

Memo

To: Plan Commission, Village Board

Fr: Trevor Fuller, Director of Planning & Community Development

Re: ACTION RE: PETITIONS RECEIVED BY FOX TRAIL DEVELOPMENT, LLC FOR THE PROPOSED OFFICE BUILDING LOCATED AT 2110 & 2120 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, PARCELS AL-63 & AL-64 – DESIGN EXCEPTION

Date: 11 January 2024

A request for a design exception was received from Fox Trail Development LLC. to allow for a larger build-to zone in the front and a smaller build-to zone in the rear, smaller frontage requirement, larger story height, parking in the front build-to zone, and placement of refuse storage and utility transformer for the proposed Somerville Architects & Engineers office building at 2110 & 2120 Riverside Drive (current vacant lot).

The property is classified as a “Riverfront Building” under the GXR (Riverfront Office-Residential Mix) zoning district. See the attached design exception request from the developer and staff comments. Site plan of the development is included in the next agenda item.

Staff can allow for flexibility through an administrative design exception, but only on certain items and to a certain degree. Some of the requested changes go beyond staff flexibility and require the Plan Commission and Village Board approval.

The design exception process is intended to authorize the granting of relief from strict compliance with the regulations when specific site features or characteristics of the subject property, including the presence of existing buildings, creates conditions that make strict compliance with applicable regulations impractical or undesirable. The exception provisions are also intended to recognize that alternative design solutions may result in equal or better implementation of the regulation's intended purpose and consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

Staff recommends the following:

- Larger build-to zone in the front of the building – approve request – a driveway is needed to run in front of the building due to grade challenges.
- Smaller build-to zone in the rear of the building – approve request, the overhang encroaches into the build-to area, however, the foundation wall of the building is almost entirely located within the build-to zone.
- Smaller frontage requirement, approve request, the proposed frontage is within 1’ of the allowable staff administrative approvable amount.
- Larger story height – approve request contingent on approving the larger front build-to zone. The intent of this requirement is to make the buildings more of pedestrian scale. However, if the building is set further back the intent is negligible.
- Parking in the front build-to zone – approve request – a driveway is needed to run in front of the building due to grade challenges. The proposed car parking runs along the necessary driveway and is almost exclusively concealed from the street due to natural grade change.
- Placement of refuse storage and utility transformer – approve request contingent on further detail provided to staff. The locations of the refuse storage and utility transformer are permissible by staff approval with screening and structural additions. Staff believes these requirements are met, but would like to see more detail.

The Plan Commission recommended approval of all design exceptions at the December 18, 2023 meeting.

The Village Board is asked to review the request and determine whether to approve, deny, or table the design exception request. If the decision is to table the request, a date or milestone should be included in the motion. The motion should include which requests are being approved or denied.



Village of Allouez

Design Exception Request (*Attachment*)

December 7, 2023

Name of Project: Somerville, Inc. – New Office Building

Address of Project: 2120 Riverside Dr.

Name of Developer: Fox Trail Development, LLC

Name of Owner: Fox Trail Development, LLC

Written Statement of Public Hearing Design Exceptions:

Summary:

- a. Fox Trail Development, LLC (*Somerville, Inc. – Architects & Engineers*) purchased the property in 2014 and began designing a new office building in 2017. A conceptual site and parking layout, floor plans and exterior massing concept was developed in 2017 based on the Village of Allouez zoning code in effect at the time of design.
- b. Further development of the design concept was postponed until early-fall of 2023. During the period of postponement, the Village of Allouez introduced a new zoning code – placing the property in the GXR District.
- c. With the unique character of the building design and specific adaptations to the project site (i.e. grades, views, optimal solar and wind orientations, etc.) it is the teams desire to maintain the original building design concept. Reviewing the concept with the new GXR District regulations, the following design exceptions are being proposed:

1. Build to zone:

- a. Primary frontage build-to-zone
 - i. Regulation: 10'-30'
 - ii. Proposed: 68'-1"
 1. The proposed primary frontage setback is being driven by the need for surface parking on site to serve the employees working in the office building, as well as periodic visitors.
 2. Existing grade on the sloping site drops approximately 20' from Riverside Dr. to the west property line along the Fox River Trail.

The site parking and vehicle circulation is designed in an L-shaped arrangement, to lengthen the travel distance and reduce steepness of grades. Grades too steep can be problematic for parking spaces and for maneuvering the drive aisles in the winter months.

3. The setback of the building is consistent with the existing building on the adjacent property to the north and other properties along this stretch of Riverside Dr.
- b. River/trail frontage build-to-zone
- i. Regulation: 15'-30'
 - ii. Proposed: 10'-0" (*at building overhang*)
 1. The building footprint is not parallel with the west property line, leaving only a portion of the northwest corner of the building less than 15' to the property line.
 2. The building envelope walls vary from 18'-6" to 31' from the property line, only a portion of the building overhang reduces the dimension to 10'-0".
 3. The outdoor terrace space and building envelope walls further south on the property are setback greater than 30' from the west property line, to accommodate a required on-site bio-retention basin. The property is also an irregular shape in this area and jogs 18' to the west.

2. Primary frontage lot line coverage:

- a. Regulation: 80% min.
- b. Proposed: $167'-11" \text{ (building)} / 247'-5" \text{ (property)} = 67.87\%$
 - i. The proposed building is unable to accomplish an 80% coverage due to the on-site parking needs. As described in exception no. 1 above, the L-shaped parking configuration with side yard parking is necessary to accommodate the grade change on the site.

3. Height (maximum height of stories):

- a. Regulation: Ground story = 14', all other stories = 12'
- b. Proposed: 23'-4"
 - i. A portion of the building includes an open concept design studio with a mezzanine integrated into this space. Consequently, where the mezzanine is adjacent to the open space, the story height is comparable to a two-story volume.
 - ii. The number of stories (3) is within the allowable min.-max. range and overall building height does not exceed regulations.

1. *Max. building height from the regulations is calculated as follows:*
 - a. *Ground story = 14' max.*
 - b. *Stories 2-5 = 12' max. (ea.)*
 - c. $14' + 12' + 12' + 12' + 12' = 62'$
2. Proposed building height is 45'-6" along the river facing elevation and 35'-8" along the street facing elevation.

4. Surface or accessory parking yard location:

- a. Regulation: Interior yard, limited side yard
- b. Proposed: In addition to the side yard parking that meets the requirements of "limited side yard parking" (*one double-loaded aisle with the center line of the aisle perpendicular to the street*), surface parking is proposed along the primary frontage.
 - i. As described in exception no. 1 above, the L-shaped parking configuration is necessary to accommodate the grade change on the site, as well as total parking space quantities.
 - ii. The setback of the parking from the property line and location of the retaining wall parallel with Riverside Dr. is consistent with the existing surface parking on the adjacent property to the north.

5. Refuse and recycling, utilities and loading yard location:

- a. Regulation: Interior only
- b. Proposed:
 - i. Refuse and recycling: Exterior of the building, within the surface parking lot along the north property line.
 1. Due to the sloping nature of the site, refuse and recycling containment integrated into the building enclosure would be problematic for disposal pick-up.
 2. The proposed solid-walled enclosure will be constructed with materials complementary to the building exterior.
 - ii. Utilities: The proposed transformer location is near the southeast corner of the property – between the building and parking.
 1. Due to limited available space on site and proximity to the building electrical room, the proposed location is most suitable.
 2. Grade at the transformer will be lower than Riverside Dr. and the area will be screened with evergreen plantings.