



**TOWN OF ACTON
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Review Memorandum: McGovern Automotive at 1&5 Nagog Park
Proposal – Revision 2
October 05, 2023

DRB Members in attendance: Peter Darlow, (Chair), David Honn, Holly Ben-Joseph, Tom Doolittle, Richard Keleher

Proponents in attendance:

Jon Crandall from McGovern Automotive
Ben LaFrance from Hawk Design (landscape)
Garrett Horsfall from Kelly Engineering Group (civil)
Christopher Alphen from Blatman, Bobrowski, Haverty & Silverstein (attorney)

Documents reviewed:

- Powerpoint presentation consisting of revision 2 of the Site Development Plans, dated 09.26.23, and of revision 3 of the Landscape Permit Submission, dated 09.29.23.
- Concept Building Plans and Elevations, prepared by BKA Architects, dated 04.20.23.
- Lighting Illuminance Plan – revised 09.27.23

The project proposal has been further updated following a second meeting with the Select Board on September 18, 2023 and in response to the September 13, 2023 site and landscape document review by the Design Review Board. As previously presented, McGovern has elected to develop one new auto showroom building along with its associated service and customer access, new car parking display aisles, staff and customer parking all located on the easterly “half” of the 1 and 5 Nagog property. (for convenience, “North” is assumed to be towards the top of the plans.) A substantial portion of the existing retail building on the westerly half of the property will remain, along with its existing parking and landscape, as well as several commercial properties along the perimeter of the developed portion of the site.

The proponents highlighted the following proposed site development and landscape adjustments made in response to their more recent meetings with Acton Planning Staff, the Selectboard, the adjacent neighborhood community, and the more recent comments made by the DRB:

- The main drive in, which bisects the site between the existing property and the newly developed car dealership, will be landscaped each side with an allée of trees.

- A mix of native species, at 3” caliper, are the proposed tree plantings to be used along the allée as well as throughout the new parking field islands.
- The existing informal walking path from the adjacent Nagog residential neighborhood will be formalized with a clearly delineated bituminous walkway through the enlarged landscape buffer on the eastern edge of the property. Where this walk meets the parking lot the walk will be striped to meet up with the sidewalk crossing in front of the new dealership building.
- A buffer of coniferous trees will be planted along the easterly landscaped edge to reduce the visibility of the parking lot from the neighboring residential properties.
- The access sidewalk in from Great Road to connect with the retail buildings on the southerly perimeter and leading directly to the new dealership building has been enhanced with a walk wrapping the parking field of the westerly retail parking area.
- The color temperature of the parking area lighting has been confirmed to be 3000K, consistent with Acton regulations. In general, the lighting illuminance of the parking lot has been significantly reduced with this present proposal. The lighting illuminance will be reduced further overnight to maintain a security level of brightness only.

DRB members are pleased with each of the above noted proposed project site design adjustments.

One aspect of the site design that DRB members question is the location and quantity of bicycle racks. Per town regulations the bicycle rack count required is a ratio related to the quantity of parking spaces developed. DRB members do not believe the likelihood of the retail shops nor the car dealership to be heavily visited via bicycle transport. Given the newly configured parking field proposed in relation to the dealership is comprised of approximately 50% active parking spaces and 50% auto dealer car display parking, DRB members believe there is a strong argument to be made that the proponents should be offered relief on the bicycle parking ratio requirement. The DRB suggests that 50% of the bicycle parking spaces presently shown will be more than sufficient for this development.

The proponents presented the architectural concept drawings for the new dealership building as well as for the modifications to the existing retail building.

The primary building façade for the new dealership, which faces south to the parking field, is comprised primarily of metal panels and large glazed openings offering a formal and contemporary presentation for the dealership. This metal panel and glass façade treatment wraps around to the west onto roughly 50% of the westerly facing side of the building before shifting to a cast concrete tilt up panel finish. The eastern and northern sides of the building are proposed to be completely constructed with tilt up concrete panels, punctured programmatically with windows, door, and car door openings.

Following are recommendations made by DRB members:

- The wrap of the metal and glass treatment onto the western side of the building will be quite visible upon arrival to the site and thus the more formal finish where shown on the western façade is a good solution. On the eastern side of the building, as presently conceived, the façade jarringly shifts to concrete panels at the southerly corner. Given this southeast corner of the building will also be visible from the parking field, and likely from Great Road, as seen from the Frolic and Detour restaurant portion of the site, the DRB highly recommends that the formality of the front facing façade wrap around onto the eastern side to cover the first three proposed concrete tilt up panels. This will result in the car dealership building having a more three dimensional public facing presence.
- The landscape treatment on the eastern edge of the building should be adjusted to align with the recommended extent of metal panel finish onto the eastern side.
- At the westerly front corner where patrons will drive cars into the service bay for drop off a 6” diameter column stands alone to support the overhead roof canopy. Though this may be structurally sufficient, the visual of this narrow profile column is in stark contrast to the solid proportions of metal panel and glass of the public facing façade. DRB members recommend this corner be wrapped with the same metal panel finish to present a more substantial scaled pier. The base of this larger scaled corner pier could be on a cast concrete plinth for protection from possible damage given how close this will be to the drives.

The existing retail building will be refreshed with repairs to the existing façade and a fresh coat of paint. On the eastern side where the building has been reduced in scale, the new exterior wall will be finished in a matching stucco panel. DRB members are comfortable with this proposed update and repair.

It was noted that the proponent will in time return with a proposal for additional signage at Great Road. Though the DRB does not typically review signage, this is likely to be a significant scaled sign and therefore, a review of this by the DRB is suggested.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Darlow, for the DRB