

TO: Town of Harrison SSPRC

CC: Mayor James Fife
Michael Pichowicz, Esq.
Peter Bonder, P.E.
Rocco Russomanno, P.E.
Arthur Pettigrew, Planning Board Chairman
Mary Gaines, Planning Board Secretary

FROM: M. McKinley Mertz, PP, AICP, LEED Green Associate

RE: Block A Partners Urban Renewal I, LLC
Block 138.01 Lot 1
Block 138.02 Lot 1
Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan and Major Subdivision

DATE: February 15, 2022

As requested, we have reviewed the following materials in preparation of our report for this application:

- Town of Harrison Standard Development Application, undated;
- 1-sheet Major Subdivision Plan prepared by Stonefield Engineering & Design, dated December 21, 2021;
- 3-sheet Boundary and Topographic Survey, prepared by Stonefield Engineering & Design, dated October 23, 2021;
- 24-sheet Preliminary and Final Major Site Plans, prepared by Stonefield Engineering & Design, dated November 5, 2021;
- 40-sheet Architectural Site Plan Submission, prepared by RAMSA Robert A.M. Stern Architects, dated November 5, 2021;
- 3-sheet set Harrison Riverbend Blocks A and B Clarifications, prepared by RAMSA Robert A.M. Stern Architects, dated December 2021;
- 4-sheet set of drawings indicating ground level and stoop configuration as well as additional shadow studies, prepared by RAMSA Robert A.M. Stern Architects, dated January 2022;
- Stormwater Management Statement; and
- Traffic Impact Study, prepared by Stonefield Engineering & Design, dated November 4, 2021.

Harrison Redevelopment Process

As per the Waterfront Redevelopment Plan, prior to submission of formal development review by the Planning Board, each redeveloper shall submit detailed plans to the Harrison Redevelopment Agency (HRA) for its review. The HRA's approval of such submission shall be based on whether the plans conform to the Redevelopment Plan and redeveloper agreement, if one exists at the time of conceptual review. If the HRA has conditionally designated the Redeveloper and a Redevelopment Agreement does not exist at the time

of conceptual approval by the HRA, the approved conceptual plans shall be incorporated in the Redevelopment Agreement when executed.

If the HRA determines that the plans are non-conforming, Harrison Redevelopment Agency shall advise the redeveloper of the issues that give rise to such non-conformance. The redeveloper shall then revise the plans and resubmit them as many times as necessary to receive approval from the HRA. The jurisdiction to grant design waivers is now with the Planning Board.

The applicant appeared before the Harrison Redevelopment Agency on January 24, 2022 and received endorsement from the HRA.

Property Description

The subject properties consist of two blocks located on the east side of Frank E. Rodgers Boulevard in what has become known as the Riverbend District. The properties were part of previous perfected subdivisions and are commonly referred to as "Block A" (Block 138.01 Lot 1 on the Town's tax map) and "Block B" (Block 138.02 Lot 1 on the Town's tax map). Block A is bound by Guyon Drive to the north, South 5th Street to the east, Riverbend Drive to the south, and Frank E. Rodgers Boulevard to the west. Block B is bound by Guyon Drive to the north, Pete Higgins Boulevard to the east, Riverbend Drive to the south, and South 5th Street to the west. Both properties are currently vacant but are used for temporary parking and as a laydown area for construction of adjacent "Building D."

Previous Approvals

Block A received preliminary and final major site plan approval on February 25, 2015 via Planning Board Resolution 14-04 to construct a 5-story, 150-room hotel with 883 square feet of conference space and 4,340 square feet of restaurant use as well as 75 surface parking spaces and 42 street parking spaces. These improvements were proposed for the northern section of the block along Guyon Drive. As part of the approval, the applicant at the time, Advance at Harrison, LLC, received variance relief for increased setbacks and deficient on-site parking. Advance at Harrison, LLC did not proceed with the construction of the approved hotel and associated parking. The site remains undeveloped.

Block B has never been the subject of a site plan application/approval.

Aerial Map of Subject Properties



Project Proposal

The current applicant, Block A Partners Urban Renewal I, LLC, is proposing to subdivide the two blocks into four smaller blocks of roughly equal sizes. The subdivision creates an east/west corridor connecting Frank E. Rodgers Boulevard and Pete Higgins Boulevard. Without a street name identified yet, this new public right-of-way is currently referred to as the “Retail Corridor,” as it is proposed to be a central retail thoroughfare, in accordance with the Buildout Road Network Map and the Ground Floor Land Uses Map of the adopted Waterfront Redevelopment Plan.

The development across all four blocks will include 1,998 residential units, 60,757 square feet of retail, 1,808 structured parking spaces, 53 on-street parking spaces along the Retail Corridor, as well as amenity space for residents and publicly accessible green space. Each block will consist of buildings, ranging in heights from 3 to 11 stories, in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan.

The project will be phased, beginning with the Southwest Block, followed by the Southeast Block, Northeast Block, and finally the Northwest Block. The following is a breakdown of development by block:

	Phase I – Southwest Block	Phase II – Southeast Block	Phase III – Northeast Block	Phase IV – Northwest Block	TOTALS
Residential Units	512 units	524 units	477 units	485 units	1,998 units
Structured Parking Spaces	414 spaces	413 spaces	692 spaces	289 spaces	1,808 spaces
Retail	14,440 sf	14,440 sf	16,190 sf	15,687 sf	60,757 sf
Height	3-story entrance on South 5 th Street followed by an 11-story tower; 11-story tower fronting on Frank E. Rodgers; 7 stories in the middle of the block	3-story entrance on South 5 th Street followed by an 11-story tower; 11-story tower fronting on Pete Higgins Boulevard and the Retail Corridor; 7 stories in the middle of the block	11-story towers fronting on South 5 th Street and Pete Higgins Boulevard; 7 stories in the middle of the block	11-story towers fronting on Frank E. Rodgers, South 5 th Street, and a portion of Guyon Drive; 7 stories in the middle of the block	-

All garage entrances to the structured parking will be accessed from either Guyon Drive or Riverbend Drive. No garage entrances are proposed from the Retail Corridor, Frank E. Rodgers or Pete Higgins Boulevard. The applicant is proposing a publicly accessible green space on the Northwest Block that will connect Guyon Drive to the Retail Corridor. Each building will also have their own private courtyard spaces, accessed from the second floor. Additional rooftop amenity space is proposed.

Zoning

The subject properties are within the Mixed-Use District of the Waterfront Redevelopment Plan. Retail sales and services as well as multi-family are permitted uses within the District.

	Permitted/Required	Proposed
Building Height	3 to 11 stories	Southwest: 3 to 11 stories Southeast: 3 to 11 stories Northeast: 7 to 11 stories Northwest: 7 to 11 stories
Minimum Setback	0 ft	Applicant to confirm
Maximum Setback*	10 ft	
Minimum Parking	<i>Residential:</i> 1 space/unit = 1,998 units = 1,998 spaces – HOWEVER – the State-mandated Electric Vehicle Charging Station ordinances permits on EV or make-ready space shall count as two spaces, up to 10% of the required parking – see comments on next page for further discussion 10% of 1,998 = 199.8, rounded to 200 pursuant to State ordinance; 1,998 – 200 = 1,798 required	1,861 spaces (1,808 in garages (V) ; 53 surface spaces on Retail Corridor – see planning comments)
	<i>Retail:</i> 1 space/1,000 gross sf = 60,757 sf = 61 required	
	TOTAL PARKING REQUIRED = 1,859 SPACES	
Residential Bedroom Mix	Min. 50% studio & 1-bed	50% of units
	Max. 50% 2 or 3 bed, of which 10% can be 3-bed	50% of units, of which 10% are 3-bed
Minimum Retail Depth	40 feet	Applicant to confirm

*An additional 10 feet is permitted only if the setback is used as a public amenity, outdoor dining or provides architectural interest (e.g. offsets) to the building façade.

Interim Uses

The applicant is proposing temporary surface parking on the unused lots during the construction of the various phases. As will have a shared parking arrangement between the buildings, the surface parking will serve to fill any temporary gap in parking while additional phases are under construction. The applicant should note that Ordinance 1435 amended the standards for Interim Uses, which the temporary parking qualifies as. Interim uses are now subject to the following conditions:

- Interim surface parking shall require that the Redeveloper prepare the site so as to assure the safety of both vehicular users and pedestrian users. It shall have a dust -free surface, be adequately

illuminated, and be managed and monitored so as to assure its convenient use by the general public.

- Interim uses may be established subject to agreement between the Redeveloper and the Harrison Redevelopment Agency that such use will not have an adverse effect upon existing or contemplated development during the interim use period of up to three (3) years in duration. Additional renewals of an interim use may be granted by the Harrison Redevelopment Agency.
- Any interim use must receive approval from the Planning Board and must provide a site plan to confirm that all requirements of this section are met.

Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS)

NJ Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS) for High Rise Buildings

- 0.8 spaces per studio or one bedroom -> 999 units = 799 spaces
- 1.3 spaces per two-bedroom -> 899 units = 1,169 spaces
- 1.9 spaces per three-bedroom -> 100 units = 190 spaces
- 2,158 spaces total are required – the applicant is proposing 1,808 on-site parking spaces

A de minimis exception from RSIS is required for number of parking spaces

State-Mandated Electric Vehicle Charging Ordinance

In accordance with the new State-mandated Electric Vehicle Ordinance, the applicant must provide Electric Vehicle Service Equipment (EVSE) / “Make-Ready” spaces (i.e. the prewiring of electrical infrastructure at a parking space or set of parking spaces). The State ordinance requires the following:

- For multi-family dwellings, prepare as Make-Ready parking spaces at least 15% of the required off-street parking requirement and install EVSE in at least one-third of the 15% of the Make-Ready spaces. Within 3 years of the certificate of occupancy, another one-third of the 15% must become EVSE. Within 6 years of the certificate of occupancy the final one-third of the 15% must become EVSE. For the subject property this means:

1,998 residential spaces required = 300 EVSE/Make-Ready Spaces required	
<i>Years from CO</i>	<i>Number of Spaces Converted to EVSE</i>
0	100 spaces shall be made EVSE at onset
3	+100 spaces shall be converted to EVSE
6	+100 spaces shall be converted to EVSE
<i>By Year 6</i>	<i>300 Spaces will be EVSE</i>

- Also pursuant to the State ordinance, an EVSE or Make-Ready equipment shall count as at least two parking spaces for the purpose of complying with a minimum parking space requirement. This shall result in a reduction of no more than 10% of the total parking requirement.
 - a. In the case of the subject application, this allows for a reduction of 200 spaces, making the parking requirement 1,798 spaces.
 - b. Because 300 spaces are required to be EVSE/Make-Ready, the final parking make up will consist of 1,498 standard parking spaces and 300 EVSE/Make Ready.

Rights-of-Way Dimensions

	South 5 th Street		Guyon Drive	
	Required	Proposed	Required	Proposed
Sidewalk Width	13 ft to 18 ft	17 ft	15 ft to 18 ft	18 ft 3 in
Parking Width	8 ft	8 ft	8 ft	Applicant to confirm
Drive Aisle	12 ft	12 ft	11 ft	11 ft

	Frank E. Rodgers Boulevard		Pete Higgins Boulevard	
	Required	Proposed	Required	Proposed
Sidewalk Width	12 ft to 15 ft	11.8 ft (W)	11 ft	11.5 ft to 11.8 ft
Parking Width	N/A	N/A	8 ft	Applicant to confirm
Drive Aisle	11 ft	11 ft	14 ft	14 ft

	Riverbend Drive		Retail Corridor	
	Required	Proposed	Required	Proposed
Sidewalk Width	12 ft to 18 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft
Parking Width	8 ft	Applicant to confirm	8 ft	8 ft
Drive Aisle	11 ft to 14 ft	Unconfirmed	11 ft	11 ft

Variances Required

1. Off-Street Parking – The applicant is **required** to provide 1,798 off-street residential parking spaces and 61 off-street spaces for the retail tenants for a total requirement of 1,859 off-street spaces. The applicant is proposing 1,808 off-street spaces and 53 street spaces, leaving a deficiency of 51 off-street parking spaces. We note that the applicant is applying the 53 street spaces toward their retail parking requirement as the 53 spaces are located along the Retail Corridor and are intended to serve the retail tenants that will be located there.
2. ROW Encroachment – The applicant is proposing rain gardens within the right-of-way along the Guyon Drive and Riverbend Drive building frontages. If conceptually approved by the Planning Board, final approval from the Town Council would be required.

Design Waivers

1. Loading & Service Areas (page 43) – Loading and service areas shall be integral to building design and screened from public view where the applicant is proposing four (4) loading areas along the Retail Corridor that are not screened.
2. Loading & Service Areas (page 43) – No vehicular access to loading areas shall be permitted along Riverbend Drive where the applicant is proposing access to residential loading areas for Phases I and II from Riverbend Drive.
3. Parking and Circulation (page 44) – All permanent parking spaces shall be in structures and screened from view. The applicant is proposing to utilize 53 on-street parking spaces along the Retail Corridor to count toward the overall parking requirement.
4. Sidewalk Width – The applicant is proposing a sidewalk width of 11.8 feet along Frank E. Rodgers Boulevard where a minimum of 12 feet is required.

A de minimis exception from RSIS is required for number of parking spaces

Planning Comments

General

1. The applicant shall revise all plans to show the most up-to-date conditions and proposals as discussed at the January HRA meeting and the upcoming SSPRC meeting. Revisions should include but not be limited to:
 - a. Updated unit and parking counts

- b. Identification of all on-street parking, including parallel parking along Guyon Drive, Riverbend, and Pete Higgins Boulevard.
 - c. Location of electric/gas meters, access panels, transformers, generators, etc.
 - d. Any other condition identified in our memo or the Board Engineer's memo that requires updates to the plans.
2. The proposed development is generally consistent with the standards of the Waterfront Redevelopment Plan. However, relief will be required for various aspects of the proposal. The applicant shall address the need for variance and waiver relief.
 - a. We recommend widening the sidewalk on Frank E. Rodgers to meet the 12-foot requirement.
3. There are a number of architectural design standards in the Redevelopment Plan that the applicant shall provide additional information on, including residential windows and doors, retail fenestration, and roofs. The Applicant shall identify any additional design waiver relief that may be required.
4. The applicant shall speak to the intended phasing of the project i.e., timelines.
 - a. The applicant is proposing a shared parking arrangement between the four buildings. However, as a shared parking arrangement, Phases I and II will not meet the parking requirements for the residential units in their buildings and instead, additional parking will be utilized from other phases.
 - b. It is our understanding that the applicant intends to present a temporary surface parking plan at the SSPRC meeting, where the lots that are not under construction will act as temporary overflow parking.
 - i. We note that one of the lots is currently being used as a laydown area for the construction of adjacent Building D.
 - ii. The applicant shall provide information regarding the temporary parking (interim use) in accordance with the standards of Ordinance 1435, as discussed on pages 5 to 6 of this memo.

Architecture and Building Design/Operations

5. The applicant should provide information at the SSPRC meeting regarding the intended architectural aesthetic of the buildings and how the appearance will relate to the surrounding buildings and area. The applicant should speak to how the proposed aesthetic of the buildings is

consistent with the principles of the Redevelopment Plan, designed to promote the industrial history of the Area.

6. While the applicant has only provided elevation drawings for Phase I, the Southwest Block, information was provided at the HRA meeting indicating that all buildings will match in aesthetics, including materials, colors, lighting, etc.
 - a. We note that while the buildings are going to be similar in appearance, they are different in their designs, especially the Northwest Block that is proposed to have a cut-through open green space.
 - b. Is the applicant only seeking approval of the design for Phase I (the Southwest Block) at this time?
 - c. We also note that any changes in proposed façade / elevation aesthetics that would substantially change the look of the development would require an amendment to any such approval.
7. We recommend the applicant provide additional visualization for the open green space in Phase IV (Northwest Block). The eastern boundary of this open green space is made up of the parking garage wall. How will this condition be treated so that it does not appear as a parking garage wall from the outside?
 - a. Additionally, this open green space amenity will act as a gateway for those going to and from the PATH Station and into the Riverbend District. Additional details about how this entryway will be designed would be beneficial for the Board.
8. The applicant shall walk the SSPRC through the shadow and light studies that were prepared as part of the application package to demonstrate any potential for tunnel effects.
9. The applicant provided visualizations depicting the relationship between the ground floor residential units and the sidewalk. This condition should be presented and discussed at the SSPRC meeting to determine whether there are any privacy issues regarding people walking on the sidewalk being able to see into the units.
 - a. The applicant is proposing bicycle storage for residential tenants in the lower levels of Phases I and II (Southwest Block and Southeast Block respectively). Is there an estimate of how many bicycles will fit in these spaces? We recommend a tenant bike parking ratio of one (1) per 20 required auto spaces.

- b. We note that Phases III and IV (Northeast Block and Northwest Block respectively) do not have in-building bicycle storage. Will the tenants of those buildings be able to utilize the rooms in Phases I and II? If not, we recommend including in-building bicycle storage for Phases III and IV.
10. We note that the trash room and residential loading area in Phase IV (Northwest Block) is located interior to the building and only accessible from the courtyard. How will a tenant reach the loading area, and how will a trash truck reach the trash room?
11. What are included in the proposed roof-top amenities?

Site Circulation and Parking

12. The applicant identified the use of the 53 parking spaces along the Retail Corridor as a component of the retail parking requirement of 61 spaces. The applicant should confirm where the remaining 8 parking spaces will be located or if an additional variance is requested. We note that a variance is required to count the surface parking spaces toward the commercial parking requirement.
- a. During the HRA meeting, the applicant noted that retail employees / patrons will not have use of the interior parking garages.
13. The applicant shall confirm the 300 EVSE/Make-Ready spaces will be distributed throughout the four buildings in the appropriate ratio to regular parking spaces. Plans shall be updated accordingly to identify the location and number of spaces.
14. The applicant shall identify the location/number of any compact parking spaces proposed for the garages.
15. The applicant shall provide the dimensions of parking spaces and drive aisles in the parking garages.
16. Are floodproofing measures being implemented for the parking? We defer further comment to the Board Engineer.
17. The applicant shall provide information regarding the status of discussions with Hudson County. Vehicular access for the Retail Corridor is required onto Frank E. Rodgers Boulevard, a County Road, triggering County approval.
18. We note that there are four loading spaces proposed along the Retail Corridor. Are these intended for deliveries for the retail spaces? Deliveries for the residential component? Move-in locations?

- a. We recommend the applicant provide designated “pick-up” areas for rideshare programs such as Uber and Lyft. Designated areas eliminate unfavorable double-parking situations.
19. The residential loading areas for Phases I and II (Southwest Block and Southeast Block respectively) that extend off Riverbend Drive traverse the outdoor terrace areas. The applicant should confirm if these areas are large enough for a moving truck, and if they will be separated from the usable outdoor terrace area to protect pedestrians using the area.
- a. The applicant shall provide additional information regarding how the residential move-in areas will function for Phases III and IV. There is a concern about potential double parking or blocking a driving lane, especially on Guyon Drive, which is a significant commuter route for those leaving the train station parking area located north of Guyon Drive.

Landscaping, Lighting, Street Furniture, and Signage

20. The applicant is proposing a mix of deciduous trees, deciduous shrubs, evergreen shrubs, evergreen trees, flowering shrubs, flowering trees, perennials, street trees, flowers, grasses, and annuals/perennials. The applicant should provide testimony at the time of the public hearing to confirm that all proposed plantings adhere to the requirements of the Waterfront Redevelopment Plan.
21. The “Paver Band with Tree Grate Detail” on page C-23 of the civil drawings identifies 4’ x 4’ tree grates. However, the tree grate specifications on C-22 identifies a 5’ x 5’ grate. The applicant shall confirm the proposed dimensions. A 5’ x 5’ tree grate would require waiver relief as the Redevelopment Plan permits 4’ x 4’.
- a. The applicant should confirm conformance with the remainder of the tree grate requirements, as found on page 59 of the Redevelopment Plan.
22. Street trees shall be planted 30 feet apart along Frank E. Rodgers Boulevard and Riverbend Drive and 25 feet along Guyon Drive and Pete Higgins Boulevard. While street tree spacing for the Retail Corridor is not identified in the Redevelopment Plan, we recommend the plantings be consistent with the other streets.
23. The applicant shall provide information regarding the proposed rain gardens that will project into the right-of-way along Guyon Drive and Riverbend Drive.
- a. While the sidewalk width is over 18 feet from building frontage to curb, what will the clear walking width be between the rain gardens and the tree grates?

- b. Because these features are in the right-of-way, the applicant will ultimately have to seek approval from the Town Council. However, the SSPRC and Planning Board should weigh in on this condition and provide any feedback regarding the proposal.
- 24. During the HRA meeting, the applicant indicated that the green space on the Northwest Block will be accessible to the public during the daytime and events at the Red Bulls Arena. Additional information should be given regarding security and whether the area will be closed during certain hours e.g. 10 pm till 6 am.
 - a. If the open space is to be closed during certain hours, will there be gating or fencing? Signage? A security guard?
- 25. The applicant shall confirm the use of best management practices to reduce excessive fertilizer and pesticide application, which may result in runoff.
 - a. The Redevelopment Plan discourages the use of lawn and turf as these materials exacerbate runoff and pollution.
- 26. The applicant shall provide additional information regarding proposed site lighting, including building lighting and the intended fixtures.
 - a. The applicant shall confirm proposed streetlight fixtures will be pursuant to the Redevelopment Plan and match the existing light fixtures located throughout the Area. Deviation from the preferred fixture would require additional waiver relief.
 - b. The applicant has only provided the location of building lighting for Phase I (Southwest Block) and has not identified the type of lighting fixtures beyond “architectural wall sconce.” Additional information should be provided about the building-mounted lighting.
- 27. The applicant shall confirm that trash/recycling receptacles, benches, bicycle racks etc. shall be pursuant to the preferred manufacturers in the Redevelopment Plan and consistent with existing fixtures in the surrounding area.
 - a. We note the applicant is proposing a dual litter/recycling receptable. We are strongly in support of this proposal.
 - b. The applicant should speak to the number of proposed public bicycle racks and approximately how many could be parked per rack.

28. The applicant shall provide additional information regarding the proposed signage, as depicted on pages 32 to 34 of the architectural submission. Information shall include materials, illumination, verbiage, etc.
- a. Is the applicant only seeking signage approval for Phase I (the Southwest Block) at this time?
29. Is any wayfinding signage proposed to help orient visitors?

Utilities and Operations

30. As identified in our Comment 1, the applicant shall identify the location of all gas/electric meters/panels, transformers, generators, etc.
31. The applicant shall provide information regarding how refuse and recycling will be handled for the retail tenants. Will they utilize the same “waste” room as the residents?
32. A number of buildings in the Redevelopment Area feature roof-mounted solar panels. Is this a proposal the applicant is considering?
33. The applicant shall submit a list of the sustainable building requirements that will be implemented throughout the project and discuss any additional sustainability measures and best practices that are proposed.

Miscellaneous

34. We note the applicant is required to pay development fees to the Town’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund in accordance with their Redeveloper Agreement.
35. The applicant is required to conform with the current public art requirement, as amended by Ordinance 1326: 0.5% of the budgeted construction cost of construction or renovation of the structure or project itself, excluding land, shall be provided to the Town’s fund dedicated to providing open space and recreation within the Redevelopment Area.

Should you have any question regarding the above memo, please do not hesitate to reach out.