



TOWN OF ACTON
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
Review Memorandum: 976 Main Street
Room 9, Town Hall
November 01, 2017

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

Applicant: Dave Duane for Machine Tools.

Documents Reviewed: As this project has not been officially submitted to the planning department, materials reviewed were those brought to the meeting by the applicant. Documents presented include a preliminary proposed site plan and a proposed building rendering from the parking lot, the existing site plan, as well as photos of the exterior of the existing building and site taken from the existing parking lot, and photos of the Machine Tools property located in Sudbury, MA.

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.

Dave Duane provided a brief overview of the Machine Tools business operation that focuses on customizing high tech machinery for the North American market. He explained how the Acton property has generally been used to date for equipment storage and occasional equipment demonstrations. With an anticipated significant increase in the volume of sales of some sophisticated measuring equipment the company is now marketing, Machine Tools intends to utilize the Acton property for many more frequent demonstrations and therefore, has a desire to improve the property for the anticipated additional staff as well as to create a clean room space for the measuring equipment and wishes to impart the company's high tech brand onto the arrival face of the building and adjacent site.

Dave presented his proposal to add a new one story contemporary glass wrapped office and meeting space addition onto the parking lot and Main Street facing side of the existing building that will replace an existing 1980s era brick and glass entrance, to construct a new metal panel clad face across the front of the building scaled to completely hide the existing metal building

structure and awkward roof line, to screen much of the existing former lumber pick up yard, and to update the parking lot and entrance with some new landscaping and new parking lot lighting.

The DRB offered the following comments and suggestions concerning the proposal as presented.

1. Given the significant scale of the parking lot in relation to the arrival sequence to the proposed new building face, landscape islands within the parking lot and interesting hardscape treatment, such as stone walls along the walkway(s) leading to the building should be considered as a part of the overall upgrade design concept. There exists an overabundance of parking capacity, (approx. 300), which could be reduced without impact to the business with the introduction of landscape islands that would break up the existing sea of pavement, improve site permeability, and offer a more inviting visual of the facility from Main Street. Ideally a section of the parking lot could be eliminated completely and returned to greenscape.
2. The existing structures in the former lumber yard should be demolished so as to not conflict with the proposed new architectural face of the building as well as to not interfere with the proposed new screening of the yard.
3. The proposed new office and meeting room addition could be increased in height by a couple of feet, offering a higher ceiling within the new interior, as well as proportionally fitting better against the fairly tall new metal panel front of the building.

In general the DRB believes the proposal has potential to offer a significant improvement to the existing property. The contemporary use of a glass enclosed office addition, and the large new metal panel faced front to the building with the corporate logo backlit feels appropriate for the business location. Suggestions of stone wall lined walkways and integrating some landscape islands within the parking lot will go a long way to forming a coordinated and contextually pleasing new front face for the property. The DRB requests that Dave Duane return when the plans have progressed, inclusive of site and landscaping design documents.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Darlow
DRB Member