

# Ulster County Planning Board

B-4



Dennis Doyle, Director

## RECOMMENDATION

Michael Zierler, Chairman  
Village of New Paltz Planning Board  
P.O. Box 877  
New Paltz, N.Y. 12561

REFERRAL NO: 2016-150  
2016-151  
2016-152  
DATE REVIEWED: 8/3/2016

### Re: Zero Place – Subdivision, Special Permit and Site Plan Review

#### Summary

This is a proposal to a 4-story, 69,320 square foot, mixed use building consisting of 48 apartments and 17,330 square feet of first floor retail/office space

The following materials were received for review:

Application for Site Plan Review  
Site Plans – 7/21/16  
Traffic Study  
Full EAF and Revised as of 7/27/16  
Deeds  
Stormwater Management Plan  
Building Plans  
Roof Plan – 7/27/16  
Memorandum on Parking and Traffic  
Elevation Updates – 7/27/16  
Zero Place Visual Analysis Presentations  
Zero Place Design Considerations Presentation

#### Discussion

Over the past few years the Village of New Paltz has created a new vision for the North Chestnut/NYS Route 32 North corridor that enables this northern gateway to the Village to become an extension of the Village's Main Street. The area has been subject to a moratorium and subsequently rezoned. The rezoning provides for design objectives that provide for bulk and setback standards similar to Main Street, as well as allowing mixed uses and requiring pedestrian infrastructure. The plan for Zero Place embraces this new vision and provides for mixed use, ease of pedestrian access, including trail access, while meeting bulk standards within the statute. That said, the proposal is the first of its kind on a corridor that is largely single use low rise commercial buildings and service establishments. The challenge for Zero Place is not so much what it represents, but its difference from its surroundings. Those differences, while in conformity with the statute, are required to be explored under the SEQRA topic "community character." While seemingly daunting, those involved should be aware that "[t]he power to define the community character is a unique prerogative of a municipality acting in

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its governmental capacity," and, that generally through the exercise of their zoning and planning powers, municipalities are given the job of defining their own character (*Village of Chestnut Ridge v. Town of Ramapo*, 45 AD3d 74 (2d Dept. 2007)). The Village in launching a new vision for the corridor has set the bar for the discussion of community character. The response should be to examine those elements of height, roof lines, setbacks, and surroundings, based on the desired more urban form now permitted. The Project has already begun this discussion looking at existing Main Street buildings, examining its visibility from sensitive land uses, attaching itself to its surroundings with public space and pedestrian infrastructure and exploring alternatives. These discussions are important in that as density increases and with it building mass and scale, design and details matter.

As the project is the first in what the Village desires to be a more urbanized corridor the issue of traffic is one that should be of concern not only for individual projects but also for the Corridor as a whole. The Corridor today is congestion free, although left turning movements can be delayed during peak hours. For the long term access management, signalization or other treatment at the intersection of Henry Dubois Drive needs to part of the techniques under consideration. The traffic study provided for Zero Place indicates over 70 left-hand turns into the site's NYS Rt. 32 curb-cut during the PM peak in its 2021 build year. While this amount of traffic may not rise to a level that warrants a left-hand turn lane, it still raises concerns about the delays being faced by those making the turns. The availability of gaps is critical to drivers executing left turns safely. In addition, in-lane left turning vehicles encourage drivers to utilize the shoulder to pass if delays are encountered. While this is an illegal activity, of significant concern here is the presence of a mid-block crosswalk and bus stop just north of the curb cut at Stewarts.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Access**

While a traffic study has been conducted a gap analysis would be helpful to anticipate how much of a delay left turning vehicles will experience.

#### **Required Modification**

Provide a PM peak gap analysis to estimate the availability of acceptable gaps for left turn vehicles entering and exiting the site. Coordinate with NYSDOT concerning any warning signs or pavement markings that would: 1) Discourage passing on the shoulder and 2) Note the presence of the bus stop and crosswalk for northbound traffic.

Consider the long term need for signalization or other treatment of the Henry W. Dubois intersection in relationship to the construction of the project both as a regional traffic need as well as any impact of gaps associated with this project.

#### **Visual Impacts**

The applicant has provided detailed visual impacts analysis, but does not include a look at the visual impacts of the proposed roof solar array on sensitive sites located at higher elevations.

#### **Required Modification**

The applicant should confirm that the rooftop solar array is not visible from sensitive sites at higher elevations.

#### **Community Character**

The applicant has provided a design considerations power point as part of their effort to meet the requirements under SEQRA to address the impacts of the project concerning community character.

#### **Advisory Comment**

Working with the community, the applicant should continue efforts to provide community based

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examples of buildings of similar mass and scale as the project. Admittedly, this is about finding a comfort level within the planning process that better illustrates the genesis of the new vision and the project's conformity to it. It also, however, offers the community a unique opportunity, and one could argue responsibility, to substantively engage in the community context discussion as part of the planning process. This discussion is often left on the table, lost in the consultants' exchange of concerns on traffic, stormwater or wetlands. The applicant's current refreshingly transparent design dialogue with community planners should be continued. While there is no one right answer, there are many guides to help the community chose. Above all, the focus should be on the project elements as a whole - the balance and coordination of building, public space, street, and landscaping.

**Subdivision**

The project involves the combining of two individual lots into a single parcel. The Board finds that this action will not have a county impact and is left to local determination.

Reviewing Officer

Robert A. Leibowitz, AICP  
Principal Planner

Cc: Dave Corrigan - NYSDOT