

To: New Paltz Village Planning Board

12 July 2017

From: David Shepler, Net-Zero Development LLC

Subject: Response to the Various Planning Board and Consultant Reports of 28 June 2017

Summary: We believe that the Board now has sufficient information to vote and confirm a Negative Declaration under SEQRA for the proposed Zero Place project. The details in the three reports provided by the Planning Board on 28 June 2017 either support a Negative Declaration or describe details that should be addressed during site plan review.

Review of Transportation and Landscaping by Alta Planning & Design

1. Overall: Alta provided a comprehensive summary of Zero Place transportation and parking considerations (along with a review of landscaping), validating our methodologies for traffic and parking considerations and supporting the mitigation actions taken to date.
2. Mulberry Parking: Regarding the proposed two accessible parking stalls on Mulberry Street, Alta concluded that any traffic generated from the stalls (or diverted from elsewhere at Zero Place) “to be insignificant and should not create an impact on the character of the historic district”. They further concluded that the proposed Mulberry parking and bike lane as shown on the site plan leave “sufficient space on Mulberry Street...without hindering the flow of traffic”.
3. Gap Analysis: Alta confirmed that “the gap analysis conducted by the developer’s contracted services shows that there are adequate gaps between vehicles on NYS Route 32 for left turning vehicles to comfortably make the turn. We do not recommend any further mitigation is needed for these turning movements.”
4. Parking Design: Alta confirmed that the design of the main lot and on-street parking was “in compliance with industry standards and the Village codes”. Alta requested an updated diagram showing the ‘sweeping path’ of the largest truck that will service the site. We attach the requested document to this memo. It illustrates the ‘sweeping path’ of a standard 30-foot box delivery truck, which includes a standard garbage truck.
5. Route 32 On-Street Parking: Alta confirmed the opinion of others, including the New Paltz Bike Ped Committee, that on-street parking on Route 32 “is a benefit to both the development and the local roadway”, providing a “traffic calming effect”.
6. Parking demand/capacity: Alta confirmed that the parking analysis performed by David Shepler and Maser Consulting “is based upon acceptable industry guidelines” and that the “comparison of proposed facilities to the available facilities at the Water Street Market supports these conclusions”¹.

Although Alta did not provide a further critique of the methodology or conclusions of our parking estimate, they suggested an alternative approach for “calculating peak parking

¹ Note: The Planning Board noticed that the summary of the parking analysis provided in the Full EAF Expanded Part 3 Report, p. 52, listed the number of parking spaces at Water Street Market as 79, instead of 69. That number was incorrectly transcribed from the original analysis provided correctly in Exhibit B-19, p. 7 and p. 8. That typo did not affect the analysis or conclusions.

demand”, resulting in a suggested minimum of “78 parking spaces” that “will be sufficient for the proposed use”. NOTE: We noticed that this number was calculated incorrectly. According to the formula described in the document, the result should be 76.75, or rounded to 77.² Alta stated a preference for a higher number of spaces (up to 83 when corrected) but acknowledged “the likelihood that non-motorized access to and from the site will limit the need for parking”.

Bottom Line: Although we calculated a peak demand of 68 spaces (vs Alta’s 77), and we believe our focus on local conditions and time of day analysis provide superior parking demand estimates, we do not believe there is a need to resolve these methodological differences. The fine distinctions in methodology and the fact that Alta recommends minimum parking (77) almost identical to our proposed capacity (76) should make it clear that parking will not create a significant adverse impact under SEQRA.

7. Route 32 Bike Lane and Bus Stop: We believe the proposal as it stands today is a vast improvement over the status quo and certainly not a significant adverse impact under SEQRA. The final design, including markings and demarcation of the bike lane along Route 32N, as discussed by Alta, should be determined under site plan review.
8. All remaining details—including curb radii, restriping of Henry W. Dubois, routing of bicyclists, bicycle parking, and additional landscaping suggestions—should be addressed as minor site plan modifications under site plan review.

Review of Zero Place Visual Analysis by Richard Smardon

1. DEC Methodology. Dr. Smardon begins his critique on the wrong premise—namely that the Zero Place visual analysis should comply with the visual analysis policies and methodology of NYSDEC Program Policy DEP-00-2. The policy document he cites states specifically that such policy and standards should be used by “facilities regulated by the Department of Environmental Conservation located in visual proximity to sensitive land uses” and that this document is intended for “[DEC] Department staff”.

“This memorandum provides direction to [DEC] Department staff for evaluating visual and aesthetic impacts generated from proposed facilities. This Guidance defines State regulatory concerns and separates them from local concerns.”³

2. Planning Board’s Request for Analysis. Even more importantly, the visual analysis we performed was the direct request of this Planning Board and the DEC methodology was never proposed. In early 2016, we sat down and discussed the basic outline of an approach with the Planning Board, receiving guidance on using balloons and line-of-sight testing and even sketching out ways to represent the building’s visual impact without going to the great expense of elaborate renderings. We later added the detailed renderings (with more perspectives and updates along the way), believing that both the Board and public would

² Alta’s formula is “1 parking space per apartment...and 3.75 to 4.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet”. With 8,200 sqft of retail and 46 units, this calculates to 76.75 to 82.9 spaces (or 77 to 83).

³ http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/permits_ej_operations_pdf/visual2000.pdf, p. 1.

benefit from seeing more complete depictions of the building over boxes and 2D, black and white elevations.

3. High-quality renderings: As Art Brod states, “Zero Place has gone far beyond in its visual ‘real-life’ presentation anything I’ve seen in my 40 years of working under SEQRA.” The renderings were certified by a professional architect (David Toder), generated from architectural Autocad drawings, and the building dressed in the material choices and design features discussed with the public, the Historical Preservation Commission and the Planning Board.
4. Site Visit: At the Planning Board’s request, providing even more data and perspective on visual impact, we hosted a site visit to the Planning Board, which included a professionally surveyed outline of the building and surrounding features and balloons at three of the building corners.
5. Conclusion: We believe the Board has sufficient information to assess visual impact under SEQRA without the considerable cost and time of further visual analyses.

Evaluation of Project Consistency with Community Plans & Character by Village Planner, David Gilmour

We believe Planner Gilmour’s summary reinforces many important themes:

1. Consistency with Community Plans: Mr. Gilmour finds that Zero Place is “consistent with existing plans and policies” and that the “site arrangement would not present potential for a significant impact on the ambiance of the neighborhood and open spaces around and adjacent to Huguenot Street.” (p. 6)
2. Enhancing the character of surrounding neighborhoods: “Rather than impair the character of Huguenot Street environments...[Zero Place] could be expected to create street-level activity and establish business (and residential) uses at a site that has been vacant since fire destroyed the prior building. Furthermore, the modified site plan protects visual access to and along Mulberry Street, at the same time it maintains/enhances/expands access to Walkkill Valley Rail Trail and historical places and landscapes.” (p. 9)
3. Supports important goals of the NBR: In Mr. Gilmour’s summary, he describes how the project supports “focused development” to create connections to the “heart of town”, while ensuring “access to historic resources and open space”. The project also “establishes a well-defined streetscape that promotes increases in walking, bicycling, and transit use”. (p. 9)

Respectfully,



David Shepler
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