

Maplewood Post Office Redevelopment Plan

An Overview Including Sample Images and Drawings

Version 2

August 13, 2013

Introduction

The pages that follow provide a description of key aspects of the Maplewood Village Post Office Redevelopment Plan.

Thus far the Redevelopment planning process has been a topic of a thousand words. The discussion here adds a few pictures in order to succinctly illustrate the meaning of the technical language within the Plan.

Each page considers an aspect of the Plan and illustrates it with figures and a brief description.

This is a working document that will be updated based on community feedback and contributions. Some of the illustrations will be improved on as more time and/or better drafting tools become available.

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The Process **NEW**

The Post Office site¹ has been declared “an area in need of rehabilitation” under NJ Statute 40A-12, the “Local Redevelopment and Housing Law.”

The declaration was made by the Township Committee in 2011 following a study done by the firm Phillips Preiss Grygiel that was issued in May 2011 (<http://nj.maplewoodtownship.civicplus.com/DocumentView.aspx?DID=412>).

Under 40A-12 the Township Committee has declared itself the “Redevelopment Entity,” which in effect allows the Committee to act both as land owner and governing body. This is a very special role afforded by 40A-12 to facilitate redevelopment. In larger cities it is common for a separate corporation to be formed to fulfill this role.

During the period January 2012 to May 2013 the same firm was contracted to write a “redevelopment plan” that outlines the regulations (the “zoning”) to be used on the site. This past July the Township Committee approved this document, which then became the official zoning for the Post Office site. This new zoning is “overlaid” on the existing zoning that remains in effect for the rest of Maplewood Village.

In late July the Township issued a Request for Information to parties interested in submitting proposals for development of the site. Responses are due September 11th, 2013.

The township intends to review these proposals privately and select a “preferred developer” by the end of the year. There is no schedule for public review of any of the design ideas presented by applicants. The first opportunity for the public to comment is scheduled to be Planning Board meetings in 2014. At that time the preferred developer will be negotiating a construction and land sale contract with the Township, and will present its intended design to the Planning Board.

The legal purview of the Planning Board is to validate that a plan presented is legally consistent with the zoning. Beyond this determination, the Planning Board is only able to make suggestions to, and perhaps seek concessions from, an applicant. The applicant is bound to abide by the Planning Boards determination regarding the zoning, but is under no obligation to make any changes that are not required by the zoning.

¹ Through-out this document the phrase “Post Office Site” refers to the **three** parcels of land (as shown in the Tax Map section) that are being re-developed. These three parcels together are approximately twice the size of the existing post office building.

Following Planning Board approval, the Township intends to sell the land to the developer, and the developer will then seek construction permits and set a date for construction.



Project Size and Buildable Area

The **larger white box** shows the approximate bounds of the area being re-developed. It consists of three lots that the Township owns totaling approximately 33,000 square feet.² The distance along Maplewood Avenue is approximately 225 feet. The existing post office footprint (the roof can be seen in gray) is approximately 13,500 square feet.

The **smaller white box** shows the area in which the Plan allows building(s). This is determined by the “setbacks” from the larger white box and are described on page 20 of the Plan.

² An additional strip approximately 12 feet wide runs north to the train station alongside the train tracks. Currently it contains a sidewalk. It is not shown in the figure above.

Building Footprint Size

The “building coverage” is the largest portion of the redevelopment area that is allowed to be covered by the footprint of buildings. The Plan specifies 60%, which is approximately 19,800 square feet.



By way of example, the smaller white box above shows 60% lot coverage as a single building, and the example below shows it as two buildings. Other arrangements are possible provided they do not exceed 60%. The smaller white boxes may be placed anywhere as long as they are within the boundaries shown on the previous page.



Building Height *NEW*

Page 19 provides information on the allowable building height. It is probably the most difficult page in the document to accurately interpret.

The first paragraph describes an overall height limitation for the roof. It states that the maximum is 45 feet above the *average finished grade* along the new building perimeter. This terminology means that if landfill is added around the foundation that the building is allowed to sit atop this fill, effectively raising its height relative to existing buildings near by. In addition, the site is sloped to the north--so with or without landfill, the *average* grade is higher than it is at the property's low point (which is at the south end, next to Village Coffee).

In rough terms, the slope adds about 6 feet to the allowable height, and if some amount of grading is added, this could be closer to 8 feet. Added to the 45 feet allowed roof height, the roof would be approximately 53 feet higher than the entrance to Village Coffee. The Village Coffee building is approximately 39.5 feet at its front facade, and a couple of feet less at its rear.

Page 19 also describes the parapet as being no more than 42" (code requires a parapet of this height).³ The document is vague as to whether the roof measurement includes the 42" parapet height or whether it could be considered an allowable height *above* the roof limitation described above.

The remaining paragraphs (B and C) on page 19 describe the facade heights. These are of course allowed to be as high as the roof, however the facades facing Maplewood Avenue and Ricalton Square must be "set back" further from the street at heights over 30 feet.

Paragraph C describes the allowable height of the southern facade, that which is closest to the building that Village Coffee is in. It is described as being 40 feet above a point that lies close to the entrance of the existing Post Office.⁴ Because of the slope, that point is approximately 11 feet above the entrance to Village Coffee, leading to a allowable facade height of 51 feet, or approximately 12 feet higher than the building that Village Coffee is in.

The 40 foot limit can be exceeded if the southern facade is "set back" a points higher than 40 feet. These points would all be higher than the building that Village Coffee is in.

³ A parapet is the portion of outside wall that extends above the roof, for decorative and/or safety reasons.

⁴ The document refers to this as the intersection of Lots 180, 181, and Maplewood Avenue.

Building Massing

The combination of information from the previous pages allows “massing” diagrams to be made. If you apply all the numbers at their largest values, a massing similar to those above results. This is not exactly what a building might look like,



but rather indicates its maximum permitted shape and size. This image is very important to a developer as it sets out the maximum amount of development possible. Typically a developer will try to come as close to the maximum as is practical to maximize their profit.

Usages and Square Footage **UPDATED**

The Plan provides for a variety of retail store sizes which a developer is free to combine as they see fit. Stores must be under 4,000 square feet each, except that a grocery store is allowed to be up to 15,000 square feet.

The first figure below shows the maximum permitted building size (the large white box), and the permitted size of a grocery store (smaller white box). If a developer were to choose to include a grocery store it could potentially be the only store on the lot as it is nearly as large as the largest permitted building.

The types of usage allowed appear on Page 17. They include:

- Retail, including grocery and postal retail
- Financial Institutions and offices
- Restaurants (not fast food)
- Dwelling units
- Hotel
- Community facilities
- Open space

Additional examples to be added in Version 3.

Public Spaces

To be added in Version 3.



Parking ***NEW***

There are 33 existing public parking spaces in the Redevelopment Area. The planned usages (see “Úsages and Square Footage” page) of the new site will determine the amount of parking that is required.

The Plan states:

- Public parking must be in surface parking lots
- Parking for building uses (stores, businesses, housing) must be within the building
- “adequate parking to reasonable serve all uses within the redevelopment area” is required. There is no requirement for use of established methods of determining parking needs.
- If the new design has less than 33 public spaces, the missing spaces are allowed to be elsewhere in town if they are at a “reasonable walking distance.”
- Dwelling units on the site must have parking for at least 1 car, but not more than 1.5 cars per dwelling unit on-site (up to 25 dwelling units are allowed).
- Non-residential uses require parking at a rate of one per 400 square feet of space and all of must be shared among the various uses (i.e., no dedicated parking). This implies that 10,000 square feet of retail/grocery/offices would require 25 spaces. The document is unclear how to combine this requirement with the requirement to maintain the 33 public spaces that exist.
- Parking for non-residential uses can be located “within reasonable walking distance” of the site, and may be met through a combination of “actual spaces (on-site), merchant permits, payment for existing or future parking capacity pursuant to a formal agreement with the Township, or other measures.”

Scorecards

To be added in Version 3.

Will compare the document to the public input received during the “Public Input Sessions” in 2012 and also against the goals in the Master Plan and in the development document itself.

Tax Map

