
VISUAL RESOURCES and COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Chapter Five

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A. Existing Conditions

The site is located in the southeast quadrant of the Route I-84/Route 312 intersection. I-84 has a wide right of way as it passes the property and, is set below the level of the property passing through a rock cut. The property slopes eastward from Route 312 to a long level area adjacent to the Metro North Rail Line, see Existing Conditions Map #11 .

The majority of the site is potentially visible from Route 312. The developable areas of the site are generally not visible from I-84. The most prominent feature of the site is the hill which sits between 40' and 80' above Route 312 at the extreme south end of the property, near I-84.

The surrounding area near the property is developed with commercial properties see Maps #5,#8, #12 and Context Illustrations #14, #15,#16, #17. It is clear from review of the maps and illustrations that the Crossroads property is the only undeveloped parcel between I-84 and Dykeman's in the northeast quadrant of the interchange. The Terravest Corporate Park sits on a hill above Route 312 and overlooks the property. The Highlands project and the Southeast Executive Park dominate the character of the neighborhood south of I-84. Older industrial buildings and the development in the Dykeman's area define the neighborhood character to the north. Visible area character is clearly commercial.

The site itself is wooded with second growth forest which has been continually harvested.

B. Potential Impacts of the Proposed Project

The development of the property will remove vegetation from the site, cause site earthmoving to take place and buildings will be erected, see Maps #4 and #9.

The area subject to the most change in regard to site visibility will be immediate Route 312 frontage from Exit 19 ramp north for 1,600 LF±. In that area, the drivers on Route 312 will have a direct view opened into the property after trees are removed.

A wooded buffer of at least 100' in width will remain along the eastern property line.

A process was followed to determine site visibility which began with establishing a broad area in which the site might be seen, Map #18. This broad area was tested by driving through the area, taking photographs, developing graphic cross sections and preparing a balloon study, see Map #19.

A balloon test was conducted during the winter in 2010. Two large (5' dia) orange weather balloons were launched from the highest area of the site in the southern portion of the property and located on rear line of the proposed retail building. Two additional balloons were simultaneously launched from the center of the site to define the general location of the secondary retail building and the restaurant. All balloons were raised above the proposed heights of the respective secondary buildings. The balloons were tied in 4 directions to minimize the impact of the wind. The weather was clear. The test occurred on a Saturday and the Town of Southeast officials were invited, see Map #19.

Town officials and members of LADA,PC staff drove through the area observing the balloons. It was concluded by LADA,PC staff that the balloons were not easily visible from North Brewster Road, Tonetta Lake Park, the Town Banquet facility on Shore Drive or from John Simpson Road. The Town Planner provided a photograph of the balloons taken from the intersection of Sunset and Locust. Topography and vegetation block views from virtually all locations in Town.

The site is shown on a topographic map for the Carmel/Southeast area, Map #20. This map portrays the potential view shed area of the site. The viewshed would be considered the area where it may theoretically be possible to find a view of the property. The view shed was determined by developing cross section studies laid out in a 360° pattern radiating from the site, see Maps #21 and #22 and Illustrations #18, #19, #20.1 to #20.6. Primarily, topography and vegetation are the determinants of visibility in this hilly area of the Town of Southeast.

The traditional methods of visibility analysis consider views from public areas such as parks or roads the most important. The cross section analysis suggests that the majority of the site will not be visible from Route I-84 or other State, Country or Town roads but for Route 312 along the site frontage. The cross section studies seem to confirm the balloon visibility test, the development will not be visible from John Simpson Road or Independent Way. The development will not be visible from Tonetta Lake Park. Portions of the development may be visible from the rear yards of some homes along the west side of North Brewster Road and portions of the wetland associated with BR-18. Some isolated spots on North Brewster Road and the immediate surrounding area may have distant views of the site.

The cross sectional analysis and balloon analysis was supplemented with photographs taken from areas defined in the Scoping Document. Before and after computer simulations were prepared from specific locations. In most areas the site development will not be visible. The photographic locations are shown on Map #23 and Illustrations #22 through #31.

The development site is located in a designated Ridgeline area shown on the Zoning Map #5. A Ridgeline area is defined by the zoning code as the upper 50' of elevation above a base line of 500'. The subject property rises to an elevation of 659. The area of Ridgeline would extend from 659 to 609. A portion of the development is proposed to be situated in the area.

Site lighting is proposed to be composed of down lights mounted at a 25' height. All lights will be dark sky compliant and lights will likely be LED.

The site is generally not visible due to topography and/or vegetation from Route I-84, there should be limited visual disturbance in the evening to drivers on Route I-84. The site is not situated similar to the Highlands property above I-84.

C. Mitigation Measures Proposed

The impact of tree removal and site grading will be somewhat mitigated by a planting plan. The 'Large Retail' zoning requirements require a 75' planted Environmental Conservation Buffer along Route 312 and a similar buffer along side yards to a depth of 50'. The entire site will be stabilized and both evergreen and ornamental trees will be planted along Route 312, where the primary views into the site will be screened.

The effectiveness of the planted Environmental Conservation Buffer is made more understandable in Illustration #23.1 and #23.2 as well as #29.1 and #29.2. Illustration #23.1 shows the existing View #2 looking into the subject site at the intersection of Route 312 and the westbound I-84 ramps at the project entrance. This Illustration shows the proposed condition with the planting of mature buffer trees. The development would be mostly invisible. Illustration #23.2 continues to show the proposed condition in the lower panel but also projects a picture of the development if no plantings were proposed. It is clear that the planted buffer should be an effective tool to screen the potential visual impacts of the project.

Illustrations #29.1 and #29.2 depict similar concepts at View #8, taken at Zimmer Road looking toward the site. Illustration #29.1 shows the existing wooded site in the upper panel and the developed site with the planted Environmental Conservation Buffer in the lower panel. Illustration #29.2 shows the development without the planting in the upper panel and compares that view to the lower panel with the mitigation of the planted

Environmental Conservation Buffer.

The ridgeline area will be disturbed but, a buffer of trees and hillside will remain along I-84 and Route 312 to hide the development. The building roof lines will be well below the ridgeline.

Some distant views will be possible from locations on and around elevated areas near North Brewster Road. Plantings will be installed to screen the view.

In summary: existing vegetation and new plantings will significantly screen the development on all sides.