



January 24, 2014

City of Ithaca Planning Department  
ATTN: Lisa Nicholas  
108 East Green Street  
Ithaca, New York 14850

Reference: **Site Plan Review for Proposed  
Holiday Inn Express Hotel  
371 Elmira Road  
Ithaca, New York 14850  
Optima Project 13-288**

Dear Lisa,

We are pleased to submit the following itemized responses to the City's review comments issued by the various departments over the past couple months:

City of Ithaca Planning & Development Board - CAC

Comment 1:

Larger trees should be included in the planting design to provide more shade and heat abatement and to reinforce the screening on the retaining wall between the hotel and the residential wooded area beyond.

Response 1:

**Larger shade trees (Shademaster Honeylocust and Red Sunset Maple) have been added to the revised Site Landscape Plan (Sheet C-4.0) to reinforce the screening and for heat abatements as requested.**

Comment 2:

The proposed 4" stone subbase beneath the porous pavement area at the entrance of the driveway is inadequate for draining and retaining the stormwater that would be allowed through the porous pavement. Instead we recommend the entire parking lot be porous pavement with a 24 inch layer of structural soil to provide stormwater retention beneath the pavement.

**Response 2:**

**The proposed 4" subbase beneath the porous pavement area on the revised Detail E on Sheet C-1.4 has been revised to the ¾" fractured washed open-graded #57 aggregate with minimum porosity of 32% as requested. The entire parking lot has also been changed to porous pavement as requested, with a 25-inch minimum layer of storage volume for stormwater detention beneath the porous pavement as requested.**

City of Ithaca Transportation Engineer – Tim Logue

**Comment 1:**

The current site plan indicates an existing sidewalk along Elmira Road to remain. This existing sidewalk is not located within the Elmira Road right-of-way but is on private property. Now is the opportunity to consider relocation and reconstruction of a new sidewalk within the right-of-way since the existing sidewalk will be damaged anyway during construction. This will provide more development space within the site parcel since there should be some buffer space between the sidewalk and the building face is available (5 feet minimum for pedestrian use). If the existing sidewalk remains in its current location an easement must be granted and any concrete sidewalk damaged during construction should be repaired.

**Response 1:**

**The existing sidewalk along Elmira Road has been removed and replaced with a new sidewalk as requested on all the revised site plans.**

**Comment 2:**

The new lawn sign, water feature, and northern corner of the new hotel building present sight obstructions for vehicles exiting the driveway. Please present verification that the proposed location of these site features allows for adequately safe sight distances and that these items are in conformance with zoning setback requirements.

**Response 2:**

**The new lawn sign, water feature, and northern corner of the new hotel building have been revised and relocated to be in conformance with zoning setbacks as requested on all revised site plans. AASHTO Minimum Required Safe Sight Distance lines have been added to the revised Site Layout Plan (Sheet C-1.0) in order to demonstrate that the new lawn sign, water feature, and corner of the new hotel allow for adequate safe site distances as requested.**

Director of Zoning Administration – Phyllis Radke

**Comment 1:**

Since the proposed project is larger than 10,000 square feet in area, the zoning code requires two (2) loading spaces be added to the parking area. Each loading space shall be 450 square feet in area minimum.

**Response 1:**

**Two new loading spaces (combined total of 924 square feet or 462 square feet per loading space) have been added to all revised site plans as requested.**

**Comment 2:**

The two separate parcels (371 Elmira Road in the front and 652 Spencer Road in the rear) must be consolidated into one single parcel before approval can be granted.

**Response 2:**

**The Owner's Attorney is currently in process of legally combining both parcels into a single parcel as requested. The Site Design Engineer (Optima Design) is not legally responsible for addressing this City request. Please contact the Owner (Jay Patel) directly at (716) 481-9888 for any further questions regarding the status of this parcel consolidation.**

City of Ithaca Common Council – Cynthia Brock

**Comment 1:**

The Common Council requests a new sidewalk be installed within the Spencer Road right-of-way at the rear of the site.

**Response 1:**

**A new sidewalk within the Spencer Road right-of-way has been added to all revised site plans as requested.**

**Comment 2:**

The Common Council requests the addition of a new pedestrian path from the new sidewalk on Spencer Road through the property to the sidewalk on Elmira Road. The path should be appropriately graded for handicap access for pedestrians and strollers.

**Response 2:**

**While the Common Council's request for the addition of a new pedestrian path has been considered, it cannot be added to the revised site plan for the following reasons: 1) In order to create a handicap accessible path for pedestrians and strollers as requested by the Common Council, a minimum pedestrian path of 623 linear feet would be required in order to make the surface slope of the ramp comply with the maximum allowable ANSI slope requirement over the 12-½ foot drop from the parking lot to finished grade along Spencer Road. This paved area behind the rear proposed parking lot would total 3,115 square feet of additional impervious area, which would be approximately 46% lost landscaping in the rear of the property, making it impossible to meet the additional revision requests of the City Forrester in her review comments. Please refer to the Alternate Site Plan enclosed with the**

revised site plans showing this pedestrian path superimposed onto the site plan; 2) The pedestrian pathway cutting through the site to the Elmira Road right-of-way would eliminate 6 parking spaces violating the minimum required parking required by City Code. As can be seen on the Alternate Site Plan enclosed with the revised site plans, there is no more physical space on the site where the 6 eliminated parking spaces can be geometrically located; 3) In order to avoid the 6 lost parking spaces discussed in the previous point above, alternate pedestrian pathways would be along the southern edge of the site or the northern edge of the site between the proposed parking lot and the property line. As can be seen on the Alternate Site Plan enclosed with the revised site plans, either alternate pedestrian pathway would eliminate the required landscape area and be in violation of the City Code for not meeting the minimum required side pavement setbacks.

Planning Board (Public Hearing Project Review Comments & Revision Requests)

Comment 1:

If the existing sidewalk along Elmira Road is to be removed and replaced as requested by the City of Ithaca Traffic Engineer, please locate the new sidewalk in such a way to avoid damaging the existing trees if they are being preserved and protected.

Response 1:

**The City Forester has requested all existing ash trees within the Elmira Road right-of-way to be removed and replaced with Gleditsia Triacanthos because of the Emerald Ash Borer disease.**

Comment 2:

The proposed board-on-board fence along the property line abutting neighboring residences should be changed to a solid (opaque) privacy fence without pickets or spaces in order to meet the minimum required screening requirements of the Zoning Code.

Response 2:

**The proposed board-on-board fence (Detail A on Sheet C-1.4) has been revised to a solid (opaque) privacy fence without pickets or spaces as requested in order to meet the minimum required screening requirements of the Zoning Code.**

Comment 3:

Replace the row of proposed crabapple trees on the 2nd tier of the proposed retaining wall with a row of screening evergreens (such as arborvitae).

Response 3:

**The row of proposed crabapple trees on the 2<sup>nd</sup> tier of the proposed retaining wall has been replaced with a row of screening evergreens (Picea Pungens) on the revised Site Landscape Plan (C-4.0) as**

**requested. The City Forester has requested arborvitae not be used however, in order to avoid damage from deer.**

**Comment 4:**

Add a row of canopy street trees along the Spencer Road right-of-way.

**Response 4:**

**A row of canopy street trees has been added to the revised Site Landscape Plan (Sheet C-4.0) along the Spencer Road right-of-way as requested.**

**Comment 5:**

The design of the proposed hotel façade needs to have more 3-dimensional articulation especially around the windows. In order to differentiate the design of the hotel from the existing Fairfield Inn nearby, please consider adding louver shades to the windows, or else at least revise the wall section of the façade to bump out the face of the façade as far as possible and set the window pane as deep as possible, because the proposed windows and facade look too flat in the current rendered elevation provided by the Architect of Record.

**Comment 5:**

**In order to differentiate the design of the hotel from the existing Fairfield Inn nearby, the Architect of Record has revised the wall section of the façade to bump out the face of the façade as far as possible and set the proposed window panes back as deep as possible. Please refer to the partial rendering enclosed with the revised site plan package.**

**Comment 6:**

Add additional bicycle racks at the main entrance to the hotel.

**Comment 6:**

**Additional bicycle racks have been added to all revised site plans at the main entrance to the hotel as requested.**

**Comment 7:**

Screen the transformer with higher, denser hedge to make it less visible from Elmira Road.

**Comment 7:**

**The transformer has been screened with additional higher denser hedge (Spartan Juniper) on the revised Site Landscape Plan (Sheet C-4.0) to make it less visible from Elmira Road as requested.**

City of Ithaca Forestry Division – Jeanne Grace (City Forester)

Comment 1:

The proposed Thuja occidentalis on the Site Landscape Plan will likely be heavily browsed by deer, and will never develop into a screening hedge as described. We suggest selecting an alternate species.

**Response 1:**

**The proposed thuja occidentalis species has been replaced with an alternate species on the revised Site Landscape Plan (Sheet C-4.0) as requested.**

Comment 2:

The proposed Hemerocallis (day lilies) on the Site Landscape Plan may also see quite a bit of deer damage. Please consider replacing with an alternate species.

**Response 2:**

**The proposed day lillies species has been replaced with an alternate species on the revised Site Landscape Plan (Sheet C-4.0) as requested in order to eliminate deer damage.**

Comment 3:

Euonymus alatus (burning bush) is an invasive species in Tompkins County. Please consider replacing with an alternate species.

**Response 3:**

**The proposed burning bush species has been replaced with an alternate species on the revised Site Landscape Plan (Sheet C-4.0) as requested.**

Comment 4:

Guying trees with wire and hose is out of date, and no longer recommended. If trees need to be guyed, nylon straps (such as Arbortie) are recommended. And guying should be removed after 1 year.

**Response 4:**

**The tree detail on Sheet C-4.1 has been revised showing the guying removed as requested.**

Comment 5:

Remove wire baskets completely from B&B trees at the time of planting.

**Response 5:**

**A note requiring wire baskets to be completely removed from B&B trees at the time of planting has been added to the revised Landscape Details (Sheet C-4.1) as requested.**

Comment 6:

Trees should be planted before leaf out (early May) or after leaf drop (early November), not mid summer. Successful tree planting should be done based on the season, not the schedule of building completion.

Response 6:

**A note requiring tree plantings before leaf out (early May) or after leaf drop (early November) instead of mid summer has been added to the revised Site Landscape Plan (Sheet C-4.0) as requested.**

Comment 7:

Regarding the existing trees along the Elmira Road frontage: The street trees currently present on the site are ash, which have an uncertain future with the impending arrival of Emerald Ash Borer. Also the new water line and gas line installation will conflict with current tree location. Therefore removal of these existing trees and replacement with 2 new Gleditsia triacanthos may be a better option as long as landscape notes #3, 4 & 5 regarding soil preparation prior to planting are adhered to.

Response 7:

**All existing ash trees within the Elmira Road right-of-way have been removed and replaced with Gleditsia Triacanthos on the revised Site Landscape Plan (Sheet C-4.0) as requested.**

Attached please find twenty-seven (27) reduced copies and two (2) full sized stamped revised site plans and details reflecting the above changes that you have requested. Revisions have been labeled, flagged, and dated for clarity. Please call us if you have any other questions or need any other additional information.

We trust the attached shall be satisfactory. Please notify us in writing of plan approval.

Thank you,

**OPTIMA DESIGN & ENGINEERING, PLLC**

*Andrew Terragnoli*

Andrew Terragnoli, P.E.  
Managing Member

Attachments