

Planning & Real Estate Consultants

September 16, 2020

Planning Board
Township of Berkeley Heights
29 Park Avenue
Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922

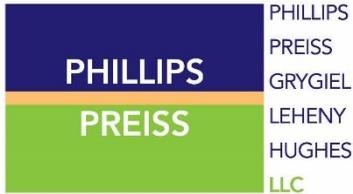
**Re: Planning Review #1
Application #SP-5-20
Amendments to Site Plan (SP-9-18)
Block 702, Lot 13
450 Springfield Avenue
Lockhern Property Urban Renewal, LLC
Former Movie Theatre Redevelopment Area**

Dear Chairman Einbinder and Members of the Board:

The present application concerns the redevelopment project by Lockhern Property Urban Renewal, LLC (titled “the Terrace at Berkeley Heights”) on Block 702, Lot 13 in the Former Movie Theatre Redevelopment Area. The applicant had previously submitted Application #SP-9-18 in connection with the project and was granted preliminary and final site plan approval from this Board on September 17, 2018. The applicant presently requests approval for amendments to the previous site plan, including the replacement of the proposed walkable alley with landscaping, building exterior changes, and other related improvements.

Documents Reviewed

- Denial of Application Letter for “450 Springfield Ave Block: 702 Lot: 13” by Thomas A. Bocko, Zoning Officer, dated July 17, 2020.
- Letter entitled “Site Plan of Lockhern Property Urban Renewal, LLC (the “Applicant”) for Block 702, Lot 13 (450 Springfield Ave.), Berkeley Heights (the “Property”) Application No. SP-9-18” from Patrick J. McAuley of Connell Foley LLP to Connie Valenti, Planning Board Secretary of the Township of Berkeley Heights, dated July 22, 2020.
- Letter entitled “Site Plan of Lockhern Property Urban Renewal, LLC (the “Applicant”) for Block 702, Lot 13 (450 Springfield Ave.), Berkeley Heights (the “Property”) Application No. SP-9-18” from Patrick J. McAuley of Connell Foley LLP to Connie Valenti, Planning Board Secretary of the Township of Berkeley Heights, dated August 13, 2020.



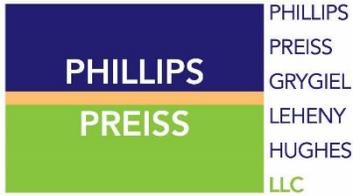
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- Elevation Plan entitled “Elevation Comparison for Four Story Mixed Use Building The Terrace at Berkeley Heights,” prepared by Rotwein + Blake, dated July 17, 2020.
- Site Plan entitled “Layout Plan Comparison for the Terrace at Berkeley Heights Layout and Dimensioning Plan,” prepared by Bowman Consulting, dated July 17, 2020.
- Landscape Plan entitled “Landscape Plan Comparison for the Terrace at Berkeley Heights Landscape Plan,” prepared by Bowman Consulting, dated July 17, 2020.
- Redevelopment Plan for the Former Movie Theatre (Block 702, Lot 13) 450 Springfield Avenue, prepared by Harbor Consultants, Inc., dated March 30, 2017.
- Planning Board Resolution of Approval for Application No.: SP-9-18 adopted September 17, 2018.

Site and Location

The subject property is a 1.027-acre tract with approximately 140 feet of frontage along Springfield Avenue. The Sherman Avenue right-of-way traverses the property in a northeast-southwest direction. The property is currently developed with a single-story commercial building between Springfield Avenue and Sherman Avenue, and a surface parking lot to the rear of the property east of Sherman Avenue. A driveway is located along the eastern property line connecting Springfield Avenue and Sherman Avenue, and providing access to the building entrance. Lawn areas are provided along the Springfield Avenue frontage and around the building, and a sidewalk connects the building entrance and the rear parking lots.

The property is commonly known as 450 Springfield Avenue and is located in a central location within Downtown Berkeley Heights. The surrounding land uses consist of residential uses at various densities, mixed residential and commercial developments, and many commercial uses. The property is adjacent to the Station Court apartments, a surface parking lot, and a single-family residence to the west. Two mixed-use buildings are located to the northwest on the other side of Springfield Avenue. To the south is the site of the Stratton House redevelopment project. To the east and generally along Springfield Avenue in the vicinity are a number of retail, service businesses, and medical offices.



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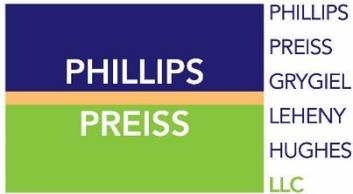
Proposed Development

Pursuant to aforementioned resolution dated September 17, 2018, the applicant originally obtained approval to construct a three-story mixed-use building over an underground parking garage with approximately 4,000 square feet of retail and 20 residential units (including 3 affordable). The garage would contain 25 parking spaces, and an additional 28 parking spaces would be provided via the rear surface parking lot. The main building entrance is located on Springfield Avenue while the retail space faces Sherman Avenue and takes up a northeastern portion of the ground floor. Other major improvements included an outdoor paver plaza area along the eastern and southern building facades, a patio/amenity space along the northeastern facade of the building, realignment and streetscape improvements to Sherman Avenue, and streetscape improvements to Springfield Avenue.

Relevant to the present application, the paver plaza area was originally proposed to be a “L” shape with a walkable alleyway extending along the eastern-most façade of the building that curves to open towards a wider plaza area along the southern facade. The applicant now proposes to eliminate the alleyway portion along the eastern façade and replace it with landscaping. A seat wall will be installed at the boundary between the newly proposed landscape area and paver plaza area. According to the comparison landscaping plan, the new landscaped area will consist of 3 American Holly trees, 3 Nannyberry shrubs, and 6 Burgundy Switch grasses.

The applicant notes that the grade of the newly proposed landscaped area slopes upward by 10 feet in elevation from the top of the seat wall to the adjacent patio/amenity space. In order to accommodate the topography and the change in site design, the applicant also proposes several alterations to the eastern building façade facing the proposed landscaped area. Most notably, the applicant proposes to eliminate the alleyway entrance and the insulated vision glass and canopy for the retail space. The new ground level façade will have 1 two-panel window near the retail entrance encased within a simulated stone veneer façade, which will match the color and treatment on the upper stories. The area above the original alleyway entrance for storing HVAC equipment will also be changed from two separate fenced areas separated by brick columns to one area enclosed by a red cedar privacy fence.

Finally, throughout the upper story building facades, the applicant proposes to replace the previously approved single-hung windows with casement style windows. The applicant indicates that this is because of negative reviews for the manufacturer of the single hung windows.



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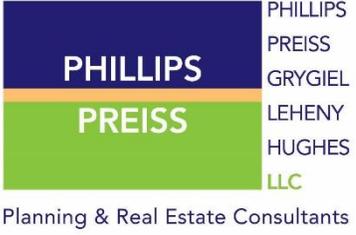
Compliance

The proposed development is subject to the standards set forth in the Former Movie Theatre Redevelopment Plan. The proposed changes to the paver alleyway and the building exterior do not trigger deviations from the standards in the Redevelopment Plan, nor do they impact the conditions for the previously approved variances. As such, no variances or waivers are identified at this time.

Planning Comments

1. The applicant should provide testimony regarding the work completed thus far on the project and the reasons for the proposed changes.
2. The applicant should clarify if any interior changes to the retail space are proposed, in light of the substantial reduction to fenestration and natural lighting from the northeast elevation due to the elimination of the storefront windows and the new landscaped area.
3. Pursuant to Section 3.2.E of the Redevelopment Plan, the applicant is required to provide an outdoor plaza space contiguous to the retail space that is at least 3,500 square feet. Based on the scaling of the layout plan, it appears that the space exceeds this requirement even after the elimination of the alley. However, the applicant should provide the exact measurement of the remaining plaza space and confirm compliance with this standard.
4. Certain previously approved elements are missing from the “Proposed” Elevations compared to the “Approved” Elevations. Namely, the decorative brackets at the cornice and canopy signs are not shown on any of the “Proposed” facades. The applicant should clarify if any changes are proposed to these elements as well.
5. The applicant should confirm that all streetscape improvements will be in accordance with the Part 19 Design Standards.
6. We additionally defer to the Township engineer in regards to grading, paving, lighting, erosion and sediment control, drainage and stormwater management, and other site design elements that may be impacted by the changes.

We trust that the above information is responsive to your needs.



Respectfully submitted,

Keenan Hughes, PP, AICP