate 57 additional building occupants. State water quality regulations stipulate 15 gallons per person per day in this occupancy. This results in a total added demand of 855 gallons per day. That is a 13.5% increase over current building use. The water system in this part of Burlington's Downtown has significant capacity, and 855 gallons per day is quite literally a drop in the bucket. We have contacted the Burlington Water Department and Burlington Public Works and have not identified any problems with existing infrastructure or system capacity.

As part of this building upgrade an automatic sprinkler system will be installed. While this system will use water, it is generally not considered in determining water use since the system only deploys under fire service conditions, which hopefully are rare.

3. Not unreasonably burden the city's present or future water supply or distribution system;

This proposal does not include construction of new water distribution system components. There are existing water mains in both Pine Street and College Street. The service connection into the building will be resized to accommodate the fire suppression system, but a reducing valve will be placed in line after the sprinkler valve to more or less the same size as the existing service entrance. The elevation of the subject property is low in the system relative to the Main Street Reservoir, and should not significantly reduce pressure to downstream.

4. Not cause unreasonable soil erosion or reduction in the capacity of the land to hold water so that a dangerous or unhealthy condition may result;

The subject property is located in the City Center District, which by ordinance allows 100% lot coverage. The lot is currently fully developed and is substantially covered with impervious surfaces. The proposed expansion of the building area is limited to the addition of a penthouse level on an existing roof, and therefore does not result in any increase of lot coverage. Modifications to the site coverage entail replacing existing hardscape in the form of wide walkways and stairs with a drivable surface and parking in a more or less one to one exchange.

5. Not cause unreasonable congestion or unsafe conditions on highways, streets, waterways, railways, bikeways, pedestrian pathways or other means of transportation, existing or proposed;

In this Downtown location, there are not impacts on water or rail travel. Pedestrian pathways are essentially the grid of City sidewalks throughout the Downtown area, and those have more than sufficient capacity for an additional 57 people. The relevant question here relates to vehicle traffic, most essentially during the evening commute.

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Traffic impacts for an office use are determined using the Institute of Traffic Engineers Design manual. General office space will yield 1.49 vehicle trip ends during the PM Peak Hour (evening rush hour.) For the 5700 new square feet proposed, this is an additional 84.93 trip ends.

However, a recent study by the ITE has demonstrated that for urban infill projects in City Center Districts, the manual currently overstates VTEs. The samples for the rate set for General Office are heavily weighted for suburban locations where mass transit and other modes of transportation are not common. The observed rate of trip generation for downtown projects is 50% of the tabular rate.

If we apply the adjusted trip generation rate of 0.74 VTE per 1000 sf., the anticipated traffic impact is more likely 42.18 pm peak hour trips. This seems more likely given that we anticipate an additional 57 building occupants. At least some building occupants will travel during off peak hours, use readily available public transportation, or even walk to work.

Between 42 and 84 trip ends weighted towards exiting movements at the end of the day does not constitute a significant burden on the capacity of the local road network. On the downtown grid, traffic will diffuse in multiple directions, primarily northward via Battery, southward via Pine Street and eastward via Main and or College streets.

6. Not cause an unreasonable burden on the city's ability to provide educational services;

The project is commercial / office space and will remain so. As such, it will not increase the number of students. A nominal increase in building valuation will positively benefit schools through the increase in property taxes.

7. Not place an unreasonable burden on the city's ability to provide municipal services;

The subject property already uses city water and sewer, electrical, police, fire and emergency services. The small incremental increase in building area does not constitute an unreasonable burden on city services because it does not require an expansion of the service area and is not located in an area where services are not designed to handle the proposed volume. The taxable value of the project will more than offset the incremental cost of the small expansion.

8. Not have an undue adverse effect on rare, irreplaceable or significant natural areas, historic or archaeological sites, nor on the scenic or natural beauty of the area or any part of the city;

This is an urban site, and it has been fully developed for a long time. There are no natural areas, historic features or the potential for archeological discovery. The addition of another story would not block existing view corridors, since the next block uphill has much taller buildings. In addition, the proposed penthouse is stepped back from the principal façade, mitigating the impact of this addition.

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The building façade as it exists is distinctive, but the execution of it is so energy inefficient that other values outweigh its novelty. To understand the shortcomings of the existing façade, one must experience this building from the inside. The projecting window bays limit visibility from within, making the current office space feel claustrophobic. Since the concrete projections are not insulated in any way, and feature single pane fixed glazing, the spaces at the perimeter of the floor plate can be drafty. The building is not historic by definition.

9. Not have an undue adverse effect on the city's present or future growth patterns nor on the city's fiscal ability to accommodate such growth, nor on the city's investment in public services and facilities

This is a renovation project. It is located in the city core, where growth is most desirable. By building in the city center, this project allows the city to concentrate deployment of city resources. It takes advantage of existing infrastructure without committing the city to expending facilities or take on new responsibilities. Re-investment in an existing site is very much intended to retain businesses in the city and allow the owner to compete with new build suburban properties at Technology Park or on Tilley Drive in South Burlington, or Water Tower Hill in Colchester.

10. Be in substantial conformance with the city's municipal development plan and all incorporated plans;

The proposed retrofit and expansion of this building reflects the values of the Municipal plan. Selected excerpts of the plan and our opinion of compliance are as follows:

"LAND USE PLAN

This Plan envisions Burlington as a city where the downtown is a distinctly urban place serving as the historic core of the county's educational, economic, cultural, and governmental center. Downtown Burlington is a high density, mixed-use growth center that has blended the need for concentrated and efficient development with a respect for the city's architectural heritage and natural environment. Vacant and underutilized land and buildings have been adaptively reused for housing, shops, and offices. "

Strengthen the City Center District (CCD) with higher density, mixed-use development as part of the regional core while ensuring that it serves the needs of city residents, particularly those in adjacent neighborhoods.

Target new and higher density development into the Downtown...

The renovation and expansion of One Burlington Square does concentrate density in the CCD. It also entails an expansion of an underutilized site in an efficient manner.

"BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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This Plan envisions Burlington as a city where...

...Burlington's built environment reflects a legacy of a rich architectural heritage, moderately scaled buildings, and high quality urban design. The unique design characteristics of each neighborhood have been retained, while new construction and public investment respect the city's historic character and demonstrate high quality architecture while effectively meeting the demand for continued growth. In higher density areas, buildings are closer to the street, with parking underneath or in a nearby structure. All buildings and public facilities are welcoming to people with disabilities. Both new construction and renovations to older buildings illustrate a commitment to sustainable development practices with the use of green building materials and energy efficient design. The streetscape is clean, well maintained and lined with shade trees. Overhead utilities have been relocated underground, and excessive street lighting has been eliminated. Important view corridors and scenic vistas have been retained, and developed areas are complimented by open spaces, parks, and natural areas.

Retain its moderate scale and urban form in its most densely developed areas, while creating opportunities for increased densities.

Most buildings in high-density areas should be no taller than six to eight stories, and should make the most effective use of the site. Building height is based on its location (both individual site and context) and function.

In higher density areas, buildings should be closer to the street, with uses and entrances at the street level that invite pedestrian activity. Transitions between high density and low-density areas should be gradual. Access to light and air is maintained, while care is taken not to cast large shadows over nearby buildings and alter wind patterns.

This effort will incorporate moderate density and increased energy efficiency. At four stories, it is a modest increase in building height. By stepping the new story back from the principal faced, we are respecting the existing urban fabric and mitigating the potential for casting shadows. The project will incorporate under building parking.

11. *Not have an undue adverse impact on the present or projected housing needs of the city in terms of amount, type, affordability and location; and/or*

This project will have no effect on housing stock. It does not involve removal of or replacement of housing stock and is located in a zoning district where the stated purpose is to promote commercial activity.

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12. Not have an undue adverse impact on the present or projected park and recreation needs of the city.

The project site is not located adjacent to any city park or recreational amenity and so will not directly Commercial properties do not adversely affect these elements in the same way that housing projects may, but we can assume building occupants will make use of the rec path system to commute or for exercise on lunch hours. The addition of 57 building occupants does not represent an undue or adverse increase in the volume of use.

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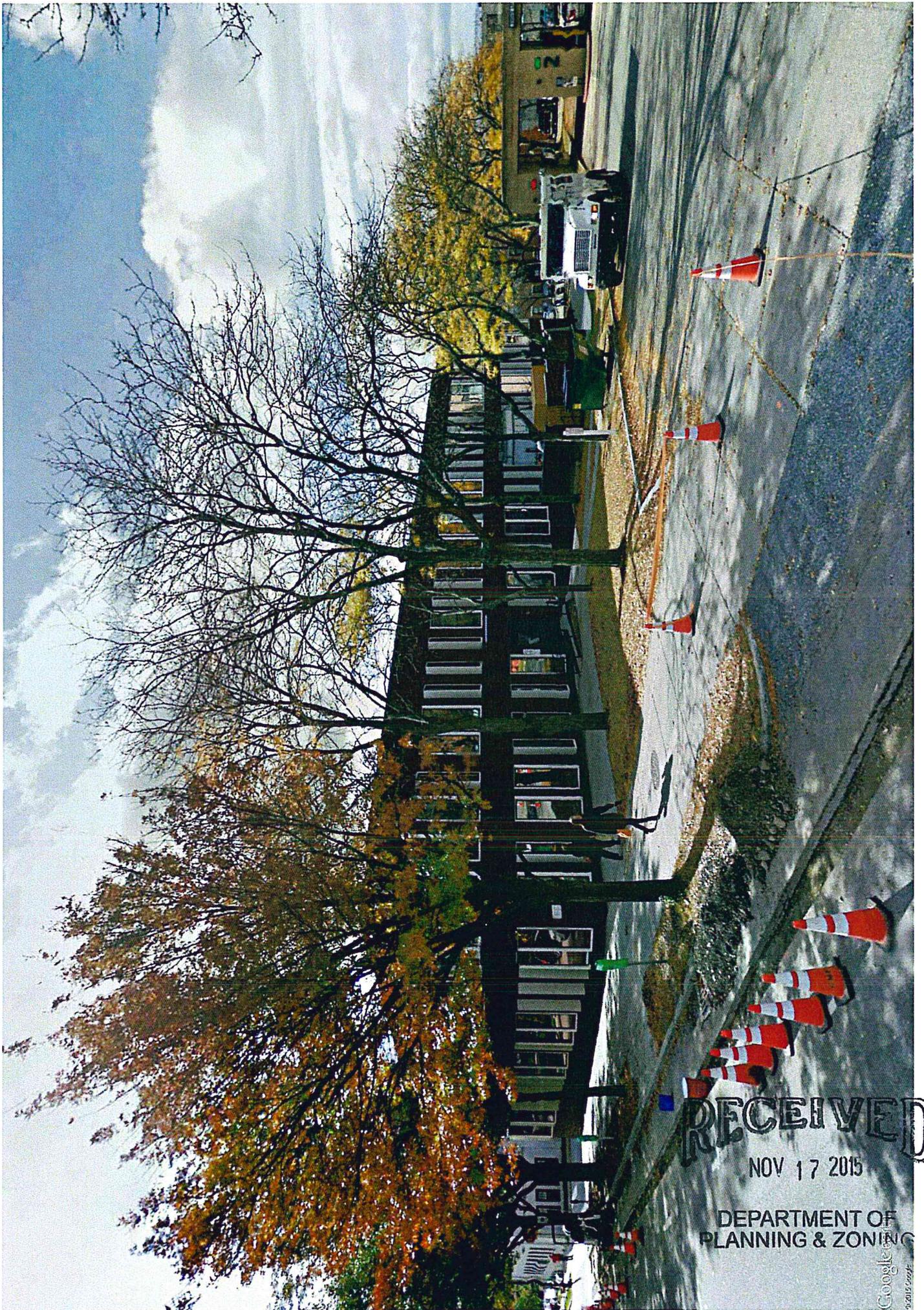


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