

VISUAL RESOURCES

Chapter Seven

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Introduction

The proposed development described in the DEIS has evolved during the SEQRA process in response to comments from the Town and public. The 186,000+/- sf retail/mixed use shopping center identified in the DEIS has changed to include a hotel in response to many public comments. The incorporation of the hotel has the consequence of reducing the retail and restaurant use space and allowed for reconfiguring the buildings on the site. This reconfiguration also results in a site plan that addresses the potential visual impacts in a positive manner thereby reducing many of the impact identified in the DEIS.

In response to questions identified below about the potential impact of the development on views from the Brewster Hill area, additional cross sections were drawn to evaluate the proposal as well as existing views of the adjacent shopping center known as The Highlands. These cross sections are intended to understand the existing views of The Highlands and to determine what the residents from that area will be able to see. (See Visual-6A below).

The location of the buildings and orientation of the site limit the views from Brewster Hill. Views from that area were found to be additionally mitigated with reduction in the size of the cut slope behind the buildings. The revegetation of the cut and fill slopes were revised on the Site Plans in response to questions about views from the south.

The increased area of no disturbance along Route 312 toward Zimmer Road limits views into the site and reduces the impacts on views as seen by motorists on Route 312 as well from the adjacent properties to the east. This additional tree preservation was due to changes in grading and earth work associated with the refined stormwater design.

The trees along the east side and I-84 are preserved and the retail building is designed into the hill to reduce tree removal and views from the southwest. In limited views from that direction, only the roof line will be visible as shown in the sections provided in this FEIS.

The environmental conservation buffer along Route 312 is also studied in this FEIS. Plans showing the proposed berm supplemented by a mixture of plant material are included in the FEIS.

Further, the hotel was placed in the middle of the site away from the fill slope and from Route 312 to minimize potential impacts. Additional sections and illustrations were prepared (see Comment Visual- 3 below) to identify what will be seen and from where. The redesign and placement of the hotel in this location limits the views to the top sections only. This is a significant change from the alternatives shown in the DEIS where the hotel was placed along the westside visible from I-84.

The FEIS plans are designed to minimize the visual impacts identified in the DEIS by preserving additional trees along Route 312, reducing earthwork thus reducing exposed slopes, increase the mitigation planting and provide more detail for the environmental conservation buffer along the site frontage at the project entry onto Route 312.

Comment Visual-1

Chapter 1: Project Description

- 1. The description of the proposed project should clarify the visibility and appearance of the project from Route 312. The applicant states that the proposed project will maintain a 75 foot “environmental conservation buffer” along Route 312. This buffer should be further described, as it appears that the majority of the buffer will clear cut during the construction of the proposed project and then replanted. Understanding that the details of the site plan will be further developed throughout the process, to the extent that the applicant can, the grading, types of plantings, stormwater features, project signage, etc. that are proposed within the buffer should be described. (AKRF (11/12/2013))*

Response:

In the short term, during construction, the project will be visible from Route 312. Much of the vegetation along Route 312 will be removed and earthwork operations will be undertaken to create the site development platform and stormwater basins. Per section 138-63.4.C.(1)(a)[1] thru [7], environmental conservation buffer will be established.

The above referenced zoning regulation does not require existing vegetation along a street be preserved; given the slopes on this site, it would be impractical to attempt to preserve existing vegetation beyond what is shown on the plans. No significant habitat has been found to exist within the frontage area of Route 312. Per points [4] and [6] of the buffer design guidelines, a graded berm is proposed. The berm will average 8' feet tall. The 75' deep buffer will be heavily planted with a mixture of native trees, see the Planting and the Plan Enlargement Maps #16 and #17.

The planted berm is proposed to screen the buildings and parking which would be placed closest to Route 312. The parking will be entirely screened and the buildings will be significantly screened, see Map #18 and Illustrations 10 and 11.

Access to the site will be gained, as permitted by 138-63.4.C.(1)(c). The interior of the project will be partially visible at the access points with the hotel the most prominent structure, see Illustration 16.

Proceeding north on Route 312, from the northerly access drive, the Environmental Conservation Buffer will follow the stormwater control basin outline as is permitted by 138-63.4.C.(1)(a)[1]. Views of the site will be very limited, see Illustration 17.

A project monument sign may be placed in the driveway median at the primary entry point. The sign is likely to be located within the buffer area. It has not been determined if a sign will be requested at the most northerly entry, opposite International Boulevard. Pole mounted lights may also fall within the buffer along the entry drives.

Comment Visual-2

- 2. Page 1-7 describes the development within the ridgeline area. In addition to maintaining the peak of the ridgeline above the development, measures should be taken to minimize any light spillover from the development. Such measures could include a planted berm at the edge of the parking lot, full-cut off fixtures with shields to reduce spillover off the parking area, and zoned lighting with timers so that only the minimum amount of light for health and safety is used after normal business hours. (AKRF (11/12/2013))*

Response:

The roof of the retail buildings will sit below the level of the ridgeline area. Site lighting is proposed at 25', the building height, to avoid the possibility that lighting could expand beyond the site.

A planted berm will be constructed in front of buildings C and D. All light fixtures used on the site will be LED, dark sky compliant. The light fixtures will be located adjacent to the buildings so that a diminished level of light would exit at the outer edge of the parking lots along the Environmental Conservation Buffer parallel to Route 312.

Site lighting will be set on timers. Parking lot lighting in the immediate area of the hotel will remain on during the night. In most retail developments, as will likely be the situation at Crossroads 312, only about one third of the site lighting remains on in the evening for security purposes. Illumination of building signs can be turned off at close of business. Illustration of night time light impact is shown on Illustration 15.2.

Comment Visual-3

- 7. The Zoning Petition requests that hotel/motel/conference facility be added to the list of special permit uses in the HC-1 Zoning District. It also proposes to increase the maximum allowable height of a hotel to four stories, or 50 feet. The FEIS should include a visual simulation of a hotel at this height from Route 312 and a representative location from the Brewster Hill neighborhood. (AKRF (11/12/2013))*

Response:

Photo simulation have been prepared for the proposed hotel as shown on Illustration #16.

The visual simulation of the four story hotel is taken from the traffic signal at the primary entry point from Route 312 at the Exit 19 exit ramp. From this position, given the recessed position of the hotel on the site, and the resulting distance to the hotel, the hotel does not dominate the view. The hotel will not be visible from I-84 or from the

westbound I-84 ramps at Exit 19, see Illustration 10 and 11.

An visual simulation image has been prepared showing the view of the project from Sunset and Locust Streets on Brewster Hill about one mile from the proposed development, Map #24 and Illustration 15.1. The hotel will be visible above the proposed planting from this location.

Comment Visual-4

Chapter 5: Visual Resources and Community Character

1. *Based on the topography, site sections, and balloon test, portions of the proposed project will be visible from the Brewster Hill neighborhood. Within this neighborhood, the proposed project would likely be most visible to the public while traveling west (towards the project site) on Tulip Drive, Lakeview Drive, Locust, and Hickory Drives between Brewster Road and Sunset Drive. Views of the proposed project from the rear yards and upper floors of residences in this area can also be expected. (AKRF (11/12/2013))*

Response:

Acknowledged, some views of the project may be possible.

Comment Visual-5

2. *The project site sits at a slightly lower elevation than Brewster Highlands and Terravest. As such, this will minimize some of the views of the proposed project from the Brewster Hill neighborhood. The views from the portions of the Brewster Hill neighborhood identified in comment 1 above (Visual-4 above) can be expected to look similar to DEIS Illustration 31, which has more of a bird's-eye view of the project site. As shown in DEIS Illustration 31, the project site sits at a lower elevation than some of the surrounding hills, as such views of the hills beyond the project site would be maintained. (AKRF (11/12/2013))*

Response:

Acknowledged.

Comment Visual-6a

3. *During the public hearing, many residents from the Brewster Hill neighborhood commented on their existing views of the Brewster Highlands shopping center*

and how they do not want the proposed project to be as visible, particularly at night.(AKRF (11/12/2013)

Response:

In summary Brewster Highlands is positioned slightly higher than the Crossroads development. Brewster Highlands does not have the benefit of a backdrop of hills and trees which allow site lighting to appear very prominent as shown on the cross sections. The Crossroads proposal is situated at a lower elevation and will maintain a backdrop of trees and hillside. Site lighting will not stand out like the Highlands, also see Map #24 and Illustrations 15.1 and 15.2 which consider the day and night view of the site from Brewster Hill.

In response to these comments numerous cross sections from the Brewster Hill area to “The Highlands” were proposed for comparison to cross sections representing potential views of the Crossroads. As noted in the DEIS, the visual impact of the project was studied for the entire area around the Crossroads in a two mile radius, shown on Map #19. It was concluded, as a result of the study, a portion of Brewster Hill and the hill south of Lake Tonetta have the potential to see the property, see Map #20.

Cross sections taken of the Highlands project as shown on Map #22 and Illustrations 13.1 through 13.7. The Highlands project sits on top of a hill with roof tops at an elevation of 655. At the time of approval, no requirement existed for planting or screening. The site is visible through existing vegetation from the Brewster Hill and Tonetta Lake area.

Cross sections taken of the Crossroads shown on Map #21 and Illustrations 12.1 through 12.10 indicate the roof levels of the retail buildings to be in the range of 625 with a portion of the ridgeline at an elevation of 640 being maintained as a buffer.

Comment Visual-6b

- 3. The proposed project involves significant grading of an existing hill, as well as extensive use of manufactured slopes, to construct the parking area. This will also require tree removal in an existing forested area that faces the Brewster Hill neighborhood, The proposed Landscaping Plan shows a mixed border of white spruce and oak trees along the edge of the parking area to minimize views of the proposed project from the Brewster Hill neighborhood. (AKRF (11/12/2013) However, a greater variety of trees along the edge of the parking lot may provide a more natural buffer and could lessen the potential visual impact on the Brewster Hill neighborhood, The quantity, size, and species of trees will need to be carefully reviewed during the site plan approvals process. (AKRF (11/12/2013)*

Response:

Acknowledged. Additionally, per 138-15.1(3) the 2 on 1 slopes will be replanted to evolve into a mixed wooded area. Spruce may be a good selection for the initial buffering since they are hardy and can be moved effectively at large sizes.

Comment Visual-7

4. *The FEIS should include additional site sections through the Project Site (similar to sheet L-8 of the Site Plan drawing set) that demonstrates the proposed change in grade from the parking area to the wetlands at the southern edge of the site. The sections should include light poles and plantings scaled to their height at the time of planting. A section through the alternative hotel should also be included. (AKRF (11/12/2013))*

Response:

Please see Map #23 and Illustration 14 sections W-1, W-2, and W-3. These sections portray the grade changes from the buildings and parking through the site to the wetland edge. A continuous buffer is maintained to protect the wetlands. The four story hotel has been included in the primary proposal and will be screened by existing trees to remain.

Comment Visual-8

5. *The DEIS states that “all lights will be dark sky compliant and lights will likely be LED.” As part of the FEIS, the applicant should provide more information on the proposed lighting, and should consider the use of cut-off fixtures and light shields to further minimize spillover outside the parking lot. (AKRF (11/12/2013))*

Response:

The site plans indicate the light fixtures to be used. Pole mounted lighting will use LED fixtures and all fixtures will be dark sky compliant; no flood or spot lights will be used. Cut-off fixtures and light shields will be used to limit light to the parking areas, as shown on the Lighting Plan included in the site plan set in Chapter Twenty-Four. Sheet L-11a and b.

Comment Visual-9

5. *The FEIS should include a visual simulation of the proposed project at night from the Brewster Hill neighborhood. The intersection of Sunset and Locust, which*

was used in DEIS illustration 31 could provide a representative view. (AKRF (11/12/2013))

Response:

Please see Map #24 and Illustration 15,2. This nighttime visual simulation indicates some site lighting will be visible but will be very diffused with distance and topography.

Comment Visual -10

6. *The DEIS visual simulations seem to exaggerate the size of the proposed plantings. The FEIS should include views of the proposed project at the time of planting. (AKRF (11/12/2013))*

Response:

The simulations have been adjusted to indicate the size at time of planting: deciduous trees at 15', coniferous trees at 10-12' as shown on Illustration 16.

Comment Visual -11

7. *A great variety of trees within the environmental conservation buffer should be considered to provide a more natural look to the re-vegetated areas. The landscaping in the immediate vicinity of the entrance to the project site could utilize a more formal planting arrangement to signalize the entrance to the shopping center (AKRF (11/12/2013))*

Response:

Acknowledged. Please see the Planting Plan included in Chapter Twenty-Four or Map #17 illustrates the intent to create a natural appearance to the planted buffer as does Illustration 16.

Comment Visual-12

What will the Route 312/I-84 Interchange look like after this project is completed? (Bill Heath (11/12/2013))

Response:

In the vicinity of the site, a travel lane will be added on the north side of Route 312. The trees along the frontage, north of exit 19 will be removed and the site re-graded and

replanted to create a planted buffer; please see Illustration 16. The hillside to the south of the main entry drive will be maintained as a buffer. Nothing of the project will be visible from Route 312 at the I-84 east bound ramps, see Illustration 10.

Comment Visual-13

Will the project be visible at night? Will the project create light pollution? If so, how will this be mitigated? Will the project have an orange sky “glow” similar to the Highlands? (Lisa Eidlin McCarthy (11/11/2013), KimCercena (11/12/2013), Robert Rubrycki (11/12/2013), Paul DeLeo 11/09/2013), Steven Mattson 11/07/2013), Dr. Bernadette Brandon (10/25/2013), Public Hearing (11/07/2013)

Response:

Please see Illustration 15.2, taken from Brewster Hill. Distant views of the site will be possible. The site will be dark sky compliant to address the impact of light pollution. All light fixtures which are dark sky compliant must focus the light downward, away from the sky. The proposed lights will be LED. LED fixtures use substantially less power and reduce light reflecting off of pavement, leading to sky glow. LED fixtures are not as bright as traditional light fixtures, particularly the sodium vapor fixtures which give an ‘orange’ color glow. LED fixtures provide a more traditional white light.

Comment Visual-14

*What will I see from my property on:
Cooledge Drive
North Brewster Road
Tonetta Lake Way
Simson Road
Shore Drive*

(Paul DeLeo (11/09/2013), Cherie Ingraham (11/11/2013), (Bradley D. Schwartz (no date), Robert Zubrycki (11/12/2013), Public Hearing (11/07/2013)

Response:

Additional site cross sections were prepared in response to these inquiries. Section locations are shown on Map #21. Sections C-1 and C-2, Illustration 12.1 and 12.2, are taken from John Simpson Road over a mile from the site. Due to other hillsides between the site and John Simpson Road, the site is not visible.

Views from Tonetta Lake Way and Cooledge Drive will be screened by topography and

vegetation, as shown on Illustration 12.9 and 12.10.

Sections C-6 through C-10 as shown on Illustrations 12.4 through 12.8 include Shore Road. Views of the Crossroads site should be screened due to topography and vegetation from Shore Road. It is possible some lighting may be visible through the trees at night.

Some filtered views of the site may be possible from North Brewster Road, see sections C-6 through C-10, as shown on Illustrations 12.4 through 12.8.

Comment Visual-15

Describe the planting to be installed on the side facing Tonetta Lake and the neighborhoods. (Robert Zubrycki (11/12/2013)

Response:

The east side of the development faces Tonetta Lake. The east side of the site will include three 10' tall retaining walls and a 30' tall slope. Existing woods will be retained on the site extending uphill from the railroad tracks; these woods will screen the retaining walls. Per zoning section 138-15.1(A)3, the slope must be replanted with a mixture of trees. The plan will call for a mixture of native plants including oak, birch, and pine. Upon the top of the slope a mixture of shade and coniferous trees will be installed.

Comment Visual-16

What is the impact to the existing ridgeline? What will the area look like from I-84? Views from the South? (Michael Principe (11-11-2013), (Deb Keiser (11/11/2013), Lynn Edelsen (11/11/2013), (Alice V. Brandon 11/09/13), (Steven Mattson (11/07/2013),(Michael & Sally Terlizzi (10/31/2013), (Cherie Ingraham (11/11/2013), (Public Hearing (11/07/2013)

Response:

The existing ridgeline is a topographic area extending from a high point of 659 downward to the 609 contour, approximately 9 acres in size. Approximately 6.5 acres of the ridgeline area will be disturbed and lowered in grade to an average of 600. Around 800 linear feet of ridgeline will remain on the west and southwest side of the site facing Route 312 and I-84. The proposed buildings will be screened by the ridgeline to remain, see Maps #12 and #16. Sections C-3, C-4, and C-5 as shown on Illustration 12.3, were drawn to consider possible views from I-84. These sections show that the proposed development will be screened by topography and vegetation.

Comment Visual-17

Will the project be dark sky compliant? Will there be any noticeable light generated that will be visible from Shore Drive? (Public Hearing 11/07/2013)

Response:

The project will be dark sky compliant. The light fixtures will face downward and will meet dark sky recommendations for brightness. LED fixtures will be used. It may be possible to see a light or two through the trees from homes along Shore Drive. The project will not have the same look as the Highlands, refer to Sections C-9 and C-10, Illustrations 12.7 and 12.8. The views from Shore Drive will be buffered by the hillside above Tonetta Lake Park..

Comment Visual-18

Why isn't there an environmental conservation buffer at Highlands? (Public Hearing 11/07/2013)

Response:

The Highlands was built in accord to the zoning regulations in place at that time. The zoning regulations did not require the planting of an Environmental Conservation Buffer. Since that time, the regulations have been changed and any retail project over 50,000 SF in size is subject to section 138-63.4 which requires an Environmental Conservation Buffer.

Comment Visual-19

Since the balloon study test pictures for Shore Drive was taken at the lowest elevation on the street, was other pictures taken at higher elevations on Shore Drive and can you present them? Why was the lowest elevation on Shore Drive chosen as location to determine the view? (Samantha Jacobs (11/08/2013) (Public Hearing (11/07/2013)

Response:

Pictures were taken at many locations along Shore Drive. The balloons were not visible in any photographs. The hillside on the Town land associated with Tonetta Park and the existing vegetation on the west side of Tonetta Lake block views of the Crossroads site.

Please refer to cross sections C-6 through C-10 for more information on views from Shore Drive.

Comment Visual-20

*Will the project be visible from boats/canoes on Lake Tonetta? (Kim Cercena
(11/12/2013)*

Response:

Crossroads will not be visible from boats or canoes on Lake Tonetta, please refer to cross sections C-8 and C-9, Illustrations 12.6 and 12.7. The vegetated hillside on the west side of the lake blocks all views of the development.