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Memorandum

DATE: January 27, 2023

TO: Members of the Plainfield Planning Board

FROM: Malvika Apte, PP, AICP - Consulting Board Planner *MA*

CC: Maximo Vazquez, Planning Board Secretary
Peter Vignuolo, Esq., Board Attorney
Drew DiSessa, PE, PP, CME, Board Engineer
Zenobia L. Fields, Director, Department of Economic Development
Brittany Claybrooks, Director, Planning Division
N'Dela Costley, Zoning Officer
Reginald Jenkins, Jr., Esq., Applicant's Attorney
1100 SA, LLC, Applicant
Robert G. Dooley, Jr., Applicant's Architect

RE: *Planning Review # 1*
Application # PB-2022-27
Applicant: 1100 SA, LLC
Location: 1100-1118 South Avenue
Block 623, Lots 1, 2, and 3
Zone: TODN – South Avenue Redevelopment Plan / Trainside Commercial Zone

FILE NO.: HPFP0623.01

As per your request our office has reviewed the following documents in connection with the above referenced application:

- Application form received by the City on September 1, 2022;
- Political Contribution Disclosure Form for Applicant/Owner;
- Consent of Property Owners of Lots 1 and 2;
- Consent of Property Owner of Lot 3;
- Assignment and Assumption of Purchase and Sale Agreement for Lots 1 and 2;
- Assignment and Assumption of Purchase and Sale Agreement for Lot 3;
- Certificate of Ownership of Applicant;
- W-9 Form for Applicant;



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- Report entitled “Drainage Report South Avenue Redevelopment Plainfield, NJ Block 623, Lots 1 & 2” prepared by Anderson Consulting Services, LLC dated July 26, 2022 and last revised November 11, 2022;
- One (1) sheet of “Survey of Property Tax Lots 1, 2 & 3 – Block 623 1100-1118 South Avenue, City of Plainfield Union County, New Jersey” prepared by Lakeland Surveying dated June 23, 2022.
- One (1) sheet of “Topographic Survey of Property Tax Lots 1 & 2 – Block 623 1100-1114 South Avenue, City of Plainfield Union County, New Jersey” prepared by Lakeland Surveying dated February 28, 2022.
- Seven (7) sheets of engineering site plans entitled “1110-1118 South Avenue Block 623 Lot 1, 2 & 3 City of Plainfield Union County, New Jersey” prepared by Anderson Consulting Services, LLC, dated March 14, 2022 and last revised November 21, 2022;
- Nine (9) sheets of architectural plans entitled “1100-10 South Ave Block 623, Lot 1 & 2 & 3, Plainfield, NJ City of Plainfield, Union County, New Jersey” prepared by Robert G. Dooley, Jr., Architect, dated October 12, 2022.

1. Proposed Application

The Applicant, 1100 SA, LLC, is seeking preliminary and final site plan approval with design waivers, and bulk and supplemental zoning variances for this project.

It appears that the existing lots, identified as Block 623 Lots 1, 2, and 3 in the Plainfield Tax Maps, are to be consolidated. **The lots must be consolidated.** Assuming the lots are consolidated, the total area of the site is 38,698 square feet. Lot 1 is currently developed with an auto repair shop, while Lot 3 is developed with a used car lot. Lot 2 is vacant. The site has frontages along South Avenue and Belvidere Avenue. The properties are subject to the TODN – South Avenue Redevelopment Plan, and specifically the Trainside Commercial Zone of that Plan.

Applicant proposed to demolish all existing improvements on the properties and redevelop the site with a six-story multi-family building consisting of one (1) studio unit, 58 one-bedroom units, seven one-bedroom loft units, and 22 two-bedroom units (total of 88 residential units). The schedule of dwelling units on the cover sheet of the architectural plans should be revised to provide the accurate type of loft unit (one-bedroom, not two). The first floor will consist of a covered parking area with, a 1,268 square foot lobby, an 813 square foot gym, and a 1,687 square foot commercial space. Access to the parking area is provided via driveway from Belvidere Avenue. **Applicant shall confirm that the proposed gym is an amenity for the residential tenants.**

The parking situation must be clarified. In previous site plans, tandem parking spaces were identified. Based on comments from City professionals the Applicant at the TRC noted that the tandem spaces would be removed. This has been done in both site and architectural plans, and is satisfactory. Additionally, 20 spaces on the plans are numbered with two numerals (e.g., 7-8; 44, 45; 61, 62; etc.). **Applicant must clarify the nature of these spaces: why are they numbered twice? Are these**



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mechanical stackers? As currently shown on the plans, these can only be taken as single spaces, which would yield just 73 parking spaces.

2. Completeness

The application was received by the Planning Division on **September 1, 2022**, and was initially deemed incomplete on **October 3, 2022**. After additional materials were submitted, the application was again deemed incomplete on **November 18, 2022**. Additional materials were then submitted, and the application was determined to capable of being deemed incomplete on **January 13, 2023**. The following items were still noted as missing or incomplete in the January 13, 2022 Completeness Review Letter:

- a. **§17:8-2.B.5:** A tax search indicating current status of all taxes, assessments, and fees due to the City of Plainfield. ***We are not in receipt of an official tax record. The Applicant has indicated that an application for official tax record has been submitted to the City. Once Applicant has received the tax record, it shall be submitted for our records.***
- b. **§17:8-2.B.6:** All requisite escrow deposits and fees. ***Please see the calculations in the following sections. Applicant has submitted copy of check to the City of Plainfield for fees. We defer to the Board Secretary to confirm receipt of the fees.***
- c. **§17:8-2.B.8a:** Contribution Disclosure Statements. ***Disclosure Statements are still required from all professionals (attorney, engineer, architect) providing plans or testimony for the application. These are required.***
- d. **§17:8-2.F.14:** Location, type, and volume of refuse storage and recycling facilities. ***The location of the proposed refuse storage and recycling facility has been indicated on the site plan sheets, but the type and volume are not. We continue to recommend a refuse and recycling plan be drafted and submitted indicating trash and recycling calculations, type and volume of storage containers, procedures for removal of trash from the building, timing of trash and recycling pick up, days of pick up, and agency/company providing pick up services.***
- e. **§17:8-2.F.17:** A written description of the proposed use(s) and operation(s) of the building(s). ***A written description providing any known details on the commercial space tenant should be provided, including: the number of employees, proposed number of shifts, expected truck traffic, and anticipated hours of operation, should be provided.***
- f. **§17:8-2.F.18:** A sign plan for all existing and proposed signs. ***Two signs are indicated on the architectural plans. The details of the address sign (labeled as "1" in the elevations) shall be updated to provide dimensions of the overall sign.***
- g. **§17:8-2.G.1-5:** Final site plan approval requirements. ***These are taken as waiver requests at this time. We take no issue with these waivers being granted and the Board conditioning approval upon their completion.***



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- h. **§6.1** of the *TODN-South Avenue Redevelopment Plan*: Only the redeveloper designated by the City Council of the City of Plainfield shall be permitted to redevelop the properties situated in the Tepper's Tract Redevelopment Area. ***Proof of the same must still be provided. This is required to be provided prior to Board Hearing.***

3. Subject Site and Surrounding Land Uses

The subject properties are located in the north central section of Plainfield, and is just across South Avenue from the Netherwood Train Station. The site has frontages along South Avenue to the northwest and Belvidere Avenue to the southwest. Lot 1 is developed with an auto repair shop, Lot 2 is vacant, and Lot 3 is developed with a used car lot.

Review of NJ-GeoWeb Application indicates that there is a groundwater contamination area (Classification Exception Area) associated with a now-defunct gas station on Lot 1. This previous gas station is also a New Jersey Environmental Monitoring System (NJEMS) site, meaning that the environmental metrics at the site are monitored by NJDEP. The NJ-GeoWeb Application also identifies underground storage tanks that either exist or were previously located on Lot 1 that are associated with Lot 1. ***Applicant shall provide testimony regarding the groundwater contamination and if any remediation will be necessary to allow the proposed use to be established on the site.***

Review of the National Flood Hazard Layer (NFHL) confirms that the entire property is identified as being in Zone X: Area of Minimal Flood Hazard.

The subject site is located along South Avenue, which is a commercial corridor, so the site is surrounded directly to the northeast, southwest, and north by commercial uses. Just west of the site, across South Avenue, is the Netherwood Train Station. To the south and east of the site are residential properties that mostly appear to be single-family dwellings.

4. Zoning Review

- a. ***Use***: The subject properties are subject to the TODN-South Avenue Redevelopment Plan, last amended March 4, 2021. The properties are located in the Trainside Commercial District of the Plan. The Plan permits mixed use structures and "studio, one and two-bedroom apartments over retail uses". ***The proposed use of residential units over commercial is therefore permitted.***

We note that, per the Redevelopment Plan, any standards not addressed or identified in the Plan are defaulted to the City's Land Use Ordinance.

- b. ***Bulk Regulations***: The following table provides the compliance of the proposed project with the requirements of the Redevelopment Plan. The values provided assume the lots to be consolidated. ***Consolidation of the lots is required.***



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Bulk Regulations: TODN – South Avenue Trainside Commercial District (Commercial Use)		
	Commercial	Proposed
Minimum Lot Area (square feet)	10,000	38,698
Minimum Front Yard Setback (ft.)	0	6.3
Maximum Front Yard Setback (ft.)	5	10.1 (V)
Minimum Side Yard Setback One/ Combined (ft.)	5 / 20	5.1 / N/A
Minimum Rear Yard Setback from property line (ft.)	15	17
Maximum Building Coverage	75%	59.3%
Maximum Impervious Coverage	90%	88.1%
Density (dwelling units/acre)	100	99.1
Floor Area Ratio	3.3	2.81
Maximum Number of Stories	6	6
Number of Stories within the First 20 feet of the Property Line	4	6 (V)
Maximum Building Height (ft.)	70	68.5
Minimum non-residential space not including amenities (Ground Floor)	40% of building coverage	40%
Minimum First Floor Height (ft.)	12	16
Minimum Open Space Required	5% of the property	0% (V)
(V) Variance (e) Existing Non-Conformity		

- (i) The proposed building requires one variance for setbacks: for maximum front yard setback where 10.1 feet is provided but five (5) feet is permitted.
- (ii) A variance is required for number of stories within the first 20 feet of the property line. The Redevelopment Plan permits a maximum of four stories in this area; the proposed building includes six stories.
- (iii) The Redevelopment Plan requires 5% of the property area to be provided as open space. The Plan defines open space as “as area within a development designed and intended for the use or enjoyment of all residents of the development or for the use and enjoyment of the public. The only area identified as meeting this definition is the “outdoor area” on the roof of the building, totaling 808 square feet. This represents just 2.1% of the area of the subject site. **A variance is required.**



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5. Additional Standards

- a. Parking: The following table indicates the parking requirements for the proposed new development, per the Redevelopment Plan.

Use	Standard (Minimum)	Required	Proposed
Residential: Studio, One- and Two- Bedroom Apartments	1 / residential unit	1 x 88 = 88 spaces	
Commercial Retail	1 / 300 square feet	1,697 sq. ft. x 1/300 = 5.65	
Total		93.65, rounds up to 94	73 (V)
(V) Variance (e) Existing Non-Conformity			

- (i) As noted in Section 1 of this Memo, the Applicant must clarify the parking situation. The site and architectural plans show 20 spaces numbered with two numerals (e.g., 7-8; 44, 45; 61, 62; etc.). **Applicant must clarify the nature of these spaces: why are they numbered twice? Are these mechanical stackers? As currently shown on the plans we do not consider the double-labeled spaces as two spaces; these can only be taken as single spaces, which yields just 73 parking spaces.**
- a. If mechanical stackers are proposed, additional details must be provided. These details must include diagrams, timing and operations, especially during peak hours.
- (ii) The following is noted:
- a. Per the State-mandated model ordinance regarding provision of EV equipment and parking spaces, a total of 15 spaces must be provided as Make-Ready for EV equipment (15% of residential spaces = 88 x 15% = 13.2, rounds to 14; plus one space for non-residential parking areas of less than 25 spaces). **The site plan notes that 26 such spaces are provided; however, these are not clearly indicated on the site layout. Plans must be revised to clearly show where the EV equipment/spaces are located.**
- b. Per the State ordinance, an EV space bonus is provided such that each EV space is counted as two spaces; however, this bonus cannot reduce the required parking by more than 10%. Ultimately this means that the Applicant must provide at least 83 parking spaces. As such, the identifiable parking spaces and EV space bonuses do not meet the parking requirement.



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- (iii) As the parking area is partially open air, the portions in the open air section are considered a parking lot. Per §17:9-24.C.1, a minimum five foot (5') buffer is required around the sides of all parking lots. When the parking is adjacent to a residential property, the buffer shall be ten feet (10'). Only a two foot (2') buffer is provided from the residential property to the southeast of the subject property. **A variance is required. Details on the fence providing screening of the parking area must be provided, including height and material. We recommend as an alternative that the entire parking area be covered, especially as some of the spaces may be stackers.**
- (iv) Per §17:9-42.D, a minimum five foot (5') setback of buildings from parking areas must be provided. The first floor building is setback just about two feet (2') from parking spaces. **This does not comply and a variance is required.**
- (v) Applicant shall testify as to how parking spaces will be equitably distributed between the residents of the building and with the commercial space, as required by §17:9-42.R.
- b. **Parking Lot Screening:** Per the Redevelopment Plan, General Standard c., first floor parking areas shall be screened with a wall comprising architectural features and façade materials compatible with ground floor commercial uses. The architectural plans appear to indicate an eight foot tall wall screening the parking area around all sides but the front South Avenue, which provides a full wall with punch-outs and some sort of decorative grate or window. **There are not enough details of the 8-foot faux wall to determine compliance with the Redevelopment Plan requirement. Details of the architectural treatment for the faux wall must be provided.** A blank wall is not acceptable; the ideal design would be a full faux wall consisting of the same treatment as the front of the building, including the punch-outs covered by attractive grates.
- c. **Outdoor Amenity:** Per the Redevelopment Plan, General Standard i, a roof top garden, deck or green roof at any level is required. An “outdoor area” is provided on the roof level of the building. **No details have been provided to determine what type of outdoor area is being proposed. Applicant must provide additional details on this outdoor area to determine what is being proposed for this area; we recommend at the least landscaping and furniture.**
- d. **Terraces:** The setback of the “mezzanines” on the sixth level of the building creates what amounts to a terrace along the South Avenue frontage of the building. Per the Redevelopment Plan, General Standard j, where building setbacks create terraces landscaping is encouraged around the terrace. No details of these terraces showing landscaping or other features have been provided. These details must be provided.
- e. **Sustainable Design:** Sustainable design and LEED certifiable buildings are strongly encouraged, per General Standard k of the Redevelopment Plan. **Applicant shall provide testimony regarding sustainable design features and LEED certifiability, and shall revise the plans to provide an itemized list of these design features.**
- f. **Signs:** The architectural plans indicate an address sign above the lobby entrance. **All details for this sign must be provided.** The following is noted:



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Type of Sign	Permitted	Proposed
Sign # 1 – Wall Sign along South Avenue- 3.41 ft. x 2.17 ft.		
Number of Signs	2	1
Area of Sign	10% of the total façade of the building = 10% x 1,215 sq. ft. = 121.5 sq. ft.	7.40 sq. ft.
Maximum Projection	9 inches	TBD
Max. Height	2 ft	2.2 ft. (V)
Lighting	Internally or externally	TBD
Colors	No more than three	TBD

- g. Retail Frontage: Per General Standard r of the Redevelopment Plan, the entire frontage along South Avenue must be occupied by retail space, with the exception of driveways and entrances to the parking garage. The floor plan provides for a gym for residents and parking spaces along the South Avenue frontage. ***This does not comply and a variance is required.***
- h. Planting Islands: Most of the parking is provided under the building. The Planning Board, per General Standard s of the Redevelopment Plan, may require a contribution to the Shade Tree Fund in lieu of planting islands. ***Given the layout of the site, we recommend contribution instead of planting islands. We defer to the Shade Tree Commission to determine contribution amount.***
- i. Fencing: There are limited details on the fence screening the proposed development along the southeastern and northeastern property boundaries. ***A detail of the fencing including material, height, and design must be provided.***
- j. Landscaping: Applicant has provided landscaping plan as sheet SP-5 of the site plans. We recommend that the Applicant’s engineer work with the Board Planner to ensure that the landscaping is acceptable. The following is also noted:
 - (i) The plans identify two grass areas to the rear and side of the proposed building. Applicant must clarify how these areas will be maintained, especially the grass area on the easterly side of the property, which is blocked from the parking area by faux wall and fencing.
- k. Shade Trees: We defer to the Shade Tree Commission regarding the provision of shade trees and compliance with §17:9-49.C of the LUO.



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- I. Apartment Sizes: The apartment sizes are in compliance with the floor area requirements of the Redevelopment Plan (500 square feet for studio units, 750 square feet for one-bedroom units, and 1,000 square feet for two-bedroom units).

6. Site Design Review

- a. Building Design: The applicant should discuss the architectural design of the building, specifically addressing the architectural massing and features, pedestrian and “human scale” design elements, architectural variety and continuity, materials, and other elements found under the Design Standards (§4.4) of the Redevelopment Plan.
 - (i) Applicant should provide color diagrams of the proposed façade treatments.
 - (ii) As indicated elsewhere in this Review, the screening wall surrounding the sides and rear of the parking area should receive a façade treatment similar to the treatment of the rest of building along with punchouts and decorative grating. As currently designed, the wall is blank and featureless which is not acceptable.
 - (iii) There is no direct entrance from the parking area to the commercial space. As currently designed, a customer parking in the lot would have to walk through the driveway to the sidewalk and around to the South Avenue entrance, or around to the lobby entrance, through and to the South Avenue entrance. This is not acceptable, especially as there is an ADA-accessible space in the lot directly behind the commercial space. We recommend providing an entrance more accessible to those parking in the parking lot.
 - (iv) The South Avenue retail entrance should receive additional embellishments to identify it as an entrance.
 - (v) Applicant should identify design features to offset the flat roof of the building (e.g. cornice and frieze).
- b. Residential Standards: The following is noted:
 - (i) Per §17:11-8.B7 of the LUO, all units shall be provided with 350 cubic feet of covered storage space in excess of the usual closet space. Storage space for 71 units is identified in the basement. **The plans should be revised to provide space for all units or a design waiver is required.**
 - (ii) Per §17:11-8.B9 of the LUO, all units above the ground floor shall be provided with 64 square feet of private open space in the form of a patio or balcony. Per the elevations and floor plans it appears that not every unit has access to a patio or balcony. **Applicant shall clarify plans for balconies, including how many are being proposed, how many units shall have access, and the dimensions of these balconies, or waivers may be required.**
- c. Loading: No loading spaces are required for the size of the commercial space proposed. However, the Applicant shall provide testimony regarding how deliveries will be made to the commercial tenant.



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- d. Streetscape: Per “Streetscape Standards” (pg. 21 of the Redevelopment Plan) the proposed development must follow the Streetscape Design Manual. ***The streetscape does not meet the requirements of the Manual and must be revised.***
- e. Average Illuminations: Per the Redevelopment Plan, the development must comply with §17:11-12 of the Land Use Ordinance. The lighting plan indicates the average lighting of sidewalks on the property will be 1.3 foot-candles. This is higher than the permitted range of 0.5-1.0 foot-candles. ***A design waiver is required.***
- f. Drive Aisle Width: Per §17:11-15.B, drive aisles with parking spaces perpendicular to the access drive must be 24 feet wide. The access drive to the rear of the commercial space is only 22.6 feet wide. ***A design waiver is required.***
- g. Refuse/Recycling Area: A 15 ft. x 8 ft. dumpster enclosure area is provided in the parking area. The enclosure will be surrounded by a 6.5 foot tall board-on-board fence and situated on a concrete pad. A “trash area” is provided within the building on the first floor, and each residential floor has what appears to be a trash room with trash chute. ***This shall be confirmed and call-outs added to the plans.*** We recommend that Applicant submit a refuse and recycling management plan detailing how trash and recycling will be moved within the site from residential and commercial areas to the trash room and to the dumpster enclosure, the days and timings of pick-up, and the contractor to provide the hauling services.

7. Redevelopment Plan:

The proposed project in general appears to be consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the TODN – South Avenue Redevelopment Plan. The Plan includes the primary goal of creating a “transit-oriented development hub that serves as a 24/7 “living” district where people choose to live, work and play.” The development, located just across the street from the Netherwood Train Station, helps promote such a district.

8. Planning Comments

- a. The Applicant will require one (8) variances and four (4) design waivers from the Redevelopment Plan and the City of Plainfield Land Use Ordinance.
- b. As per the Redevelopment Plan, the Board has the authority to grant deviations (variances) where the purposes of the Plan would be advanced by a deviation from a strict requirement of the Plan, and the benefits of the deviation would outweigh any detriments.
 - i. Benefits – The benefits should be those where the community will benefit, and not just the applicant.
 - ii. Detriments – The detriments considered for a proposed deviation should focus on how the deviation may impact the intent of the plan and the character of the surrounding community.



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- c. We defer to the Board Engineer regarding drainage, storm water, traffic impact analysis and other engineering issues related to the site.
- d. We defer to the Shade Tree Commission regarding shade tree requirements along the frontages of the properties.
- e. Applicant must provide proof of being designated by the City as the redeveloper of the site.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any planning related questions at mapte@cmeusa1.com.

MA:nf