



## The Design Review Board Memorandum

Project: TD Bank North, 408 Mass Ave., Kelley's Corner, Acton, MA

Architectural Proposal by: Joe Nevin, Bergemeyer  
Engineer: Josh Swirling, Matt Murphy, Bohler Engineering  
Legal: Marc J. Goldstein, Esq., Beveridge & Diamond,

Date of Review: 5/19/10

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The DRB met with the proponent several times over the past two years and believes the proposed new building structure will be an improvement over existing conditions (gas station and garage). The proponent was very helpful in preparing almost a dozen design choices for this corporate satellite office; the DRB selected one they believed best suited the site, given the bank's palette.

The DRB is also impressed that this building proposes to be Acton's first LEED-certified structure, indicating the proponent's serious commitment to sustainable design, one overseen by an independent third party (the U S Green Building Council).

The DRB's primary concern at this stage is with site planning for this site and its emphasis on parking and car-access over pedestrians and bikers. This is because the new building is set back far from the street (at 75') and has a driveway and parking in front of its street-facing facade. Acton's Master Plans, Acton's Specific Area Plans for Kelley's Corner, Acton's most recent outreach effort "Re-Visioning Kelley's Corner," and Acton's Zoning Code, all indicate prioritizing pedestrian experience is key and parking-lots facing the street should be avoided. In this plan, however:

- 27 parking spaces are proposed while Acton by-law requires only 10 Spaces;
- 10 Parking Spaces and a driveway are placed in front of the building facing the street; this means cars and parking lots will be dominant at this prominent site coming into and leaving Kelley's Corner; it will also be impossible for pedestrians to access the bank without crossing a parking lot, (unlike, the more pleasant walking experience in West Acton)
- Additional green space/tall trees will be removed in the southwest corner of the site, replaced by Asphalt parking and a high Retaining Wall.

The DRB understands that the proponent is under direction from a corporate center that fears creating less visible parking will have a negative economic effect. On the other hand, the DRB also understands more walk-able business districts can be an economic boon and enhance residential property values and quality of life, (including health), of residents in nearby neighborhoods. For this reason, the DRB recommends the following, in keeping with the Town's Design Review Guidelines:

- Remove parking along the front of the building, relocating/and or adding spaces to the lot at the rear (on the south side) of the building. In land gained, move the new bank forward, closer to the street. Moving the overall plan forward may save some of the trees and hill at the rear, now slated for demolition. If this change is not feasible, we recommend, at a minimum:
- Remove the 2 front parking spaces to the far right of the front door (as you face the building); Replace with green space and plantings that also serve to screen side (west) parking; this would balance this project's landscape design (the building would have green on both sides of its front). We note the opportunity to plant a tree here as well as 2-1/2 to 3' tall shrubs. We recommend a small native tree such as the Redbud *Cercis canadensis* tree, (2-1-1/2" caliper) or multi-stemmed Shadblow *amelancheir laevis*, 7-8" clump.
- At the southwest corner at the rear of the site, on top of the new retaining wall, we recommend a Black Vinyl coated chain link fence with no privacy slats to blend in best with remaining surrounding vegetation.

We would like to thank the proponents' representatives for their attention to details on this project, and for providing superlative drawings. We've enjoyed working with them and would look forward to seeing them in the future on this or any other project.

Sincerely,

The Design Review Board  
The Town of Acton  
<http://www.acton-ma.gov/index.aspx?NID=94>