

# ASHLAND HISTORIC COMMISSION

## Planning Application Review

April 6, 2022

**PLANNING ACTION:** PA-T2-2022-00037  
**SUBJECT PROPERTY:** 165 Water Street, 160 Helman Street and 95 Van Ness  
(corner of Van Ness & Water Streets)  
**APPLICANT:** Rogue Planning & Development Services, LLC, agent for  
**OWNER:** Magnolia Investment Group, LLC and Gil Livni  
**DESCRIPTION:** A request for a six-lot commercial subdivision to accommodate a phased mixed-use development for the three properties at 95 Van Ness Street, 165 Water Street and 160 Helman Street. The applicant's Phase I requests Site Design Review approval for five mixed-use commercial buildings with ground floor commercial spaces and two residential units above in each building, as well as associated surface parking, utility infrastructure and street improvements. The three remaining lots would have initial site work completed with Phase I, but building construction would occur only after Site Design Review approvals in a future Phase II. The application also includes a request for a Physical & Environmental Constraints Review Permit because the proposal includes development on severe constraints lands with slopes greater than 35 percent and on floodplain corridor lands; a request for an Exception to the Development Standards for Hillside Lands; a request for a Tree Removal Permit to remove 20 trees on the three properties and within the adjacent rights-of-way; and a request for an Exception to Street Standards to allow parking bays with street trees in bump-outs along Van Ness Avenue rather than standard park-row planting strips. *[Since the March Planning Commission hearing, the number of lots proposed has been reduced from eight to six. The application no longer includes a Solar Access Exception or an Exception to the plaza space requirement.]*  
**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DESIGNATION:** Employment; **ZONING:** E-1; **ASSESSOR'S MAP:** 39 1E 04CC; **TAX LOTS #:** 2000, 2100 & 7100

### Recommendation:

The Historic Commission would like to thank the applicants for the proposed building design modifications since the Commission reviewed the project last month. The Commission finds that most of the incremental changes are effective in that they address some of the Commission's concerns regarding the building façades and pedestrian amenities, but these revisions fall short in focusing on the major issues identified in the March meeting, which had to do with the height, scale, and massing of the buildings as they relate to the Historic District Design Standards (**AMC 18.4.2.050.B.2-B.4.**)

This massive development of eight nearly identical "cookie cutter" designs has no precedent in Ashland or its historic districts. The Commission cannot support approval of a project that has demonstrated such disregard in their attempt to comply with our historic standards and the scale of our city and neighborhoods. In particular, the three buildings facing Helman Street with a height of up to 40 feet and three stories will overwhelm the mostly single-story historic residences across the street.

These proposed buildings fail to achieve an appropriate scale and façade compatibility to the adjacent historic streetscape. Additionally, the zero setback to the sidewalk exacerbates the building mass and scale that will overwhelm the adjacent pedestrian traffic. By comparison, the Plaza Inn & Suites hotel on the same side of Helman Street, nearer to downtown, has 15- to 20-foot setbacks and is only two-stories in height.

In the Historic Commission's view, the building architecture and landscape design on this project is very attractive and high quality, but, the buildings are just not compatible with the scale of the historic district residences in the impact area, across Helman Street. For these reasons, the Commission cannot support moving this application forward.

With that in mind the Historic Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the project be denied.