

201 College Avenue

City of Ithaca, New York

Date: 3.29.2016



Project Description

The project involves the construction of a 5 story apartment building at the corner of College Avenue and Bool Street, in the MU-1 Collegetown form district, on a .173 acre lot. The building will contain 44 dwelling units with 76 bedrooms.

Site Improvements

The site is currently occupied by a 2-story wood framed house containing 1 apartment with 12 bedrooms, and gravel parking area. This house is in very bad condition and will be deconstructed. The site will be fully redeveloped with the new building in conformance with the MU-1 requirements.

Zoning Compliance

Requirements:

The MU-1 form district has a 3500sf lot size minimum for multi-family, and allows buildings to cover 70% of their lot. There is a height allowance of 5 stories and 70' above grade plane. The first level floor to floor height is 10' minimum for residential uses, and upper floors must be 9' floor to floor minimum. There is a 75' façade length maximum, a requirement for a functional entry every 35' along the street frontage, and a 10% greenspace requirement. There is no automobile parking requirement. The bike parking requirement is 1 per 5 bedrooms.

Proposed conditions:

The proposed building will occupy a 7515sf lot and will cover just under 70%. The building can comply with 5' front and side yard setbacks, and the 10' rear yard setback. However, with the encouragement of the Planning Board during sketch plan review in the interest of providing more open space on the College Avenue side for additional sidewalk or pedestrian amenities, the applicant will set the building back a further 4'-8" to provide a 9'-8" front yard and 7' rear yard. The applicant is applying to the BZA for a rear yard setback variance.

The site has a 17' difference in elevation from the southwest corner to the northeast corner, rising from 690.00 to 707.00. The average grade plane resulting from the proposed site plan is 696.50. The building will not exceed 70' above grade plane (766.50). See grading plan.

Because the site is a corner property, the façade length maximum of 75' applies to both the street elevations. Along College Avenue, the façade will be 48' wide and have a functional entry in the center, 24' from the corner. Along Bool Street, the building will be divided into two sections, each with a 52' long façade. A significant break will occur to separate the two masses of the building. Because this form district requires a 5' side yard setback, 2 separate buildings could be no less than 10' apart. Therefore, the project proposes to separate the two building masses with a 10' gap, placing the main apartment entry and elevator core back about 23' from the property line, thus creating two distinct masses. This concept was presented to City staff and informally deemed an appropriate interpretation of the façade length regulation. Because functional entries are required every 35' to activate the street façade, entries can be provided into the 2 first floor apartments facing Bool Street approximately 30' from the building corners, resulting in 3 functional entries along the Bool Street façade. However, during sketch plan review the applicant proposed eliminating these to provide more greenspace along this façade. The applicant is applying to the BZA for a variance from this requirement.

The required greenspace is 10% or 751sf, of which 75% must be vegetative cover. The project proposes approximately 1645sf (22%) vegetative cover around the site perimeter, without the two apartment entries. The remaining 8% of the site, approximately 750sf, will be devoted to the walkways necessary to access building entries.

A total of 16 bike parking spaces are required. There will be a ramp-accessed basement bike parking area for at least 20 bikes, and 4 bike parking spaces outdoors.

Program

The project proposes a total of 44 units on the property: (4) 3-bedroom, 3 bath units, (4) 4-bedroom, 2 bath units, (24) 1-bedroom loft units, and (12) 2-bedroom loft units, for a total of 76 bedrooms. The mix of units and location will appeal to upper classmen and graduate student renters.

The basement level will have a fitness room with windows looking out to the street. There will also be a basement bicycle garage for approximately 20 bikes with ramp access from a doorway on Bool Street. The space will have an air station and e-bike charging stations. A trash room will also be located in the basement so that trash receptacles will not be exposed to public view.

Stormwater

Because of the nature of the site as urban land, and its small size, there are no on-site stormwater facilities proposed, pending approval by the City's Stormwater Officer. Although not required, a best practice strategy which directs runoff to the vegetated perimeter around the building will filter stormwater from the roof, prior to its entry into the storm sewer system.

Landscape

A planting plan will be developed to address the street edge and side and rear yards, such that these spaces are a lush experience with interest throughout the seasons. All plantings will be selected to be naturally drought tolerant with no irrigation installed, and manual watering only required during the period of initial plant establishment. Strong consideration will be given for native plants.

Five trees will be removed from the site to construct the new building. There are currently no City street trees within the public right of way because of the narrowness of the right-of-way along both Bool Street and College Avenue. Because the MU-1 district begins what can be regarded as an "urban condition", sidewalks along both facades will be paved from the property line to the curb with five street trees planted in structural soil with a flexi-pave surface. Paving to the curb will improve pedestrian conditions and improve passenger access to vehicles parked in metered spaces along College Avenue.

There is no parking allowed within about 20' of the corner of Bool and College Avenues. This is an opportunity for a curb bulb-out to shorten the crossing distance across College Avenue, and provide more sidewalk space at the corner. The bump out will also allow for the relocation of a power pole (see "utilities and Energy" below).

Site Lighting

Lighting will be installed at building entries and to allow for safe access to the building. All light fixtures will be sharp cut off and dark-sky compliant.

Utilities and Energy

The water, sewer and electricity usage will be typical of residential development in the City of Ithaca and the current systems are more than capable of serving the new demand. Heating and cooling systems have not yet been designed, so the extent of fossil fuel use has yet to be determined. The owner is considering solar panels on the roof, since the building is on the edge of the MU1 zone and there will not be a taller building constructed to the south.

As a firm, STREAM Collaborative has accepted the Architecture 2030 Challenge, which means every project we design begins with a conversation about how we can achieve a net zero fossil fuel usage. In the year 2016, most of our buildings are being designed to reduce the overall fossil fuel usage by at least 70% compared to a conventional building of the same type and by 2030 all of our buildings will have zero carbon emissions. It is too early to commit to specific energy goals for this project, but we will do everything we can to exceed energy code minimum requirements.

Existing power lines intrude on the property and will need to be reconfigured to maintain the minimum required distance separation from the building façade. The owner is in negotiations with NYSEG to achieve this, and is proposing a curb bulb-out to facilitate better pole placement.

Traffic

The impact on automobile traffic of the new units is expected to be negligible. The site is well served by TCAT, offering access to Cornell, Downtown and other prime destinations. As such, residents are likely to make fewer than the average number of car trips. There is no parking requirement and as such no parking will be provided. This will discourage car ownership among residents. The building will have an internal ramp-accessed bike garage for residents, and outdoor bike parking for visitors in compliance with site plan review requirements. New +/-8'-8" to +/-12' wide sidewalks will be installed along both streets, including a new accessibility sidewalk ramp at the corner consistent with city current standards.

Site Photos

Figure 1: Existing house as seen from College Avenue.



Figure 2: Existing house facing Bool Street.



Figure 3: Google Earth view of site.

