



TOWN OF ACTON
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
Review Memorandum: 976 Main Street
Room 9, Town Hall
February 21, 2018

DRB Members in attendance: Holly Ben-Joseph (Chair), Peter Darlow (Assistant Chair), Kim Montella, David Honn, and Janet Adachi (Board of Selectmen liaison).

Lorayne Black, Landscape Architect for Methods Machine Tools, in attendance to present an overall site landscape upgrade proposal.

Documents Reviewed: Landscape Plan, L1, titled Phase 1, dated 02-05-18, Landscape Plan, L2, titled Master Plan, dated 02-05-18, Details Sheet, L3, dated 02-05-18, and a sheet of images of the proposed plantings, titled Proposed Plants.

This is the second review meeting of the proposed project for Methods Machine Tools. Whereas the previous review meeting was a general conversation with a focus on the proposed building upgrade, (see DRB review memo of 11-01-17), the purpose of this second review is to focus on the proposed site and landscape upgrades.

The existing property, located at 976 Main Street, is a former Somerville Lumber retail facility. Machine Tools acquired the property in 1998 and has generally utilized the building and site as is.

Integral to the proposed work to significantly upgrade the property and remove much of the vestiges of the former lumber yard, the focus of the landscaping and site work is intended to enhance the proposed new front face of the building, screen much of the former lumber yard infrastructure from view, and present a welcoming arrival into the property from Main Street.

The scope of landscape work is proposed to be developed in two or more phases.

In the first immediate phase, site scaping including stone walls, paved walkways, and low plantings will be installed parallel to and immediately in front of the updated building façade and glazed addition with an emphasis on more dense and taller plantings at each end of the façade. A significant portion of the existing parking lot, directly in front of the former lumber stockyard will be replaced with new landscaping. The existing chainlink fence enclosing the stockyard is to be replaced by a new black post and rail aluminum fence, and taller plantings will be

positioned in a loose organic layout to replicate a more natural feel to the portion of the site in front of the fence. A new lawn will be developed stretching from Main Street along the edges of the drive leading to the parking lot with decorative stonewalls and low plantings flanking the entrance drive. Current site lighting of the existing parking lot is under review for the potential to upgrade the existing parking lot lighting.

The master plan presented illustrates the intent of Methods Machine Tools to in time further enhance the site with removal of a more significant portion of the existing excess parking lot. The master landscape plan illustrates the addition of more plantings to replace the parking area removed consistent with proposed screening materials to be installed in phase one.

DRB members are very pleased by the proposal, commend the applicant for the proposed removal of the unneeded excessive former paved parking areas, and offered the following comments and suggestions concerning the landscape proposal as presented.

1. Given the significant visual impact along Main Street that the existing scrub landscape fields surrounding the parking present, it is recommended to review the conditions of these fields during the Spring growing season and to consider slice cutting the fields and planting these with a native meadow wildflower mix.
2. Three of the existing landscape islands within the parking lot are proposed to be maintained per the master plan. The DRB highly recommends that each of these be upgraded with respect to the plantings as a part of phase 1 given they are quite visible upon arrival to the property.

The DRB believes the landscape proposal and the previously presented building upgrade have potential to offer a significant improvement to the existing property.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Darlow
DRB Member