

## **I. VISUAL/AESTHETICS/NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER**

### **1. Existing Conditions**

#### **a. View Of The Site From Area Roads**

Figures IV.I-2, I-3 and I-4 depict existing views from the Cross County Parkway, Central Park Avenue, and the New York State Thruway (I-87), respectively. Figure IV.I-1 provides a key plan.

#### **b. Existing Conditions Views from Kimball Avenue**

From the street and rear yard level of homes along Kimball Avenue (Figure IV.I-5) there are virtually no views of the Center, except for a small portion of the Sears roof which can be seen from a few homes at mid-block on Kimball. As you travel north on Kimball, the street significantly drops off in grade and views are obstructed by a natural knoll of earth and rock outcrop.

From the homes and multi-level condominium buildings on the opposite side of the street, there are no views at grade or from the lower floors due to the existing knoll and the homes on the west side of Kimball that are between the neighborhood and the Center. On the upper floors of the condominium building and potentially the second stories of the residential homes more of the existing Center can be seen.

#### **c. View Of The Site From Nearby Residential Properties**

The following page describes views of the site following the prior Stop & Shop mitigation.

d. **Character Of Neighborhood**

The site is bounded by two different neighborhoods; one is residential and the other is commercial (Figure IV.I-6). The residential streets of Kimball and Vredenburgh Avenues are to the east and south, respectively; the commercial street of Central Park Avenue is to the west running parallel to the NYS Thruway, and the Cross County Parkway is to the north. The surrounding residential neighborhoods consist of single family and multi-family residences to the south and east, with mid-rise condominiums on the east side of the northern portion of Kimball Avenue. The neighborhoods are comprised of long time established single and two-family homes, and high rise apartment and condominium buildings. The majority of the properties (homes and yards) are in good condition and well maintained.

**Kimball Avenue Neighborhood**

Kimball Avenue is a two-sided residential street with the residents' rear yards abutting the Center. Kimball is lined with mature trees on both sides. The southern portion of Kimball Avenue is significantly higher in elevation than the Center, which is located in somewhat of a valley, and the northern portion (of Kimball Avenue) is lower. Because it has homes on both sides, with backyards helping to buffer the view of the Center, Kimball Avenue has a distinctively residential feeling (Figure IV.I-6).

**Vredenburgh Avenue Neighborhood**

Vredenburgh Avenue is a one-sided residential street with the Shopping Center property coming to the street edge on the north side and homes lining the other (south) side. This existing condition means that, rather than having back yards buffering the residents from the Center, as the Kimball Avenue residents do, the homes on Vredenburgh Avenue face the center across the street. As a result, the Center has more presence on Vredenburgh Avenue than it does on Kimball Avenue

although there are plantings and a berm (shaped mound) along portions of the Center's frontage that helps buffer the view of the residents and temper the commercial presence.

### **Central Park Avenue, NYS Thruway (I-87) and the Cross County Parkway**

Central Park Avenue is a thriving north/south commercial street that acts as the western border of the Center. Running directly along side and to the west of Central Park Avenue is the NYS Thruway (I-87). The Cross County Parkway runs along the northern border of the Center. All three of these roads are heavily used by local and "out of town" travelers. The commercial character of the Shopping Center is consistent with other bounding developments along these major thoroughfares.

## **2. Potential Impacts**

### **a. Altered Views and Relationship to Other Uses**

Figures IV.I-8 through IV.I-13 depict future (altered) views of the site from adjacent highways and residential areas. Figure IV.I-7 depicts a key plan.

Depending upon the location, the proposed renovation generates no visual impact to modest visual impacts. The proposed architectural treatments discussed later within this section of the DEIS, in the applicant's opinion, help to mitigate these visual impacts.

### **b. Design Principles, Master Planning Principles, and Façade Treatments**

Redesigned exteriors will give a whole new look to the center. New architectural guidelines (such as new and renovated building facades will make use of depth of materials for shadow lines and details; quality and contrast in building materials provide a texture to the architecture that emphasizes a more human scale and proportion; building facades and storefronts will have rich colors in its building

materials with a diverse range in architectural details and tenant storefronts; and provide for a varied roof line of new and existing building architecture, distinct building corners and parapet projections) have been developed that will apply to all of the in-line stores. The guidelines will allow retailers to express their identity to the public while meeting a much higher standard of design.

The overall design intent of the renovation work and new work at Cross County Shopping Center is to upgrade the existing building facades with new modern materials and designs that are conducive to today's shopping centers. This philosophy will also be utilized with the new buildings and parking structures that are to be constructed. It is the applicant's objective to use "real" materials, colors and textures as an integral part of the Center's image. This philosophy is also critical to the tenants' image and brand.

- The building facades will have varied roof parapet heights to convey the message of varied roof lines as with most main streets.
- The new and renovated building facades will use different materials to create the illusion of depth in the storefronts (that way the buildings don't look flat).
- Building corners will have raised heights to create interesting and important focal points.
- Materials such as masonry, metals and glass will be used at the lower level of the buildings (grade to 12'-0") in the areas that the customer comes in contact with.
- The building facades and storefronts will have rich colors and a diverse range of architectural details.
- The parking garages will be built with clean bright materials (typically concrete) to maximize the "light" feeling. The garages will also have increased height between each level to permit additional natural light and air to penetrate to the middle.

Figure IV.I-14 depicts and discusses the design plan and master planning principles for the proposed improvement plan. Exterior design principles are illustrated and discussed on Figure IV.I-15. Figures IV.I-16 and IV.I-17 depict site section/elevations of the renovated Shopping Center. Figures IV.I-17 through IV.I-21 depict façade treatments/elevation details of proposed and renovated buildings.

**c. Lighting and Signage**

The overall design intent for the lighting and signage work at Cross County Shopping Center is to upgrade the existing lighting and signage with modern materials and equipment. The project lighting (specifically the parking lot lighting) will be redone to use new modern and efficient light fixtures that simulate a more natural light and not the orange/yellow light that is found in so many parking lots of today's shopping centers. The direction of the light focus and the times of operation will also be adjusted to be mindful of the adjoining properties. In regards to the pylon signs, it is the applicant's intent to maintain the existing pylon signs at the project's three primary entries. The location, size and structure will remain as is, however, the colors, materials and illumination will be redesigned to be more mindful of the adjoining residential neighborhoods.

Figure IV.I-22 discusses proposed lighting. Figure IV.I-23 discusses project signage and tenant or retail signage. Figures IV.I-24 and IV.I-25 discuss wayfinding signage within the Center. Figure IV.I-26 discusses the Center's pylon signage.

**d. Show All Anticipated Roof Equipment And Screens On Building Elevations And On Sections Identifying Height**

The majority of the work will be performed to existing buildings, existing buildings to be razed and re-built and new buildings. Furthermore, in some case, several existing buildings will be receiving no new work. The existing rooftop equipment (on the buildings that are designated for renovation work) will remain in place and

be screened in two ways (1) the new parapets as part of the façade renovation, and (2) individual screening of the equipment when necessary if the proposed parapet extensions are not sufficient (Figure IV.I-27). Note that the existing rooftop equipment locations are “locked in” due to construction constraints of relocating the equipment locations, especially with the retail spaces currently leased. Mitigation of the existing rooftop equipment and the proposed rooftop equipment will be addressed as follows, and sight lines are depicted on Figure IV.I-28:

- As part of the façade renovation, several existing in-line building parapets will be raised from 48” to 72” in height as part of the retail building renovation work. Raising these parapets will significantly mitigate the views of the rooftop equipment from the street, sidewalks and relatively similar adjoining grades.
- In regards to rooftop equipment on new buildings, a rooftop equipment zone will be identified on the roofs of each new structure. This zone will prohibit the installation of any piece of equipment greater than 24” in height within 15’ from the edge of the building.
- New buildings will also have a parapet wall minimum height (48” to 72”) that will help to ensure minimal views are present.
- In the case where raised parapets do not completely mitigate the views, individual screens built of similar materials to match the overall project design, will be erected around the individual equipment.
- Along with the raised parapets, views of the rooftop equipment from the street and common grade elevations should be all but eliminated. Note that views of the existing rooftop equipment from above will not be eliminated.
- Note that several of the existing anchors and smaller pad buildings will remain as is.

e. **Potential Changes To Neighborhood Character**

With the Proposed Action, the applicant believes that a new and renovated Center will enhance the surrounding neighborhood, especially where the Center directly fronts the residential streets of Vredenburgh and Kimball Avenues. On these residential streets, the landscaped edges between the homes and the shopping center will be enhanced, pylon signage will be improved in appearance and site lighting within the center will be replaced and upgraded to minimize off-site light impacts.

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With the Proposed Action, the applicant believes that a new and renovated Center will enhance the surrounding neighborhood, especially where the Center directly fronts the residential streets of Vredenburgh and Kimball Avenues. On these residential streets, the existing landscaped buffers between the homes and the shopping center will remain and be enhanced with additional evergreen tree plantings. Buffer plantings are proposed along Vredenburgh Avenue to supplement the transitional plantings between the shopping center and the residences that were put in by Stop & Stop as part of their new construction, and along the Kimball Avenue site frontage south of driveway C, across from the residences on the east side of Kimball Avenue. Pylon signage will be improved in appearance and site

lighting within the center will be replaced and upgraded to minimize off-site light impacts.

The upgraded Center will also enhance the existing commercial character along Central Park Avenue. Aesthetically, the Center – its buildings, garages, streetscapes, parking fields, etc. – will be significantly renovated to create a new shopping experience. These improvements will be paired with the introduction of new anchor tenants and an improved tenant mix, to better meet the needs and desires of the Center's shoppers. In addition to the aesthetic and tenant upgrades, the services and operations of the Center will be modernized. New landscaping will be provided both within the Center and at the perimeter as noted above. Reconfigured traffic patterns in and around the Center as well as reconfigured vehicular entry/exit points will contribute to an improved customer experience.

**f. Describe Retaining Walls, If Any, And Their Material And Treatment**

A number of on-site and off-site retaining walls are proposed along with the Cross County Shopping Center renovation. The on-site retaining walls include:

- A  $\pm 140$  foot long,  $\pm 5$  foot high wall along the southwesterly side of the proposed reconfigured driveway "C" to Kimball Avenue. Depending upon site conditions, this wall may either be rock face or cast-in-place concrete.
- A cast-in-place concrete  $\pm 200$  foot long,  $\pm 12$  foot high wall adjacent to the north of the proposed deferred parking garage, along North Drive.
- A proposed  $\pm 210$  foot long, up to 25 foot high wall along the easterly portion of the proposed parking area south of the proposed Sears building expansion. Depending upon site conditions, this wall may either be a rock face or a cast-in-place concrete wall.

Off-site retaining walls are proposed in connection with off-site roadway improvements. These walls include:

- A  $\pm$ 300 foot long,  $\pm$ 12 foot high, cast-in-place concrete wall at the Driveway "B" entrance from Central Park Avenue to West Drive.
- A proposed  $\pm$ 1 foot high cast-in-place concrete wall at the northerly side of the ramp from I-87 to Central Park Avenue.
- A  $\pm$ 600 foot long, up to 14 foot high cast-in-place concrete wall along the westerly side of Central Park Avenue adjacent to the entrance to South Drive.
- A  $\pm$ 250 foot long, up to 4 foot high cast-in-place concrete or rock face wall along the westerly side of Kimball Avenue, adjacent to Midland Avenue off of the exit from the Cross County Parkway.

### 3. **Mitigation Measures**

#### a. **Architectural Treatment, Locations of Proposed Structures, and Site Lighting**

No additional mitigation measures beyond those discussed above are proposed for these site elements.

#### b. **Site Landscaping**

The Preliminary Landscaping Plan (Figure IV.C-1) depicts areas of the renovated Shopping Center that will be planted with a variety of deciduous and evergreen trees, flowering trees, shrubs, perennials and annual flowers (Figure IV.C-2) to provide visual and aesthetic interest to the site. The existing mature trees within the east-west pedestrian via will be preserved and supplemented with additional trees and understory plantings to provide a functional and aesthetically pleasing landscape theme. The parking lot will be improved by the addition of numerous

landscaped islands to help mitigate the existing visual expanse of asphalt, and to help define vehicular and pedestrian circulation routes. The proposed trees will help provide aesthetic value and shade for the at-grade parking areas. 354 new trees will be provided which, combined with the 192 trees to remain, will yield a total of 546 trees on-site. In addition, the site will be extensively landscaped with a variety of deciduous and evergreen shrubs, flowering shrubs and perennials which will provide visual interest and aesthetic appeal. A detailed Landscaping Plan will be provided at the time of Site Plan Approval depicting the exact quantities, species, sizes and location of all proposed plant material.

The Preliminary Landscaping Plan (Figure IV.C-1) depicts a variety of proposed landscaping, with the final landscaping plan to propose a wide variety of deciduous trees (such as sugar maple, river birch, dogwood, honey locust, and green ash), and evergreen trees (such as Norway spruce, kwanzan cherry, Douglas fir, white pine, and Serbian spruce). In addition, shrubs such as white azalea, forsythia, rhododendron, and viburnum are proposed, as well as perennials such as coneflowers and groundcovers such as purple leafed winter creeper and myrtle (Figure IV.C-2).

Buffer plantings are proposed along Vredenburgh Avenue to supplement the transitional plantings between the shopping center and the residences that were put in by Stop & Stop as part of their new construction, and along the Kimball Avenue site frontage south of driveway C, across from the residences on the east side of Kimball Avenue.

The site's interior tree plantings will help provide shaded areas on the surface parking lots, and trees and other plantings along the pedestrian walkways will also help provide shade and a pleasing visual appearance.