



PLANNING BOARD REPORT PORTLAND, MAINE

977 Brighton Avenue
Senior Housing
Level III Site Plan and Subdivision Plan
2018-011
Applicant: Avesta Housing

| | |
|---|--|
| Submitted to Portland Planning Board Workshop Date: April 24, 2018 | Prepared by: Christian Roadman Date: April 20, 2018 |
|---|--|

I. INTRODUCTION

Avesta Housing seeks to construct a 40 unit apartment building for senior citizens. 34 units, or 85%, of the proposed units are intended to qualify as low income housing units for rent. As currently understood by staff, 24 units will be affordable to a household earning 50% of area mean income, and 10 units affordable for a family earning 60% of area mean income. The remaining six units will be market rate. This project capitalizes on density bonuses as part of the Affordable Housing section of the Land Use Code.

The proposed project is located at the corner of Brighton Avenue and Wessex Street. Wessex Street is unfinished, and the project calls for paving the street. 32 parking spaces are proposed for the site, which potentially complies with the Land Use Code. Under Division 20 (parking) eligible projects providing affordable housing may have a lower number of parking spaces per unit than otherwise allowed. The required amount must be set by the board.

The applicant states that the project location is good for senior housing, as it offers access to transit along Brighton Avenue and proximity to shopping centers for both employment and commerce. This is one of the first projects to utilize the density bonuses and dimensional modifications available under the R-P Residence Professional zoning district. The project is larger and of a different use than many other buildings in the area – Brighton is a largely commercial corridor with office and retail uses, with single family residential neighborhoods immediately adjacent.

While the current application is at a preliminary level, the Land use Code specifies that affordable housing projects receive expedited review. Given this, an early workshop with the Planning Board seemed appropriate. Some important materials for review are still forthcoming: a neighborhood meeting is scheduled in the near future, and the applicant will provide a traffic study as part of the next submission. Given the number of units proposed, and the project site's access off of Brighton Avenue, the traffic study will be an important document. In the meantime, staff seek board direction and input regarding the details of the site that are currently known.

Applicant: Avesta Housing (Greg Payne)

Consultants: Walsh Engineering Associates (Tom Greer), CWS Architects (Ben Walter), Owen Haskell - surveyor

II. REQUIRED REVIEWS

| Waiver Requests | Applicable Standards |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 21 Foot Drive Aisle Width | 24 feet |
| 37.5% Compact Parking Spaces | 20% |
| | |
| Review | Relevant Code |
| Site Plan | Section 14-526 |
| Subdivision | Section 14-497 |
| Affordable Housing | Section 14-488 |

III. PROJECT DATA

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Existing Zoning | R-P Residence Professional, R-3 Residential |
| Existing Use | Single Family Home - requires confirmation |
| Proposed Use | Multifamily Residential |
| Proposed Development Program | 32 affordable units, 8 market rate units |
| - Bedroom Mix | All 1 bedroom |
| Parcel Size | 32,000 sq. ft. |

| | <i>Existing</i> | <i>Proposed</i> | <i>Net Change</i> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Building Footprint (sq. ft.) | 3,128 | 7,825 | 4,697 |
| Building Floor Area (sq. ft.) | 3,740 | 31,300 | 27,560 |
| Impervious Surface Area (sq. ft.) | 8,168 | 19,395 | 11,227 |
| Parking Spaces | 5 | 32 | 27 |
| Bicycle Parking Spaces | 0 | 16 | 16 |
| Estimated Cost of Project | \$7,100,000 | | |

IV. EXISTING CONDITIONS

At present, a one story wood frame building that is listed as a duplex in the assessor’s records and a separate two story wood frame building exist on the site. The rear, or northernmost area of the site (approximately 4,000 square feet), is in the R-3 residential zone. The remainder of the site (approximately 28,000 square feet) is in the R-P residence professional zone.

The properties immediately west and east of the proposed building’s location are commercial or professional office buildings, but not large-scale, buildings. Also north of Brighton Avenue are a number of nearby single family homes, including several along the unfinished Wessex Street. The Fred P. Hall Elementary School is to the northeast, within walking distance.

Across Brighton Avenue (to the south) the scale of development is fairly large. A car dealership is across the street, and a shoppingcenter is at the intersection of Brighton with Rand Road. Brighton Avenue’s is a local arterial road which carries a significant amount of traffic. The intersection of Brighton Avenue and Wessex Street is not signalized.

V. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Avesta Housing proposes to build a 40 unit apartment building on the site, after demolishing the existing onsite buildings. The proposed building would be oriented towards Brighton Avenue, with entrances off that street as well as off the proposed parking lot on the rear / south of the site. The proposed building takes advantage of height and setback bonuses available for provision of affordable housing. The proposed building height is 48 feet and four inches tall at its north end, and 46 feet and four inches tall at its south end (below the 50 foot maximum permitted with affordable housing density bonuses) The building as designed includes vinyl, wood shake, and cement-panel siding. Every proposed unit is a 1 bedroom. Laundry machines are proposed on multiple floors onsite, and the proposed building includes a front office.

The proposed site plan includes a parking lot with 32 spaces, of which 12 are designated accessible spaces and 12 are compact spaces (four spaces are designed as compact ADA spaces). The parking lot is the source of both the applicant’s waiver requests, for reduced drive aisle width and increased percentage of compact spaces. The proposed parking lot extends into existing wetland, which would be partially infilled. The applicant included a permit from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection granting permission to alter the wetland. The applicant cites site geometry, maximization of onsite parking, and minimization of wetland impact reasons for its waiver requests. 16 bicycle parking spaces, via 8 bicycle racks, are also proposed.

As part of the project, Wessex Street, which is currently unfinished, would be paved. Currently, the applicant’s plans indicate a 24 foot wide street, which is not to the City standard (28 feet).

VI. Public Comment and Neighborhood Meeting

The Planning Department received four emailed comments by the time of this writing, which are attached to this report. Two comments are from individuals who grew up on the street (one grew up in a building on the site). Both cite the history and age of the existing building facing Brighton Avenue, built in 1924, as reasons against demolition. It

was the home and greenhouse location of Ameido Martelle, a Portland resident, as well as the home of Joe Martelle, a member of the Maine Broadcasters Hall of Fame. Joe Martelle submitted one of the comments. The greenhouse structures are no longer present on the property.

The third comment in opposition is from a neighbor on Brighton Avenue who raised concerns about traffic safety (entering and exiting Brighton Avenue without a traffic light at Wessex), the size and scale of the proposed building / parking lot, lighting impacts (loss of sunlight and impact of exterior lighting), and maintenance.

A fourth comment, received from the property owner on Brighton Avenue across Wessex Street, was neither in favor of nor in support of the project, but raised a number of issues. These include concerns about turning movements onto Brighton Avenue, potential use of the property owner’s property as a turnaround and/or pet-walking site, and the potential for shadow impacts. This comment also expressed that paving of Wessex Street would be a positive development.

VII. RIGHT, TITLE, INTEREST AND FINANCIAL / TECHNICAL CAPACITY

The applicant submitted a warranty deed for three lots, and a quitclaim deed for two lots, which evidence ownership of the property in question. The boundary survey submitted with the application is not stamped by a Maine Licensed Surveyor and must be resubmitted.

A document provided by the applicant, Avesta, cites the organization’s 2,200 apartments and two assisted living facilities, as well as its \$195 million in assets, as evidence of its capacity to successfully complete the proposed project. The document lists anticipated funding sources for the project, including subsidies, low income housing tax credit, and loans.

VIII. ZONING ANALYSIS

Multifamily housing is not a use normally available under the R-P or R-3 zones, but is provided for in the R-P zone in the Affordable Housing section of the Land Use Code. Planning staff, in consultation with zoning staff, confirmed that 40 units are appropriate under the density bonuses allowable. The project also takes advantage of height and setback bonuses, which were determined to comply with zoning.

Because part of the site (roughly 4,000) is located in an R-3 zone, this square footage was omitted from the calculations pertaining to density bonuses.

According to the Parking section, Division 20, of the Land Use Code, the Planning Board may determine the parking required for affordable housing projects such as this one. The applicant cites previous experience with / approval of affordable housing projects as support for the amount of parking requested. Tom Errico, the City’s traffic engineering consultant, requested more information regarding the proposed parking spaces (including the number of proposed handicapped and compact spaces) as part of his traffic-related comments, addressed further below.

IX. DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

A. SUBDIVISION (Section 14-497)

The proposed development prompts review for conformance with relevant standards of Portland’s subdivision ordinance and applicable regulations. Please note, the current application is at a preliminary level.

Will Not Result in Undue Water and Air Pollution, and Will Not Result in Undue Soil Erosion; Will Provide for Adequate Sanitary Sewer and Stormwater Disposal, and Will Not Cause an Unreasonable Burden on Municipal Solid Waste and Sewage

The applicant submitted a wastewater capacity authorization letter for the project.

The City’s civil engineering consultant, Lauren Swett, reviewed the applicant’s preliminary submission for compliance with applicable codes, standards, and practices. Ms. Swett submitted a memorandum, attached to this report, indicating the need for significant revisions to the applicant’s submitted plans and documents regarding stormwater control, impervious surface calculations, grading, erosion, and maintenance.

Sufficient Water Available

The applicant did not provide evidence of sufficient water from the Portland Water District.

Will Not Cause Unreasonable Traffic Congestion

The applicant did not provide a traffic study. City traffic engineering consultant Tom Errico contacted the applicant’s traffic engineer to communicate what he will require in such a study.

Comprehensive Plan

The applicant identified the following local goals, drawn from the City’s comprehensive plan, as applicable to the project:

- Increase, preserve, and modify the overall supply of housing City-wide to meet the needs, preferences and financial capabilities of all Portland households
- Encourage additional contextually-appropriate housing density in and proximate to neighborhood centers, concentrations of services, and transit nodes and corridors as a means of supporting complete neighborhoods
- Pursue policies to enable people who work in Portland to have the option to live in Portland
- Encourage quality, sustainable design in new housing development
- Adopt affordable housing: pursue new opportunities for increased energy efficiency, increased densities, mixed incomes, and greater connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods

B. SITE PLAN (Section 14-526)

The proposed development prompts review for conformance with relevant standards of Portland’s site plan ordinance and applicable regulations. Please note, the current application is at a preliminary level.

a) Transportation Standards

Impact on Surrounding Street Systems and Access and Circulation; Sidewalks; Parking

A traffic study is forthcoming. Two submitted public comments, as well as staff discussion and comment, expressed concern regarding access and egress movements from Wessex Street onto Brighton Avenue, a busy local arterial.

In advance of the traffic study, consulting traffic engineer Tom Errico provided the following comments:

The Wessex Street cross-section shall meet City standards or 28 feet in width. This width will permit on-street parking on one side of the street.

The sidewalk on Wessex Street shall extend along the entire property frontage.

Supporting documentation shall be provided on the determination of parking spaces (total number, number of handicap spaces, and number of compact spaces)

Construction Management Plan

The applicant submitted a construction management plan and narrative as part of the application. There appears to be a discrepancy regarding on-street vs. on-site contractor parking that should be addressed. Lauren Swett, consulting Civil Engineer, also provided the following comments:

- the construction management plan should address building code best practice safeguards during construction
- a construction timeline is referenced but not included.

Public Transit Access

The site is served by public transit on Brighton Avenue, which is one reason cited by the applicant for the location of this proposed development. A transit shelter serving inbound buses is located within a quarter mile of the development, so provision of a shelter is not required per City code. Despite this, staff suggest that the applicant consider providing an easement for a transit shelter, or constructing a bus pad, for outbound buses serving the proposed development.

b) Environmental Quality Standards

Preservation of Significant Natural Features

As noted above, the project impacts a wetland and the applicant submitted a permit from the Department of Environmental Protection allowing alteration. The requests for waivers of the driveway width and the higher percentage of compact spaces are proposed in order to minimize further impacts on the wetland.

Landscaping and Landscape Preservation

The project is subject to the street tree requirements and landscaping standards. Jeff Tarling, City Arborist, recommended that the project street trees along Brighton Avenue and Wessex Street be a uniform planting of like tree types. He noted that most likely, the overhead utility wires will remain and thus the trees should be ornamental types such as 'Accolade' Cherry or Crabapple. He also commented that Silver Maple are not recommended near any City street, and should therefore be changed on the plan.

Caitlin Cameron, Urban Designer, noted that the parking lot should be better screened with landscaping. Please see her other design comments below.

Water Quality, Storm Water Management and Erosion Control

Consulting civil engineer Lauren Swett's comments regarding these topics are addressed above, and her memorandum is attached to this report.

c) Public Infrastructure and Community Safety Standards

Public Safety and Fire Prevention

Division Chief Mike Thompson noted that the Fire Department has adequate capacity in the area for this project, and that emergency access for fire apparatus is available.

Availability and Adequate Capacity of Public Utilities

As noted above, additional information confirming adequate utility capacity is required. The applicant submitted a wastewater capacity authorization letter for the project.

d) Site Design Standards

Snow and Ice Loading

Lauren Swett, consulting City engineer, commented that appropriate snow storage locations (outside of existing and proposed drainage courses) should be indicated.

Historic Resources

The applicant submitted a letter sent to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission requesting information on any impact construction may have on historic, archaeological, or architectural properties. The applicant did not provide a response from the Commission.

Please note the two public comments pertaining to the former site as a greenhouse / nursery, described above.

Exterior Lighting

The applicant provided a lighting plan, and state in a zoning analysis that all lighting will be shielded. The plan anticipates spillage of .2 foot candles properties adjacent the parking lot to the east, and spillage of .2 foot candles onto Wessex Street. Staff review of this item is ongoing.

Please note the public comment pertaining to concerns about exterior lighting, described above.

Noise and Vibration

The applicant states that mechanical equipment will meet appropriate noise limits.

Materials & Waste

The applicant states that all waste will be handled in an interior trash room and picked up by a private waste hauler. Lauren Swett, consulting civil engineer, commented on the absence of a dumpster in her memorandum. The applicant should confirm that there will not be an exterior dumpster.

Zoning Related Design Standards

Caitlin Cameron, Urban Designer, provided the following review comments (her memo is attached to this report in its entirety):

- Applicant did not provide renderings of the project in context
- More information on material finishes is requested
- Aside from the canopy and the material variation, the façade and form appear flat and boxy. Window proportions are inconsistent with those found in the residential context, and the project does not look very residential
- Visual interest and residential character could be added with the following: articulation elements; more fine grain material than concrete panel; different roofline treatment; depth at the windows; reduction of materials or adjustment of material placement
- The surface parking lot is not adequately screened from view along Wessex Street, and no apparent screening is provided between the surface parking lot and neighboring properties.

Additionally, Ms. Cameron posed the following questions:

- What material finishes are proposed?
- What is the detail of the window opening? Do the windows have a reveal?

XII. NEXT STEPS

This workshop lands fairly early in the development review process for this project. Staff anticipate additional submittals from the applicant, which should help determine if there is need for an additional Planning Board workshop. A traffic study is particularly necessary.

While the applicant held one neighborhood meeting per the Affordable Housing section of the City’s code, another is forthcoming to meet the requirements for development review.

XIII. ATTACHMENTS

PLANNING BOARD REPORT ATTACHMENTS

- A. CONSULTING TRAFFIC ENGINEER COMMENTS
- B. CONSULTING CIVIL ENGINEER COMMENTS
- C. CITY ARBORIST STAFF COMMENTS
- D. URBAN DESIGNER STAFF COMMENTS
- E. FIRE STAFF COMMENTS
- F. PUBLIC COMMENT 1 - JOE MARTELL 2-12-18
- G. PUBLIC COMMENT 2 – GENE LEIGHTON 3-18-18
- H. PUBLIC COMMENT 3 – BILL MONTGOMERY
- I. PUBLIC COMMENT 4 – JUDITH STANHOPE

APPLICANT’S SUBMITTALS

- 1. COVER LETTER
- 2. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS
- 3. CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT PLAN NARRATIVE
- 4. RECORDED QUITCLAIM DEED
- 5. RECORDED WARRANTY DEED
- 6. DEP NRPA APPLICATION
- 7. EVIDENCE OF FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL CAPACITY
- 8. STATEMENT OF FIRE DEPARTMENT PROJECT REVIEW DATA
- 9. LEVEL III SITE PLAN APPLICATION
- 10. LIGHTING STATEMENT
- 11. 1ST NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING MATERIALS
- 12. NRPA PERMIT
- 13. PARKING SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION
- 14. PARKING WAIVER STATEMENT
- 15. STORMWATER REPORT

16. TEST BORINGS
17. WASTEWATER APPLICATION AND CAPACITY AUTHORIZATION
18. WETLAND REPORT
19. ZONING ANALYSIS

PLANS

- A. FLOOR PLANS
- B. ELEVATIONS
- C. BOUNDARY & TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY
- D. SUBDIVISION RECORDING PLAT
- E. SITE PLAN
- F. EXISTING CONDITIONS & DEMOLITION PLAN
- G. GRADING AND UTILITIES PLAN
- H. EROSION CONTROL PLAN
- I. LANDSCAPE PLAN
- J. LIGHTING PLAN
- K. SITE DETAILS
- L. CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT PLAN