

January 30, 2009

Portland TownPlace Design Statement

Project Narrative

This narrative has been prepared by the following members of the design team.

John A. Matthews, Architect - Architecture & Planning

Stephanie Fuss Associates, LLC - Landscape Architecture

LRC Group - Civil Engineering

Milone & McBroom, Inc. - Traffic Engineering

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Design Goals

The Portland TownPlace design team was charged with creating a vital development for downtown Portland on the 14.89 acre site of the former Elmcrest Hospital plus other parcels. Some of the design goals for the project were to create:

- A mixed use development containing office, retail, restaurant and residential components
- A pedestrian scale streetscape along Route 66
- Connections to the surrounding neighborhoods and downtown
- A design which utilized elements unique to Portland and the site
- A "Town Center" or "Town Green" where people could gather
- A place where a person could park once and walk to a variety of establishments
- A walkable center where people could live, work and shop without relying on a car

Other design goals were to create an economically successful project that would be an asset to the Town of Portland. And, of course, it had to be a safe, attractive, environmentally responsible project conforming to all Town, State and Federal regulations.

We believe that this exciting design achieves all these goals. The following narratives describe the overall design, architecture, engineering and landscape architecture proposed for the site.

Project Overview

EXISTING SITE

The site is located in the Town of Portland, CT near the intersection of Main Street (Route 66 & 17) and Marlborough Street (Route 66). It is bounded on the north by Marlborough Street, on the east by Perry Avenue, on the south by an industrial area, on the south west by properties on Main Street, and on the west by Main Street and a State owned parcel at the intersection of Main and Marlborough Streets.

The fully developed parcel contains 14.89 acres. There are more than 25 major existing structures with accessory outbuildings, recreational areas, walks, parking lots and utilities. There are also many large specimen trees on the property.

Generally, the topography slopes diagonally from a high point of 108 on Perry Avenue to a low point of 70 at the southwest corner of the site near the gas station on Main Street.

PROPOSED SITE

All but two of the existing structures on site will be demolished as part of this plan. One structure is a large white "shingle style" house on Marlborough Street designated as "Building J" on the plan. The other is a residence on Perry Avenue which is in a life estate. This property will revert to the owner's of Portland TownPlace.

Two other structures on site will be partially replicated as part of the streetscape for Marlborough Street. These buildings are shown as "K" and "L" on the plan.

The existing topography will have to be modified in order create a usable mixed use development. A ninety to one hundred-thirty five foot deep stretch of land along Marlborough Street will remain at its present elevation. This will preserve the existing house and specimen trees in this area. The remainder of the site will be re-graded so that the parking area slopes down towards the south end of the property, placing the largest structure (Building E, F &G) at the low end of the site. This grading approach places the new streetscape at street level and diminishes the impact of the parking field and largest structure from the view on Marlborough Street.

The proposed entrance to Portland TownPlace is at the existing entrance to Elmcrest, where there are also existing curb cuts in the median. The entrance and exit lanes are separated by a landscaped median and are flanked by sidewalks and low brownstone faced walls.

Going clockwise around the site from the entrance, Building A stretches along Marlborough Street, forming the eastern side of the new streetscape. This two-story building contains retail on the first floor and 12 residential units on the upper floor. The west side of the building has an outdoor patio, entrances to the retail shops are from the south side as well as the entrances to the residences.

Building B extends southerly along Perry Avenue. These are 10 attached town homes. The garages and front doors are on the west side of the building facing the parking lot, while the fenced private yards face Perry Avenue. South of Building B is the life-residence house, which at this time will remain as is.

Building C is a 6 level structure with retail and office plus 5 residential units on the first floor, 46 residences above and a parking garage below. An outdoor patio is provided for a retail use on the north west side of the building and another outdoor patio along with a common room for use by the residents is on the east side of the building.

Emergency vehicle access into Portland TownPlace is located just south of Building C. from Perry Avenue. This will be a gated entrance. There will be no regular vehicular access in or out of the site from Perry Avenue.

Building D, located to the west of Building C, is a one level branch bank with a double drive-up window.

The largest structure on site is attached Buildings E, F & G. This is the main retail structure on the site and is located eight to fourteen feet below Marlborough Street. The structure is divided into three buildings for different tenants. It has been designed to provide the backdrop for the center as it faces the main parking field. All loading and service will occur at the rear of the building which is adjacent to the industrial area to the south of the site.

Building H (a proposed pharmacy) is located to the north west of E, F & G. This portion of the property has frontage on Main Street, but the entrance to the building is in the north east corner. The drive thru is located at the back of the building, or the west side, with loading and service occurring on the south side. The drive thru and service areas are screened from Main Street by grading, a low brownstone faced wall topped with a screen fence, and extensive landscaping. These areas will not be visible from Main Street.

Building I, a proposed restaurant is located north of H. It sits on the corner of Main and Marlborough Streets. The loading area is screened from Main Street by the same elements that screen Building H from Main Street. There are outdoor dining patios on the north and south sides of the building. The entrance is located on the side of the building facing the parking lot.

Building J is located to the east of the restaurant. This is the existing white shingle style house being renovated and saved in-place. It may have an office or medical use along with 2 residential units on the upper floor. Later additions to the rear of this structure are being removed.

The "Green" is located between Buildings J and K. It is about one-half acre in size and adjacent to the proposed sidewalk on Marlborough Street. There are six large specimen trees here that will be saved. A gazebo will also be located here along with benches and walkways connecting Marlborough Street to the interior of the project.

Building K is to the east of the "Green". This is an office building with 4 residential units on the upper level that has been designed in the style of an existing structure on site utilizing any components that are salvageable from the existing structure. It is similar in scale to Building J and is part of the fabric of the streetscape.

Building L is separated from Building K by a parking lot. It is also a replicated building, similar to an existing stucco structure on site. Salvaged components will be utilized in the construction of this building. It will have an office use on the first floor as well as 3 residential units on the upper level.

Building I (the restaurant), J (existing building to remain), the "Green", and Buildings K, L and A form the structure on the streetscape on Marlborough Street. These buildings are at a relatively small scale, two stories high and close to the street (about 35' from the curb line). Together with the site amenities proposed for the streetscape they will form a new look for Marlborough Street, creating an interesting pedestrian and vehicular experience for this part of Portland. They will also screen the larger development behind.

Architecture

The Town of Portland has a richness of architectural fabric, consisting of a multitude of materials, styles, shapes & finishes. We have used a common thread of brownstone accents, with horizontal siding, stucco, pitched shingled & metal roofs that can be found thruout the town. Each of the twelve buildings proposed for the site are each unique to itself, using the common elements mentioned above to blend them together as a unique cohesive mixed use center. We feel that there is enough use of repeating elements & materials that make this successful. This variety will provide the center with a "synergy" that would not occur if all the buildings "were the same". It is this same variety that gives the Town of Portland its unique architectural character, and we feel that Portland TownPlace will be a great contributor to continue that character.

Landscape Architecture

STREETSCAPE

Buildings I, J, K, L and A provide the backdrop for the new streetscape along Marlborough Street. These 2 story buildings are located close to the street and are in scale with the surrounding area. A sidewalk separated from the roadway by a grass strip extends from the east end of the project's frontage onto the State property on the corner of Main and Marlborough, connecting to the proposed crosswalk (by others) at the corner. A fence will be located behind the sidewalk on the Portland TownPlace parcel. This fence will be the re-furbished wrought iron fence that presently exists on the site. If the quantity of existing fence is not sufficient to complete the length of the frontage, replicated fence panels will be used.

Pedestrian scale street lights and street trees will also be located along Marlborough Street to enhance the pedestrian experience and reinforce the impact of the new development.

A new "Town Green" will be located along Marlborough Street between Buildings J and K. This half acre parcel will be accessible from the sidewalk on Marlborough Street and will provide a pedestrian access into the site. It will contain a new gazebo, pedestrian scale lighting and benches. This is also the area where several large and noteworthy specimen trees are located. These will be preserved and will help to create a historic and established feel for the new green.

PASSIVE AND ACTIVE RECREATION

Portland TownPlace has been designed to provide a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities. Most important of these is the internal pedestrian circulation system and the pedestrian connections to the surround neighborhood.

The green provides the largest area for recreation. It is connected to the surrounding community on the north by the sidewalk along Marlborough Street. South of the "Green" is a 25 foot wide linear pedestrian connection through the parking lot to the buildings at the rear of the site. This green strip contains a sinuous walk, sitting areas paved with decorative pavers, trees, shrubs and lights. All portions of the site are accessible to pedestrians through a system of walks and crosswalks. Connections to the surrounding neighborhood are located along Perry Avenue (at Building A and Building C), at the project entrance (double sidewalks flanking the entrance drive) and at the corner of Main and Marlborough Streets (on State property).

Residents of Portland TownPlace will also have private recreation areas. The townhomes each have a private back yard, while tower residents have private terraces, a private community patio and a landscaped walk from the patio to the rear of the building.

Areas for people-watching and gathering have also been provided at Buildings I (the restaurant) A, and C. These are outdoor dining terraces which can be enjoyed during the warmer months and will contribute to the vibrancy of Portland TownPlace.

LANDSCAPING

Portland TownPlace has been landscaped with an extensive variety of shade trees, evergreens, shrubs perennials and annuals. Over half the varieties specified are native in origin. In addition, all lawn areas are to be seeded with a turf type tall fescue mixture. Native plants and turf type tall fescues are hardy and (once established) drought tolerant, resistant to most pests and diseases, require less fertilizer and mowing, help to restore regional landscapes and reduce maintenance costs.

Over 80 shade trees with a caliper of 2 to 2.5 inches have been located in parking areas and along roadways. These are in addition to the large existing trees that are being preserved. Over 40 large columnar trees (*Acer Rubrum* 'Armstrong' and *Fagus Sylvatica* 'Dawyckii Purple') are also being specified in areas where large canopied trees are not practical.

All parking lot islands have been landscaped with evergreen shrubs and perennials. In addition ornamental flowering trees and evergreens have been provided to create year round interest.

Site Engineering

Site Layout features including building positioning; provide for adequate, convenient safe parking; clear conveyance drive aisles; safe pedestrian corridors; and loading, bus and emergency vehicle routes were all factors in designing this site plan from an engineering aspect. This was accomplished by addressing the following:

Building Positioning – As one of the center’s anchor tenant is anticipated to be a grocery store, the building location and orientation must factor in screening of the loading and mechanical areas. This was accomplished by placing the “rears” of our two (2) largest tenants facing the existing industrial complex to the south of our parcel and away from the three town roads. All of the other buildings were positioned around the perimeter of the parcel. This not only showcases the building architecture but allows the buildings to aid in screening the parking areas.

Parking and Pedestrian Corridors – By placing the buildings around the perimeter of the site, a well landscaped parking area with a very “walkable” sidewalk network system is positioned in the center of the site. Handicapped parking spaces exceeding state code requirements have been positioned throughout the site in safe, convenient locations. A decorative lighting system is being proposed which safely lights the public area, while not allowing light pollution to impact adjacent property owners. Also, cart corals spaces have been incorporated for the customer convenience.

Vehicle Separation – Separation of customer and loading vehicles is accomplished by providing clear, direct truck routes avoiding the need for the bulk of loading vehicles to drive through customer areas. Loading vehicles for building H and I traverse the perimeter of the parking, loop around the rear of building E, F and G avoiding the need to travel along the front of buildings E, F and G. Emergency vehicle routes and transit bus drop-off/pick-up areas are provided.

Utilities – The parcel is serviced by all public utilities having the capacity to handle the service requirement needs for the development. The proposed drainage system includes 50 sumped catch basin, 5 particle separation units and over 1,000 LF of underground detention piping which all connect into an existing State drainage system located in Main Street.

Traffic

It is expected that the proposed Portland TownPlace development would have approximately 400 (220 in/180 out), 1,442 (723 in/719 out) and 1,565 (798 in/767 out) vehicle trips during the weekday morning, afternoon and midday Saturday peak hours, respectively. A portion of these trips would not be new to area roadways, but would

consist of pass-by traffic. A capacity analysis of the intersections of Marlborough Street at the site driveway and Marlborough Street at Main Street shows that the traffic associated with Portland TownPlace can be adequately accommodated at these key locations

The mix of land uses on-site provides opportunities for shared parking. In light of this fact, the peak parking demand for Portland TownPlace is anticipated to be less than that of a single use development of similar scale, and significantly less than the sum of the peak demands of each of the individual land uses.

A review of the site driveway shows that the proposed egress has sufficient space to accommodate anticipated vehicle queues during peak periods. The intersection sightline distance looking in each direction from the location of the proposed site driveway meets Connecticut Department of Transportation guidelines based on the travel speeds on Marlborough Street.

Conclusion

The developers and design team have carefully planned, organized & designed a mixed use development in Portland TownPlace, that respects Portland's heritage and will enhance and strengthen the town center. Much care & effort has gone into the development of this design which responds to the many hours of meetings with the town's sub-committee & staff, as well as potential users and tenants. This will result in a successful place to live, work and shop in the center of Portland.