



Memorandum

Planning and Urban Development Department

Planning Division

To: Sean Dundon, Chair and Members of the Portland Planning Board
From: Matthew Grooms, Planner
Date: August 9, 2018
Re: Twelve-Unit Mixed-Use Development, Estelle Estates, LLC
Project #: 000012-2018 CBL: 344-E-006
Meeting Date: August 14, 2018

I. INTRODUCTION

Estelle Estates, LLC has submitted a Level III Site Plan, Subdivision and Conditional Use application for a new mixed-use development with twelve residential condominiums and 3,200 square feet of office space on a 1.27-acre parcel located at 300 Allen Avenue within the North Deering Neighborhood. This property falls within both the R-5 Residential and RP Residential Professional zones. The surrounding context consists of predominantly single-family and multi-family housing (located to the north, south and west) and commercial property, located to the east. The proposed development involves demolition of an existing single-family structure and construction of one new three and a half story office building, three three-story duplex structures and two three-story triplex structures and 36 off-street parking spaces.



Figure 1: Approximate location of Development Site

The Planning Board held an initial workshop on this proposal on June 12, 2018 to review site plan, subdivision, conditional use and inclusionary zoning standards. The purpose of this second workshop is specifically for the Planning Board to weigh in on the design of the proposed office building and overall site configuration, with specific attention paid to separation of on-site uses and usable open space. Because of this, the subsequent memo does not provide a comprehensive overview of all applicable standards, but only these two topics. For additional information, please review the attached June 12th Planning Board memo (Attachment 1).

A total of 344 notices were sent to property owners within 500 feet of the site and a legal ad ran in the August 3th and 6th, 2018 editions of the Portland Press Herald.

Applicant: Peter Bouchard, ESTELLE ESTATES, LLC

Consultants: Doug Reynolds, P.E., Gorrill Palmer; Rex J. Croteau, Titcomb Associates

II. PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP – JUNE 12, 2018

At the June 12th workshop, the Planning Board noted several concerns with the proposal for 300 Allen Avenue, and stated that they were not prepared to have this project go to a public hearing. Specifically, those concerns were as follows:

1. While supportive of modular buildings, the actual designs being proposed did not meet the standards of the design manual, and would need to be reworked to incorporate relevant standards.
2. Proposed buildings were found to have no activity at ground-level, with garages and no active living space. It was recommended that additional efforts be made to activate this plane.
3. Open space provided was very limited, and did not appear suitable for active or passive use. The Board recommended that the applicant increase and/or convert limited existing open space into a more usable site amenity.
4. The proposed office use transcended into the residential portion of the site. The Board asked that the office use be segregated to the extent possible.

5. The proposal includes extensive wetland impacts of 9,159 square feet. Members of the Board asked that these impacts be reduced to the extent possible.
6. A portion of the northerly-most triplex building was situated on top of a 35' foot water and sewer easement, and needed to be relocated out of that easement.

III. MEETING WITH APPLICANT – JULY 17, 2018

Early in July, revised plans for the project at 300 Allen Avenue were submitted and reviewed by City staff. These revisions addressed some of the Board’s comments, notably; building design more compliant with design manual standards, reduction in impervious surface and wetland impacts, increased outdoor space for use by residents, and relocation of the triplex building out of the sewer easement. However, the office parking was still located in close proximity to the residential units, and the amount of usable outdoor space had not significantly increased. As a result of this, the staff requested an in-person meeting that was held on July 17, 2018, where the primary focus was site configuration.

At this meeting, the applicant stated that a number of factors reduced their overall flexibility in being able to address this concern of the Planning Board. These included the sewer easement, which occupies a significant portion of the lot’s buildable area, site topography, which limits the potential for usable open space, stormwater requirements, the presence of two separate zoning districts, required parking, required fire turnaround, and required building setbacks. Together, these factors essentially locked the developer into the proposed design, with only minor modifications being possible.

The staff made several suggestions at this meeting, which included relocating office parking adjacent to the office use, providing front porches onto residential buildings with frontage along Allen Avenue, clustering the duplex units into larger residential buildings with between three (3) and six (6) units, and orienting the duplex units so that they would be entirely or partially arrayed across the rear of the property. Due to either property constraints or marketability concerns, the applicant felt that these approaches were largely infeasible, with the exception of relocating office parking, which appeared to be feasible.

Following this meeting, revised plans were submitted, which most significantly relocated eight (8) parking spaces under the proposed office building and reduced their overall surface parking count, and a fire-truck turnaround was provided.

IV. UPDATED PLANS FOR AUGUST 14, 2018 WORKSHOP

The project is proposed as a mixed-use development with twelve two-bedroom condominiums located in three three-story modular duplex buildings and two three-story modular triplex structures as well as a two and a half-story modular office building. According to the application, all proposed buildings will be less than 35’ feet in height. Each residential unit will feature a one-car garage located at ground level within the principal buildings, and additional parking space either alongside the residential unit or within a small off-street parking area. Eight (8) tandem parking spaces are now proposed at ground level of the office building, with the four (4) remaining required parking spaces being located in a small parking area across from the duplex residential units. This parking area is connected via a 5’ foot bituminous pathway. Individual units that front Allen Avenue also feature bituminous walkways that connect with the public sidewalk.

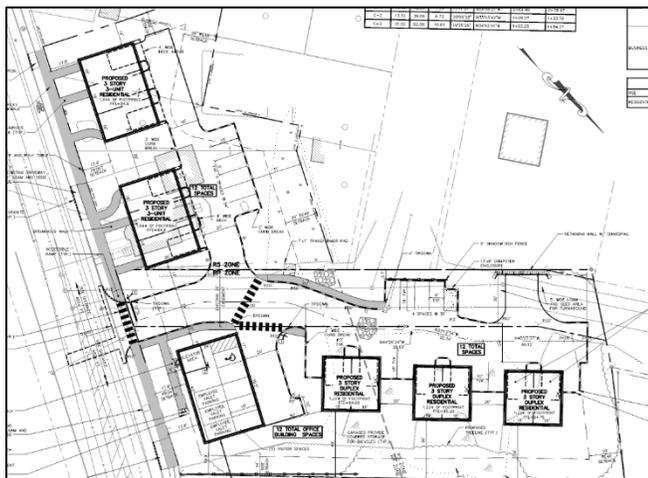


Figure 2: Revised site plan based upon staff and Board feedback

The residential buildings have been modified to address preliminary design review comments, and have had balconies provided for each unit, which are intended to provide additional outdoor space on this constrained site. The rhythm of window placement has been made consistent, dormers have been provided with windows and building facades have been slightly articulated to provide greater texture. The suggestion to provide a front porch was deemed infeasible due to setback requirements, and so at this point, the ground level remains largely inactive.

At the time of the July 17th meeting, the design of the office building was very similar to that of the proposed residential buildings and found to be too residential in nature. Staff suggested that this building be revised so as to stand out as a non-residential building. Based upon this suggestion, and

discussions with staff to relocate some of the parking underneath the office building, the overall design of that building was significantly revised. This building is now three and a half stories tall with eight (8) tandem parking spaces located at ground level and accessible via the rear of the building. The second and third floors will consist of office space, and the fourth floor will feature storage space. The building is accented by a shed dormer along the Allen Avenue façade.

Another concern discussed at the July 17th meeting was the lack of an adequate fire-truck turnaround. The placement of this turnaround has been particularly challenging as the city’s technical manual requires that the turnaround be located on the right side of a street, and due to the existing easement, this posed a significant challenge, as residential buildings were confined to this same area. The City’s life-safety reviewer has consented to a left-turnaround, which has been provided just beyond the four (4) space office parking area.

Due to the extensive grade differential present at 300 Allen Avenue, that portion of the site will be extensively regraded, with a finished floor elevation of between 84.2’ feet and 85.5’ feet. Around the perimeter of the easterly lot, the slope will be stabilized using rip-rap in several locations and will also be the location for proposed stormwater treatment systems.

In regards to stormwater management, the development will utilize a Bioretention pond, grassed underdrained soil filters, a FocalPoint, and drip strips to provide water quality and quantity treatments.

Other site improvements include the removal of one existing curb cut and replacement with sidewalk, installation of granite curbing, installation of a mixture of trees, shrubs, ornamental grasses and perennials, located predominately along the Allen Avenue frontage and along the westerly property boundary. In response to both Board feedback and concerns from abutters, the applicant has significantly increased buffer plantings around the exterior of the site and has added shadowbox fencing around proposed parking areas to shield vehicle headlights. Site lighting is achieved through five pole-mounted light fixtures located throughout the site.

V. DISCUSSION BASED UPON UPDATED PLANS

Going in to this second workshop, the staff finds that the applicant has made a good-faith effort at addressing staff and Board concerns within the parameters of the project being proposed. Site constraints pose a serious challenge to developing this site, and it may not be feasible to increase the amount of usable open space without significant revision to the proposal, notably a decrease in the number of residential units. It should be noted that the project as presented meets applicable zoning, site plan and subdivision standards.

In looking at the site, much of the proposed open-space is essentially remainder area, located in and around parking areas or along the property boundary. The duplex units feature 20’ feet of open space in between each building, or approximately a 10’ foot wide strip for each unit. The triplex units meanwhile are limited to space between the proposed building and Allen Avenue, or in close proximity to neighboring properties to the south of this site. The applicant is proposing to landscape much of this area to provide buffering and meet



Figure 3: Proposed landscape plan, augmented to screen site from abutting residential properties

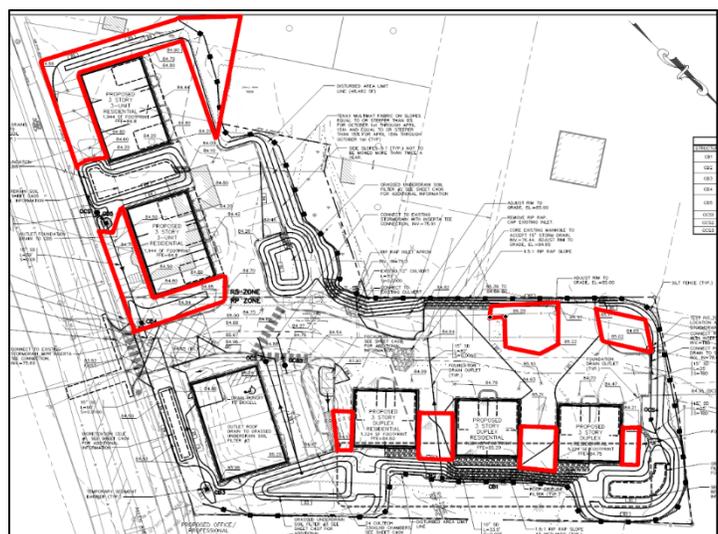


Figure 4: Open-space areas potentially suitable for active/passive use shown in red

site landscaping requirements. To compensate for this lack of open space, each residential unit is provided with two balconies, one located off of the kitchen and dining area on the second floor, and a second located off a bedroom on the third floor. Nearby, publicly accessible open space includes Pine Grove Park, located 0.7 miles east of this site, and University Park, located 0.5 miles to the southwest.

This workshop is an opportunity for the Board to review changes made and determine whether or not the configuration of the site is acceptable, or if more significant revisions to the proposal are necessary.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

As of the writing of this report, three (3) written comments have been received by the Planning Division. The concerns raised in these comments were primarily focused on drainage, the height of the proposed buildings and screening of the development from adjacent properties. In preliminary review comments, the staff asked that additional buffer plantings be provided in accordance with city’s standards for site buffering. The staff have also requested updated building elevations that clearly indicate the height of buildings as measured from average grade.

The required neighborhood meeting for this project was held on June 25, 2018 at the Lyman Moore Middle School, and was attended by thirteen (13) members of the public. At this meeting, those in attendance raised questions regarding projected traffic impacts, buffering of the site against nearby residential areas, drainage improvements, snow removal, and development schedule. In the neighborhood meeting packet provided, responses to these questions are listed, and additionally have been addressed in revised plan submittals (Attachment M).

VII. ZONING ANALYSIS

The proposed project lies partially within the R-P Residence Professional zone and partially within the R-5 Residential zone, with the office component being located entirely within the R-P zone. The residential structures are considered a multiplex development and are permitted by right within both the R-5 and R-P zones.

In terms of dimensional requirements, the project meets the standards of the R-5 and R-P standards for setbacks, building height, lot size, lot width, street frontage, units per building and impervious surface ratio. The front yard was initially non-compliant, although the site plan has been revised and the front yard setback now meets city standards.



Figure 5: Location of property with zoning context

The proposed uses require a total of thirty-two (32) parking spaces, eight (8) for the proposed office use and twenty-four (24) for the proposed residential uses. A total of thirty-six (36) parking spaces are being provided, which staff finds acceptable. This figure was reduced significantly from forty-four (44) in an effort to reduce wetland impacts.

VIII. DESIGN REVIEW

Building design was a significant concern of the Planning Board at the June 12th workshop where it was felt that the designs being proposed were not in compliance with city design standards. The Board had concerns that the ground plane of the site was not sufficiently activated, and that the building’s articulation and positioning of fenestration was awkward, particularly for the triplex units along Allen Avenue. The Board also requested that renderings and elevations for the proposed office building be provided.

The applicant has since submitted two separate sets of renderings for the proposed buildings, including renderings of the office building. This building was significantly revised following the July 17th meeting with staff, where parking was placed on the ground level, and the façade was significantly simplified. Based upon these most recent elevations, the City’s Urban Designer has provided the following comments. These comments are predominantly concerned with the office building, as the residential buildings have since addressed the majority of staff and Board comments.



Figure 6: Proposed triplex elevations

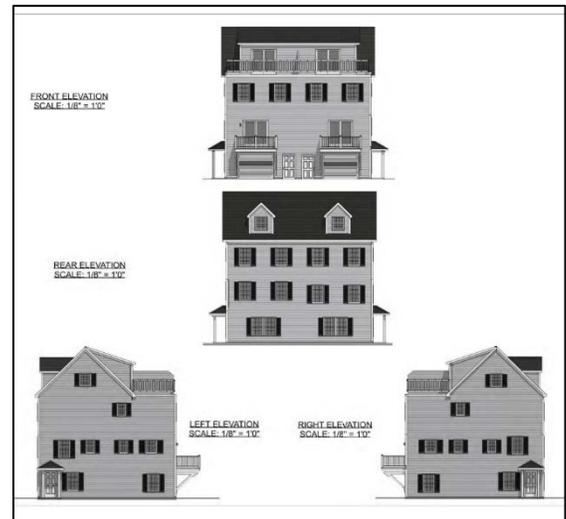


Figure 7: Proposed duplex elevations

Residential Buildings:

- **Staff comment-** Previously staff and the Planning Board commented on the lack of articulation
 - Update based on revised drawings – The project currently uses plane changes, gable dormers, covered entries to provide visual interest. Additional elements such as extended porches, bay windows, elevated entry, or similar could be incorporated to address these comments in a contextual way.
- **Staff comment** – Staff suggested that one, connected porch might be more appropriate and functional space rather than individual stoops.
 - Update based on revised drawings – While still in favor of this approach, the staff recognizes that this is infeasible based upon front yard setbacks and site constraints.

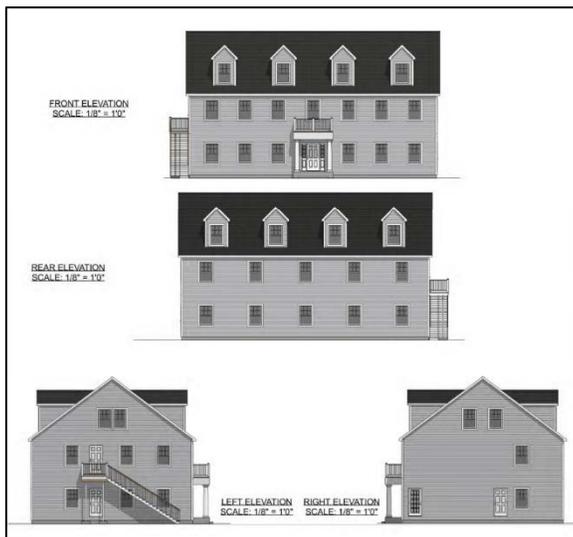


Figure 8: First proposal for office building

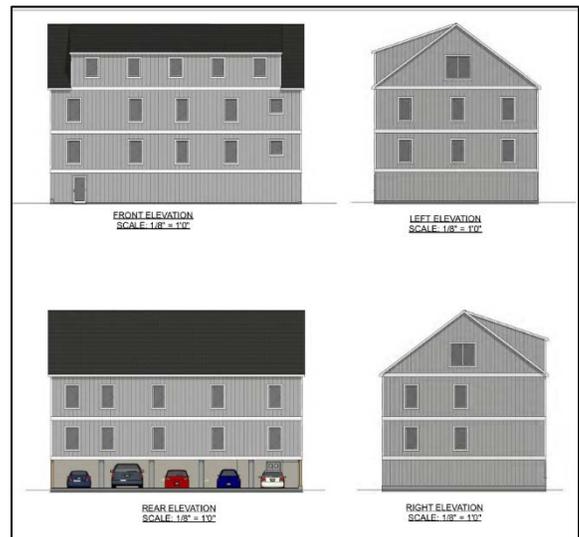


Figure 9: Revised proposal based upon feedback from staff and relocation of parking

Office Building:

- **Staff comment** – Does the Board consider the building to have a commercial character? Is a gable roof with shed dormer appropriate strategy to relate a commercial building to the residential neighborhood?

- **Staff comment** – The front façade is flat, which is out of character with the neighborhood where more articulation exists, even in commercial buildings. Once solution would be to remove the shed dormer or to move it to the back side of the building.
- **Staff comment** – Staff further suggest the street-facing, ground floor entry needs to become more prominent to be legible as the entrance but also to convey this commercial use.
- **Staff comment** – Staff recommend a material other than board and baton which is a rural material – clapboard or shingle or vertical board would be more appropriate.
- **Staff comment** – The building and front door are oriented to the street but there is not direct access from street to the door. The door lacks emphasis as the primary entrance to the building and is diminutive compared with the scale of the building. Staff suggest that a direct path from the street to the door be introduced and that the ground floor façade be revised to be more active – clerestory windows, larger door with sidelites/canopy, emphasis with lighting and signage, change in materials.
- **Staff comment** - Parking areas are placed away from the street or below the building, facing interior to the site. The ground floor now houses structured parking instead of active uses – the façade design now lacks activity and engagement at the street level.

IX. NEXT STEPS

1. Address staff comments
2. Address additional comments of the Planning Board
3. Determine whether or not the scope of the project is suitable to the development site
4. Prepare final plan submission, including subdivision and site plan submittal requirements as included in 14-496(1) and (b) and 14-527(e) and (f) for review by the Planning Authority and Planning Board
5. Hold final Planning Board Hearing

X. ATTACHMENTS

PLANNING BOARD REPORT ATTACHMENTS

1. Planning Board Workshop Report (6.12.18)
2. Final Design Review Comments
3. Public Comment
 - a. Susan Mckenna and James Mckenna
 - b. Christopher Ellingwood
 - c. Christopher Ellingwood

APPLICANT’S SUBMITTALS

- A. Cover
- B. Application Form
- C. Agent Authorization
- D. Project Narrative
- E. Right, Title & Interest
- F. Financial and Technical Capacity
- G. Stormwater Management Plan
- H. Resource Letter
- I. Ability to Serve Letters
- J. Level III Site Plan Checklist
- K. Zoning Analysis Table
- L. Tier I NRPA Permit
- M. Revised Building Elevations
- N. Traffic Memo
- O. Lighting Cut Sheets
- P. Autoturn Plan
- Q. Response to Staff Comments
- R. Neighborhood Meeting

PLANS

- Plan 1. Cover Sheet
- Plan 2. Existing Conditions Plan I
- Plan 3. Existing Conditions Plan II

- Plan 4. Site Plan
- Plan 5. Utility Plan
- Plan 6. Grading, Drainage and Erosion Control Plan
- Plan 7. Site Details
- Plan 8. Miscellaneous Details
- Plan 9. Drainage Details
- Plan 10. Bioretention Pond I Plan and Details
- Plan 11. Grassed Underdrain Soil Filter 1 Plan and Details
- Plan 12. Grassed Underdrain Soil Filter 2 Plan and Details
- Plan 13. Grassed Underdrain Soil Filter 3 Plan and Details
- Plan 14. Grassed Underdrain Soil Filter 4 Plan and Details
- Plan 15. FocalPoint Details
- Plan 16. Erosion and Sedimentation Control Details
- Plan 17. Erosion and Sedimentation Notes
- Plan 18. Lighting Plan
- Plan 19. Landscape Plan