



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Meeting Minutes

June 27, 2024

7:00 PM

Room 09, Town Hall – In Person

Present: Peter Darlow, (Chair), Holly Ben-Joseph, Tom Doolittle, David Honn, Richard Keleher

Proponents attending on behalf of 531 Main Street: Werner Gossels, Bonnie Gossels, Owners

1. Opening

Chair, Peter Darlow opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

2. Regular Business

A. Meeting Minutes:

May 16, 2024 minutes were reviewed and unanimously approved. PD will submit to the Town Clerk for posting.

B. Citizen's Concerns:

None

3. New/Special Business

A. 531 Main Street:

The owners of 531 Main Street wish to modify a portion of the existing building south facing façade to introduce an accessible entrance and exit for the second-floor level that will be accessed directly from Post Office Square Road via a new radiused access drive. The owners are in discussion with a potential tenant that offers care services for adults. The drop-off drive and accessible entrance are designed with the intention to accommodate vans that will deliver the adult clients to the proposed tenant. The existing higher topography towards the SW corner of the building between Post Office Square Road and the building's second floor level is conducive to such an intervention. A concept plan and exterior building elevation were presented. Please see the attached DRB review memo, dated June 27, 2024, for more detail on the project and for DRB comments on the proposal.

Document reviewed for 531 Main Street:

Owner Improvements: Tenant Space C, 531 Main Street, dated May 29, 2024, prepared by JG Architecture.



B. Update on Habitat for All initiative:

Holly provided the Board with a summary of the first few meetings of the Habitat for All Advisory Group and of the recent public Workshop. The focus of the initiative is to determine whether a PCRC development approach can become the as of right development code for future subdivisions in lieu of the current conventional subdivision rules. The goal of such a change is to provide for the preservation of more natural habitat, preserve more of the mature woods for carbon sequestration, and to reduce the quantity of infrastructure needed as more housing is developed. As a part of this initiative, a second goal is to look for a method whereby inclusionary affordable housing can be a value add as tracts of land are considered for development.

Holly noted that so far there has not been an indication that the Habitat for All initiative will address a bylaw to control land clearing, tree preservation on single family lots, nor establish a reasonable minimum width for single family residential lots. Each being an initiative the DRB proposed to the Select Board and had been listed on the Select Board's priority list for 2023.

4. Adjournment

At 8:19 p.m. it was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted, The DRB



TOWN OF ACTON
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Review Memorandum: 531 Main Street (Post Office Square Road)
Amanda Lane, Map 12, 56, 50-1 & 50-2

June 27, 2024 In-Person Meeting, Room 09, Town Hall

Design Review Board (DRB) Members in attendance: Peter Darlow (Chair), Holly Ben-Joseph, David Honn, Thomas Doolittle, and Richard Keleher

Proponents in attendance: Werner and Bonnie Gossels, Trustees of Laine Realty Trust

Documents Reviewed:

Drawing by JG Architecture - A-101 - Owner Improvements Tenant Space C – First Floor Plan and Exterior Elevation

It is proposed by the project proponents to add an accessible entrance to the second floor by providing fill and a new asphalt-paved drop-off drive. The building would be accessed via a new double-door. An exit door is also being provided. Both doors will have small metal awnings.

DRB comments:

1. The drawing submitted is a conceptual design only. The DRB agrees with the conceptual approach.
2. The drawing is inadequate to evaluate the design. A grading plan is necessary to show how the new drive will affect existing condition. For example, to ensure that water is not flowing toward the building or onto the street, and that the slopes on either side of the drive are not too steep. In addition, dimensions of the proposed circular drive are necessary to determine if there is adequate turning radii for the proposed van drop-off. It was noted that this could be a very tight fit and may require a more significant site modification.
3. It was suggested that the pedestrian area between the driveway and the entrances be concrete, rather than asphalt, to provide clarity between vehicular and pedestrian space since there is no curb. The proposed painted line will wear out quickly.
4. The proponent stated that tactile warnings will be provided on the public sidewalk on Post Office Square Road and that the crosswalks across the new drive will be painted, but this was not indicated on the plan. The DRB recommends this.
5. The awnings seem to be adequate and appropriate.

6. Though not shown on the plan, the proponents stated that a guardrail will be installed. The DRB recommends that in addition to the guardrail a curb be installed since the slope next to the entry looks quite steep, and people with walkers and in wheelchairs could easily roll down the hill.
7. Although not strictly within its mission, the DRB recommends that the proponent have their architect provide waterproofing and structural details where the new fill comes up against the building. It is not clear that the existing building wall has been built to retain earth and is adequately waterproofed. Details also need to be provided where new openings are being made in the walls and where the windows are being altered.

In summary, the DRB supports the addition of an accessible entrance to the side of the building, but recommends the proponent provide civil, structural, and architectural drawings.

It is recommended that if a special permit is to be granted it be contingent on submission to the planning department of sufficient site design detail to properly evaluate this project. Items not clearly thought through: van turning radius, Post Office Square Road drive cuts at sidewalk, site drainage and landscape details, and details of awnings, doors, and changes to the wall and windows, awnings.

Respectfully submitted,

The DRB

Distribution: Planning Department (Planning@actonma.gov), Select Board (sb@actonma.gov), Proponents (blace2@verizon.net).

The mission of the Design Review Board is to promote attractive development in Acton and enhance the overall quality of life for Acton residents. The DRB serves the Board of Selectmen in an advisory capacity regarding proposed commercial development and may, at the request of other Town Boards, provide design guidance on certain non-commercial development within the jurisdiction of the other Town Boards. To that end, the Design Review Board publishes Design Review Guidelines for the Town for mixed-use, commercial and residential developments of 4-or-more units.