

From: Scala, Mary Joy
Sent: Monday, December 28, 2015 10:29 AM
To: William H. Atwood (atwood@scscharlottesville.com)
Cc: btreakle@jetreakle.com
Subject: BAR Action – December 15, 2015 –501 West Main Street

December 28, 2015

William H. Atwood
214 West Water Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902

RE: Certificate of Appropriateness Application
BAR 15-09-05
425,501,503 West Main Street
Tax Parcel 320175000, 320176000, 320177000
William H. Atwood, Applicant/The Sutton Group, Owner
Massing and elevations approval for a new mixed use development

Dear Applicant,

The above referenced project was discussed before a meeting of the City of Charlottesville Board of Architectural Review (BAR) on December 15, 2015. The following action was taken:

Graves moved to find that the BAR approves the massing only, as submitted. Knott seconded. Motion passes (6-2 with Miller and Keesecker opposed).

If you have any questions, please contact me at 434-970-3130 or scala@charlottesville.org.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Joy Scala, AICP
Preservation and Design Planner

Mary Joy Scala, AICP
Preservation and Design Planner
City of Charlottesville
Department of Neighborhood Development Services
City Hall – 610 East Market Street
P.O. Box 911
Charlottesville, VA 22902
Ph 434.970.3130 FAX 434.970.3359
scala@charlottesville.org

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE
BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
December 15, 2015**



Certificate of Appropriateness Application (Deferred from September)

BAR 15-09-05

425,501,503 West Main Street

Tax Parcel 320175000, 320176000, 320177000

William H. Atwood, Applicant/The Sutton Group, Owner

Massing and elevations approval for a new mixed use development.

Background

503 W Main Street known as "Paxton Place," is a contributing Federal style structure in the Downtown Architectural Design Control (ACD) District. It was built c 1824 as a dwelling by a Presbyterian clergyman on 33 acres. Federal era buildings are infrequent in Charlottesville.

In 1889 William Wheeler purchased the Paxton Place. In 1893 he built 501 W Main Street and the former 425 W Main Street as two identical brick dwellings east of the main house for use as rental properties. In 1924 Dr. J. C. Coulter added two rooms as his office to 501 W Main Street, using brick from an old Catholic church.

501 and 503 W Main Street are historically significant buildings. Additionally, Commerce Street has a wealth of historic structures, including the Individually Protected Property Jefferson School; contributing structures including Dr. Jackson's residence and attached commercial structures near 4th Street, the Ebenezer Baptist Church on 6th Street, the former C&R Auto building, and the Bell Funeral Home; and other Starr Hill residences and structures including the former Bethel Baptist Church that was the original home of Barrett Day Care, and is currently being restored and remodeled as two apartments.

August 18, 2009 - The BAR denied (8-0) an application for demolition, after the fact, of two chimneys and connecting brick curtain wall. The BAR also stipulated that the applicant shall submit an application to the BAR to rebuild the demolished portion of the two chimneys and skirt wall...to attempt to match as closely as possible what was removed. The City Attorney's office opined that the BAR does not have the authority to require the property owner to rebuild the demolished chimneys and wall.

The applicant submitted a letter requesting an appeal, but later deferred the request. The applicant did not reschedule the appeal. Staff requested that the City Attorney's office take the applicant to court to pursue the maximum civil penalty for illegal demolition of a historic structure.

May 18, 2010 - The BAR appreciated the applicant's willingness to reconstruct the chimneys authentically and with attention to detail. The BAR approved (7-0) the reconstruction of the west chimneys and curtain wall as submitted with the condition that the mortar shall be [lime mortar or] high lime content; and that the chimney width in the north-south direction is aligned and based upon the old chimney stack; the chimney will be rectilinear in its proportion to match what originally existed. And the applicant shall look at the Dinsmore House [1211 West Main Street] coping on top of the parapet wall; for the skirt in between the chimneys; as well as the other reconstruction for similar details. And shall match the color of the brick as closely as possible [in case the paint is removed in the future]. And shall look at the original chimneys on the photographs.

July 19, 2011 - Approved (7-0) with same conditions and recommendations as previous approval. The conditions of the previous approval still need to be confirmed/submitted before the applicant can obtain a building permit:

1. The mortar shall be [lime mortar or] high lime content;
2. The chimney width in the north-south direction is aligned and based upon the old chimney stack;

3. The chimney will be rectilinear in its proportion to match what originally existed.
 4. The applicant shall look at the Dinsmore House [1211 West Main Street] coping on top of the parapet wall; for the skirt in between the chimneys; as well as the other reconstruction for similar details, and shall look at the original chimneys on the photographs.
 5. The applicant shall match the color of the brick as closely as possible [in case the paint is removed in the future].
-

May 20, 2014 - The BAR held a preliminary discussion about the proposed new building. No action was taken.

July 15, 2014 - The BAR held a preliminary discussion about the proposed new buildings. No action was taken.

August 19, 2014 - The BAR accepted (7-0) the applicant's request for deferral.

September 16, 2014 - The BAR approved (5-3) the massing only, as submitted. The applicant must return to the BAR for approval of the demolitions of (the rear buildings) at 421 and 425 West Main Street, and for details of the new buildings and site design.

October 21, 2014 - The BAR approved (7-0) the application to demolish two buildings at rear of 421 and 425 W Main Street (Mel's Barber Shop and Atlantic Futon), as submitted, with the condition that the two buildings are thoroughly documented in plan and photographed prior to demolition.

December 16, 2014 - The BAR accepted (8-0) the applicant's request for deferral to revise the drawings.

The BAR had a discussion of the current design. They wanted to see more details on the landscape plans; made suggestions to reduce the number of materials and colors; make the design more unified; address the fenestration (add more glass) on the east side of the building - do not like the "fake" windows" nor the stucco frame around 6 openings; a suggestion to eliminate the different materiality (gray zones) on the center part of both the east and west sides of the office building; make the Commerce Street storefront more current, widen the storefront windows, do not like the dated details; there is disconnect between glass /steel buildings and faux 19th c. storefronts below; the project massing is relatively successful and scale is correct on Commerce Street but needs to be unified; suggested creating a small courtyard space in front of small storefront to east of stairs on Commerce; need a greater response to Jefferson School; in general the materials are fine, brick brings warmth, but simplify them; there was concern that there is not enough depth and square footage in commercial spaces on Commerce Street; design project so that most of parking accesses W Main Street.

February 17, 2015 - The BAR denied (5-1 with Graves opposed) the project as submitted because:

1. The exterior skin is not compatible with Commerce Street and West Main Street;
2. The scales of the elevations on Commerce Street and some of the details on West Main Street are not compatible with the historic buildings;
3. The intermediate levels of the residential block are not compatible with the project and district (The rhythm, patterns and ratio of solid to voids should relate to, and be compatible with adjacent historic facades);
4. This was a proposal for a final approval that seemed unresolved.

March 17, 2015 - The BAR approved (4-2 with Miller and DeLoach opposed) the new building as submitted, with signage and lighting proposals to come back to the BAR, and revised elevations (of parapet heights/Commerce Street panel reveals) to be circulated by email

September 15, 2015 - The BAR held a preliminary discussion of the new design on three parcels. The BAR questioned if zoning requires bringing the building to W Main Street, or could it just front on Commerce? Questioned if there is room for driveway and building on W Main frontage. Not sure if ziggurat on Commerce Street is correct massing.

October 20, 2015- Mohr moved to accept the applicant's request for a deferral. Keesecker seconded. (8-0)

Application

The applicant is requesting a certificate of Appropriateness for the massing of the proposed design for a new, by-right mixed-use building to be built on three parcels instead of the previously approved four- parcel scheme. The Atlantic Futon property is no longer included in the plan. Each of the three parcels contains a contributing structure: 501 and 503 West Main Street are proposed to be incorporated into the scheme as before; 425 West Main Street is a small barber shop previously approved for demolition, which fronts on Commerce Street.

The West Main Street North and South zoning districts are currently in the process of being amended to require lower building heights and other modifications. *The BAR should review this application under the current zoning regulations. However, the applicant has voluntarily reduced the proposed height to conform to the proposed new building heights.*

The new building consists of four levels (52 ft.) above Main Street, and five levels (60 ft.) above Commerce Street, with no appurtenance level. The building is set back 15 feet from rear of the two historic buildings, and is setback 13 feet from the Eloise building to the west, in order to allow a pedestrian thoroughfare with a plaza connecting West Main Street and Commerce Street.

On the West Main façade there is a 16 foot stepback after 40 feet, creating a 3-story streetwall, with the first floor having a 16 ft. height. On Commerce Street there is a 6 ft- 6 " stepback after 36 feet, with additional stepbacks above.

Two levels of structured parking are accessed from West Main Street and Commerce Street, and exit onto Commerce Street near Fifth Street NW and Jefferson School. The garage driveway entrance from West Main Street quickly drops under the building.

Criteria, Standards and Guidelines

Review Criteria Generally

Sec. 34-284(b) of the City Code states that,

In considering a particular application the BAR shall approve the application unless it finds:

- (1) That the proposal does not meet specific standards set forth within this division or applicable provisions of the Design Guidelines established by the board pursuant to Sec.34-288(6); and*
- (2) The proposal is incompatible with the historic, cultural or architectural character of the district in which the property is located or the protected property that is the subject of the application.*

Pertinent Standards for Review of Construction and Alterations include:

- (1) Whether the material, texture, color, height, scale, mass and placement of the proposed addition, modification or construction are visually and architecturally compatible with the site and the applicable design control district;*
- (2) The harmony of the proposed change in terms of overall proportion and the size and placement of entrances, windows, awnings, exterior stairs and signs;*
- (3) The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation set forth within the Code of Federal Regulations (36 C.F.R. §67.7(b)), as may be relevant;*
- (4) The effect of the proposed change on the historic district neighborhood;*
- (5) The impact of the proposed change on other protected features on the property, such as gardens, landscaping, fences, walls and walks;*

- (6) Whether the proposed method of construction, renovation or restoration could have an adverse impact on the structure or site, or adjacent buildings or structures;*
(8) Any applicable provisions of the City's Design Guidelines.

Pertinent Guidelines for New Construction and Additions include:

A. INTRODUCTION

e. Multi-lot

Often new commercial, office, or multiuse buildings will be constructed on sites much larger than the traditionally sized lots 25 to 40 feet wide. Many sites for such structures are located on West Main Street and in the 14th and 15th Street area of Venable Neighborhood. These assembled parcels can translate into new structures whose scale and mass may overwhelm neighboring existing structures. Therefore, while this building type may need to respond to the various building conditions of the site, it also should employ design techniques to reduce its visual presence. These could include varying facade wall planes, differing materials, stepped-back upper levels, and irregular massing.

B. SETBACK

- 5) In the West Main Street corridor, construct new buildings with a minimal (up to 15 feet according to the zoning ordinance) or no setback in order to reinforce the street wall. If the site adjoins historic buildings, consider a setback consistent with these buildings.*
6) On corners of the West Main Street corridor, avoid deep setbacks or open corner plazas unless the design contributes to the pedestrian experience or improves the transition to an adjacent residential area.
7) New buildings, particularly in the West Main Street corridor, should relate to any neighborhoods adjoining them. Buffer areas should be considered to include any screening and landscaping requirements of the zoning ordinance.
8) At transitional sites between two distinctive areas of setback, for instance between new commercial and historic commercial, consider using setbacks in the new construction that reinforce and relate to setbacks of the historic buildings.

C. SPACING

Spacing between buildings depends on the size of the lot, the size of the building, and side-yard setback requirements. Consistent spacing between a row of buildings helps to establish an overall rhythm along a street.

- 1) Maintain existing consistency of spacing in the area. New residences should be spaced within 20 percent of the average spacing between houses on the block.*
2) Commercial and office buildings in the areas that have a well-defined street wall should have minimal spacing between them.
3) In areas that do not have consistent spacing, consider limiting or creating a more uniform spacing in order to establish an overall rhythm.
4) Multi-lot buildings should be designed using techniques to incorporate and respect the existing spacing on a residential street.

D. MASSING & FOOTPRINT

While the typical footprint of commercial building from the turn of the twentieth century might be 20 feet wide by 60 feet long or 1200 square feet per floor, new buildings in the downtown can be expected to be somewhat larger. Likewise, new buildings in the West Main Street corridor may be larger than this district's historic buildings. It is important that even large buildings contribute to the human scale and pedestrian orientation of the district.

- 1) New commercial infill buildings' footprints will be limited by the size of the existing lot in the downtown or along the West Main Street corridor. Their massing in most cases should be simple rectangles like neighboring buildings.*
2) New infill construction in residential sub-areas should relate in footprint and massing to the majority of surrounding historic dwellings.
3) Neighborhood transitional buildings should have small building footprints similar to nearby dwellings.
a. If the footprint is larger, their massing should be reduced to relate to the smaller-scaled forms of residential structures.

b. Techniques to reduce massing could include stepping back upper levels, adding residential roof and porch forms, and using sympathetic materials.

4) Institutional and multi-lot buildings by their nature will have large footprints, particularly along the West Main Street corridor and in the 14th and 15th Street area of the Venable neighborhood.

a. The massing of such a large scale structure should not overpower the traditional scale of the majority of nearby buildings in the district in which it is located.

b. Techniques could include varying the surface planes of the buildings, stepping back the buildings as the structure increases in height, and breaking up the roof line with different elements to create smaller compositions.

E. HEIGHT & WIDTH

1. Respect the directional expression of the majority of surrounding buildings. In commercial areas, respect the expression of any adjacent historic buildings, which generally will have a more vertical expression.

2. Attempt to keep the height and width of new buildings within a maximum of 200 percent of the prevailing height and width in the surrounding sub-area.

3. In commercial areas at street front, the height should be within 130 percent of the prevailing average of both sides of the block. Along West Main Street, heights should relate to any adjacent contributing buildings. Additional stories should be stepped back so that the additional height is not readily visible from the street.

4. When the primary façade of a new building in a commercial area, such as downtown, West Main Street, or the Corner, is wider than the surrounding historic buildings or the traditional lot size, consider modulating it with bays or varying planes.

5. Reinforce the human scale of the historic districts by including elements such as porches, entrances, storefronts, and decorative features depending on the character of the particular sub-area.

6. In the West Main Street corridor, regardless of surrounding buildings, new construction should use elements at the street level, such as cornices, entrances, and display windows, to reinforce the human scale.

F. SCALE

1. Provide features on new construction that reinforce the scale and character of the surrounding area, whether human or monumental. Include elements such as storefronts, vertical and horizontal divisions, upper story windows, and decorative features.

G. ROOF

1. Roof Forms and Pitches

a. The roof design of new downtown or West Main Street commercial infill buildings generally should be flat or sloped behind a parapet wall.

b. Neighborhood transitional buildings should use roof forms that relate to the neighboring residential forms instead of the flat or sloping commercial form.

c. Institutional buildings that are freestanding may have a gable or hipped roof with variations.

d. Large-scale, multi-lot buildings should have a varied roof line to break up the mass of the design using gable and/or hipped forms.

e. Shallow pitched roofs and flat roofs may be appropriate in historic residential areas on a contemporary designed building.

f. Do not use mansard-type roofs on commercial buildings; they were not used historically in Charlottesville's downtown area, nor are they appropriate on West Main Street.

2. Roof Materials

Common roof materials in the historic districts include metal, slate, and composition shingles.

a. For new construction in the historic districts, use traditional roofing materials such as standing-seam metal or slate.

b. In some cases, shingles that mimic the appearance of slate may be acceptable.

c. Pre-painted standing-seam metal roof material is permitted, but commercial-looking ridge caps or ridge vents are not appropriate on residential structures.

d. Avoid using thick wood cedar shakes if using wood shingles; instead, use more historically appropriate wood shingles that are thinner and have a smoother finish.

e. If using composition asphalt shingles do not use light colors. Consider using neutral-colored or darker, plain or textured-type shingles.

f. The width of the pan and the seam height on a standing-seam metal roof should be consistent with the size of pan and seam height usually found on a building of a similar period.

3. Rooftop Screening

- a. If roof-mounted mechanical equipment is used, it should be screened from public view on all sides.*
- b. The screening material and design should be consistent with the design, textures, materials, and colors of the building.*
- c. The screening should not appear as an afterthought or addition to the building.*

H. ORIENTATION

- 1. New commercial construction should orient its façade in the same direction as adjacent historic buildings, that is, to the street.*
- 2. Front elevations oriented to side streets or to the interior of lots should be discouraged.*

I. WINDOWS & DOORS

- 1. The rhythm, patterns, and ratio of solids (walls) and voids (windows and doors) of new buildings should relate to and be compatible with adjacent historic façades.*
 - a. The majority of existing buildings in Charlottesville's historic districts have a higher proportion of wall area than void area except at the storefront level.*
 - b. In the West Main Street corridor in particular, new buildings should reinforce this traditional proportion.*
- 2. The size and proportion, or the ratio of width to height, of window and door openings on new buildings' primary façades should be similar and compatible with those on surrounding historic façades.*
 - a. The proportions of the upper floor windows of most of Charlottesville's historic buildings are more vertical than horizontal.*
 - b. Glass storefronts would generally have more horizontal proportions than upper floor openings.*
- 3. Traditionally designed openings generally are recessed on masonry buildings and have a raised surround on frame buildings. New construction should follow these methods in the historic districts as opposed to designing openings that are flush with the rest of the wall.*
- 4. Many entrances of Charlottesville's historic buildings have special features such as transoms, sidelights, and decorative elements framing the openings. Consideration should be given to incorporating such elements in new construction.*
- 5. Darkly tinted mirrored glass is not an appropriate material for windows in new buildings within the historic districts.*
- 6. If small-paned windows are used, they should have true divided lights or simulated divided lights with permanently affixed interior and exterior muntin bars and integral spacer bars between the panes of glass.*
- 7. Avoid designing false windows in new construction.*
- 8. Appropriate material for new windows depends upon the context of the building within a historic district, and the design of the proposed building. Sustainable materials such as wood, aluminum-clad wood, solid fiberglass, and metal windows are preferred for new construction. Vinyl windows are discouraged.*
- 9. Glass shall be clear. Opaque spandrel glass or translucent glass may be approved by the BAR for specific applications.*

J. PORCHES

- 1. Porches and other semi-public spaces are important in establishing layers or zones of intermediate spaces within the streetscape.*

K. STREET-LEVEL DESIGN

- 1. Street level façades of all building types, whether commercial, office, or institutional, should not have blank walls; they should provide visual interest to the passing pedestrian.*
- 2. When designing new storefronts or elements for storefronts, conform to the general configuration of traditional storefronts depending on the context of the sub-area. New structures do offer the opportunity for more contemporary storefront designs.*
- 3. Keep the ground level façade(s) of new retail commercial buildings at least eighty percent transparent up to a level of ten feet.*
- 4. Include doors in all storefronts to reinforce street level vitality.*
- 5. Articulate the bays of institutional or office buildings to provide visual interest.*
- 6. Institutional buildings, such as city halls, libraries, and post offices, generally do not have storefronts, but their street levels should provide visual interest and display space or first floor windows should be integrated into the design.*
- 7. Office buildings should provide windows or other visual interest at street level.*

- 8. Neighborhood transitional buildings in general should not have transparent first floors, and the design and size of their façade openings should relate more to neighboring residential structures.*
- 9. Along West Main Street, secondary (rear) facades should also include features to relate appropriately to any adjacent residential areas.*
- 10. Any parking structures facing on important streets or on pedestrian routes must have storefronts, display windows, or other forms of visual relief on the first floors of these elevations.*
- 11. A parking garage vehicular entrance/exit opening should be diminished in scale, and located off to the side to the degree possible.*

L. FOUNDATION and CORNICE

- 1. Distinguish the foundation from the rest of the structure through the use of different materials, patterns, or textures.*
- 2. Respect the height, contrast of materials, and textures of foundations on surrounding historic buildings.*
- 3. If used, cornices should be in proportion to the rest of the building.*
- 4. Wood or metal cornices are preferred. The use of fypon may be appropriate where the location is not immediately adjacent to pedestrians.*

Discussion and Recommendations

The applicant is requesting massing approval. The BAR should decide if the massing is appropriate, so that the applicant can proceed in the design of other elements.

The BAR should focus on how the new construction interacts with the surrounding buildings as well as the streetscape and pedestrian experience of both West Main Street and Commerce Street. It is difficult to minimize the impact of a garage, but in staff opinion, the project remains respectful of the two historic buildings. The new commercial spaces are important on both streets, and the pedestrian walkway is a very important connection.

Suggested Motion

Having considered the standards set forth within the City Code, including City Design Guidelines for New Construction and Additions, I move to find that the massing of the proposed new mixed-use complex satisfies the BAR's criteria and guidelines and is compatible with this property and other properties in the Downtown ADC district, and that the BAR approves the massing only, as submitted.

December 14, 2015

Dear City of Charlottesville Board of Architecture Review (BAR) Members and Mary Joy Scala:

I write to you as a member and a stakeholder in the Starr Hill community—my wife and I own 213 6th Street NW. My comments are also informed by the fact that my father and my mother-in-law are both architects. I am addressing my remarks in response to the BAR 15-09-05, application for a new mixed-use development by William Atwood.

Over the past 19 months (we first learned of this proposal in May of 2014), the neighborhood communities of Starr Hill and Fifeville have consistently come out to express our distress at the particular proposed development on the 501/503 W. Main St. While there are members of our communities who would certainly prefer no development at all, the prevailing and realistic attitude is that development on this site is likely inevitable so we need to be open to this progress. We, as the adjacent communities, have a vested interest in the development being done in concert with the surrounding area, in a manner that is respectful of the historical nature of the structures on the site, and in a way that is also sensitive to the history of the area and the city's track record developing this part of town.

My wife and I have been members of the Starr Hill community for 12 years. There are others in our neighborhood who have lived there for 80+ years. Starr Hill is the smallest neighborhood in Charlottesville, but we have a rich history, a charming character, and strong community. Our neighborhood is home to the Jefferson School, which has been transformed into the City Center with the African American Heritage Center as its centerpiece. JF Bell Funeral Home, one of the oldest African American businesses in Charlottesville, also resides here. We also have the Ebenezer Baptist Church originally built in 1892 and the First Baptist Church of Charlottesville built in 1883. Other notable buildings and businesses include the Albemarle/Gleason Hotel, the Inge's Grocery Store, and Jokers Barbershop. Mr. Atwood has been reluctant to acknowledge this history or incorporate anything into his design that reflects this history. By his own admission, this is not his "area of expertise," but he has so far not brought anyone onboard who does. The importance of the neighborhood has been highlighted by the recently released African American historical map and a recent show on Vinegar Hill at the African American Heritage Center that featured some images from our neighborhood as well (<http://jeffschoolheritagecenter.org/exhibitions/contemporary-gallery/vinegar-hill/>).

Although I assume you know this, the house at 503 W Main may be the oldest building on W. Main from the Rotunda to the Lewis & Clark/ Sacajawea Statue. According to tax documents, it was built in 1815, two years before the cornerstone was laid at the University of Virginia. It is listed on the Historic Registry as the "Paxton Place" which according to Wikipedia was built about 1824 (still making it among the 3 oldest building on W. Main along with parts of the Medical Alumni building and the Dinsmore House also built that year). It is described as a 2 1/2-story, four-bay, Federal style brick dwelling. It has a side gable roof and two interior chimneys connected by a curtain. Over the years, the house has been occupied by the Shisler Funeral Home and the Loyal Order of Moose Lodge. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. Less information is available about the other house at 501 W. Main, but its vintage is likely built in 1895.

I have gone on record acknowledging that Mr. Atwood's and my esthetics clearly differ. However, I do not feel that my (and others) objects can be written off as a matter of taste. I find his Waterhouse building so egregiously out of place that it looks to me like a cruise ship was parked in the middle of downtown. His "anchor tenant" moved in November of 2011. While I have no way to absolutely confirm the vacancy, I can tell you that during the 19 months that I have been paying attention that at no time has there been a single residential light on in the top floors of the building during my frequent passes by the building at night. As we close 2015 more than four years later, the Waterhouse website indicate that there are 15 residential units and Zillow.com indicates 6 units are for sale, 1 is off market and presumably sold, and 9 are not on the market yet. Mr. Atwood's vision of an urban village is a lonely place.

The current design unfortunately looks more and more like the Waterhouse. After our extensive discussions and multiple BAR hearings, the last drafts of the 4 parcel project were starting to meet some of the neighborhood concerns: smaller massing, open/ public space, a conversation between the Commerce face of the building and the Starr Hill neighborhood. I still did not like it, but at least it felt like we had made progress. I understand the need to adapt to a 3 parcel plan given that the Atlantic Futon parcel was no longer in play. The Starr Hill Neighborhood deserves better than a two story parking deck backing onto our neighborhood. It will be unsightly and quite frankly hostile to the neighborhood and the Jefferson school - Does Charlottesville really want to undercut yet another historic neighborhood?

There is nothing other than the Sprint building that approaches the proposed mass in the immediate neighborhood. The Sprint building is hardly the architectural standard to which we should be holding this project. The current design crowds the two historic buildings on Main St. (BAR purview). It also looms over the Jefferson School (BAR purview) as well as our neighborhood (which I will acknowledge is not officially your purview) on Commerce. The choice to build to the road on Commerce adversely affects the entrance to the African American Heritage Center. It is disrespectful for the "backside" of the project to be exposed to the Heritage Center/ Jefferson School and the Starr Hill neighborhood.

Several community members including the Director of the African American Heritage Center, Andrea Douglas, have suggested Mr. Atwood come up with something that has a visual dialog with the Jefferson School building rather than dominating it. As indicated above, Mr. Atwood has failed to take up any of the overtures by Dr. Douglas, Schaeffer Somers (from the UVA architecture school), or others to improve the design with respect to the existing buildings (historical and not) and the history of the Jefferson School, Vinegar Hill, or the Starr Hill community.

Suggested actions:

- 1) The dive down access from W. Main and the adjacent sliver of building on the east side should be removed. The open maw of the entrance to the parking structure is out of character on W. Main and detracts from the relatively harmonious streetscape especially after the successful development of the West Main Annex site.
- 2) Reduce parking to the minimum required by the use of the building and avoid any

parking on level I (ground floor of the historical buildings)

- 3) Alter design to allow public or semi-public pedestrian flow throughout the site and onto Commerce Street (similar to the West Main Annex).
- 4) Request accurate scale drawings demonstrating the width of Commerce Street at the foot of the proposed building. [The current design includes trees and a sidewalk that cannot be accurate – there is no sidewalk behind the Atlantic Futon building, the Sprint building, or the old barber shop]. This is crucial not only for scale but also for assessing the shadowing and visual impact of the proposed building. I believe a scale drawing will reveal that the proffered design has inadequate space to allow pedestrian traffic.
- 5) In earlier designs, Mr. Atwood had responded to BAR member suggestions for a more articulated façade on commerce street to both break up the mass of the building and respond to the historical image of the independent store fronts. This element should be reintroduced into the design.
- 6) Limit tiering of posterior (Commerce Street) façade. The wedding cake effect cannot truly mitigate the shadowing and massing of the height and contributes to the overwhelming impression of the building facing Commerce. I would advocate eliminating the 4th floor tier completely or stepping back on the 3rd floor.
- 7) Request elevations of Commerce Street looking west to see the building in the context of the area. To date, it has been impossible to judge the impact of any of Mr. Atwood's designs (past or present) on the neighborhood because he never includes this elevation.

I hope the members of the BAR Committee can continue to provide leadership in shaping the architectural face of the city of Charlottesville. Thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,



Brad Worrall

December 14, 2015

City of Charlottesville
Board of Architecture Review

Dear BAR Members and Mary Joy Scala:

I write to you as a member of the architecture profession of Charlottesville, an instructor in architecture at the University of Virginia, and a stakeholder in the Star Hill community—my wife, Wendy Cohn, is the owner of a house at 208 6th Street NW. I am addressing my remarks in response to the BAR 15-09-05, application for a new mixed-use development by William Atwood. Having reviewed the latest submittal in light of previous submittals over the course of the last year and half, I recommend the following findings to the Board in considering the current application.

Parking Design & Entrance on West Main:

In the past, the applicant has stated in BAR meetings that the sizing of the parking garage exceeds the minimum required by zoning and building code by design. Although parking quantities have not been provided by the applicant, it is reasonable to assume that the parking capacity continues to exceed the need given the previous goals of the applicant.

The entrance to the parking garage on West Main Street is identified as a “Drive Down” ramp and is dimensioned as 16’ in width on sheet A1.1. The scale and use of this type of garage entry seems more appropriate to dense and spatially constrained urban conditions, and not the streetscape of Charlottesville in this critical section of West Main Street.

Furthermore, the parking entry design will undoubtedly introduce cause traffic congestion on Main Street and create conflicts with pedestrian movement on the public sidewalk, increasing the risk of traffic injury.

Massing & Facade Design:

The West Main Street Frontage drawing on the Massing Studies sheet demonstrates that the design makes no attempt to relate to the historic structures at 501 and 503 West Main or the Star Hill Neighborhood in scale or material. The massing and details of that resemble the applicant’s Waterhouse project are out of scale relative to the built environment of the Star Hill neighborhood, the historic structures, and West Main Street. The South and North elevations do not create a backdrop that is sensitive and sympathetic to the historic and residential character of this site.

The spacing between the “Drive Down” ramp and the adjacent historic property at 501 West Main is excessively narrow, so the reading from the street is one of awkward adjacency and

dominance of the historic structure. The proposal does not create a respectful setback from a historic structure, or a reasonable expectation of a pedestrian path between adjacent and unattached buildings. There is no apparent design logic for the narrow scale of this spacing that contributes to the streetscape.

Level 1 of the proposal is annotated as a "Parking Plaza", which creates a programmatic adjacency that diminishes the historic character of the properties. A better use of this floor level would be commercial or other publicly accessible uses that can leverage the aesthetic appeal of the historic structures. While programming may not be in the purview of the BAR, it is worth noting that the design is not sympathetic with the unique historic character of the site.

The 15' set-back space behind the historic structures is not scaled for a use that would create a contributing context for the properties through a use like semi-public space, retail opportunities, or landscape design. There is a successful precedent for this type of contributing public space at the next-door complex associated with 505 West Main Street.

Recommended Directions:

In conclusion, I recommend the BAR consider the following directions to guide future design proposal submittals by the applicant.

1. Eliminate the "Drive Down" garage entrance on West Main Street.
2. Reduce the parking to the minimum required by zoning and building code and eliminate parking on Level 1 (ground level of Main Street) of the project.
3. Increase the 15' set-back between the project and the historic properties to a minimum of 30' to allow for semi-public uses like outdoor commercial modeled on the design of the 505 West Main complex.
4. Provide for a reasonable set-back between the historic property at 501 West Main and the proposal scaled for pedestrian circulation and access to the rear setback.
5. Recommend that the applicant voluntarily reduce the building height to the proposed height being considered by the Planning Commission.

Thank you for considering these findings and recommendations in your deliberations, and I look forward to hearing your comments in the public hearing.

Best regards,



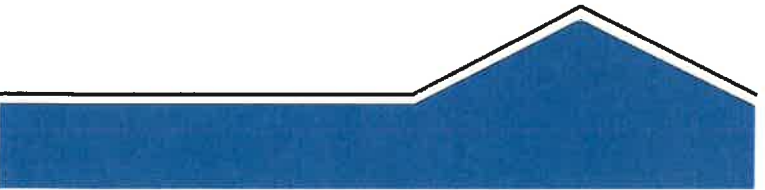
Schaeffer Somers

Lecturer, University of Virginia

Schools of Architecture | Medicine

Departments of Architecture | Public Health Sciences

THE ATLANTIC

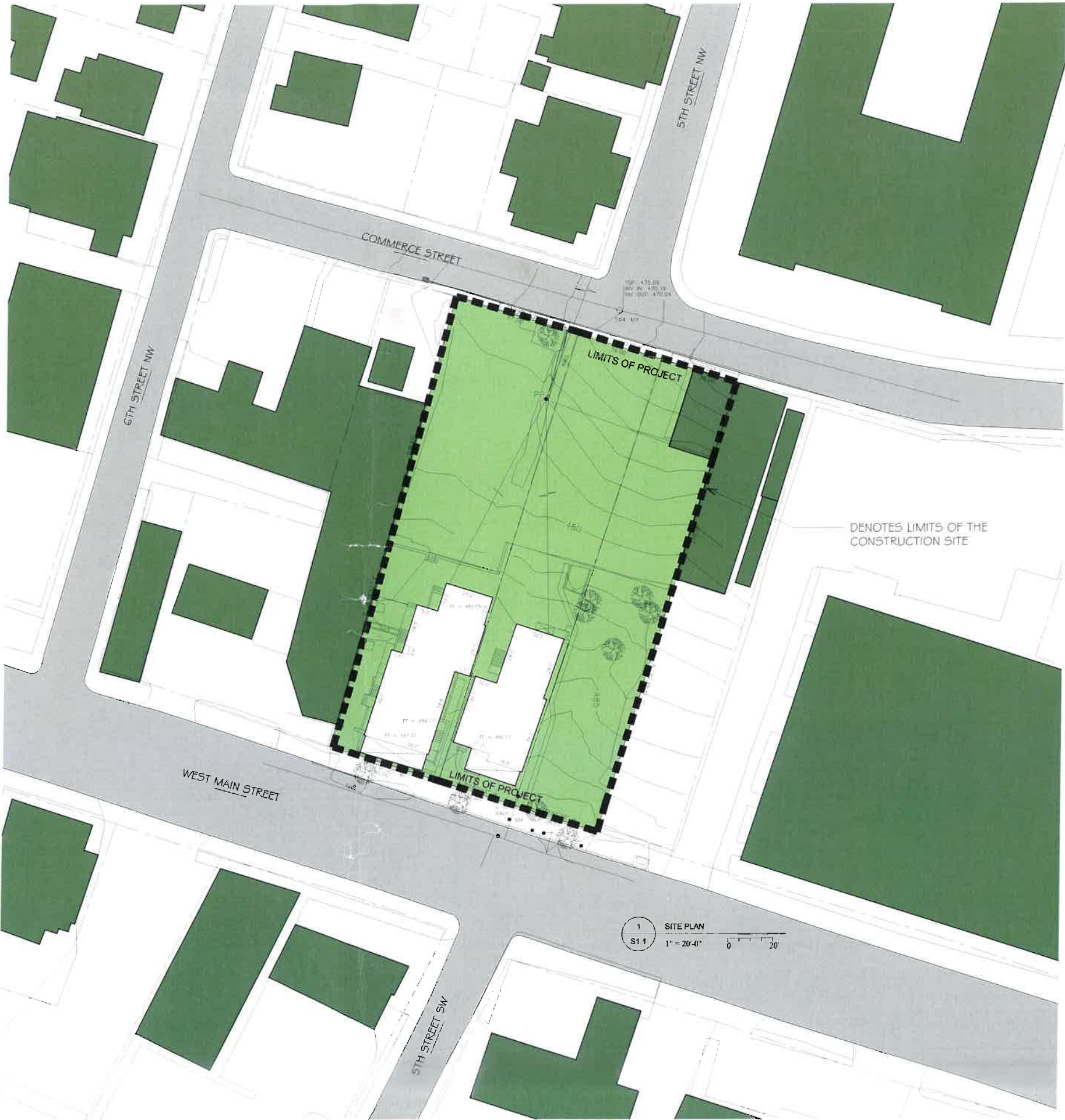


501 WEST MAIN STREET
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

The Atlantic

BAR Hearing
*Massing and elevation
concept for approval*

12/15/2015
Revised



ATWOOD

SCS
STUDIO

planning, designing, developing

WILLIAM H. ATWOOD, ARCHITECT
214 WEST WATER STREET
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

GENERAL NOTES:

1 NOTE

THE ATLANTIC



LOCATION:

501 WEST MAIN STREET
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

SITE PLAN

SHEET NAME

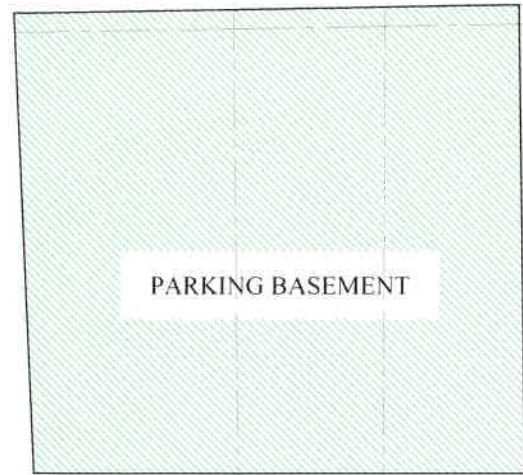
ISSUE REVIEW

DATE: 09/29/2015

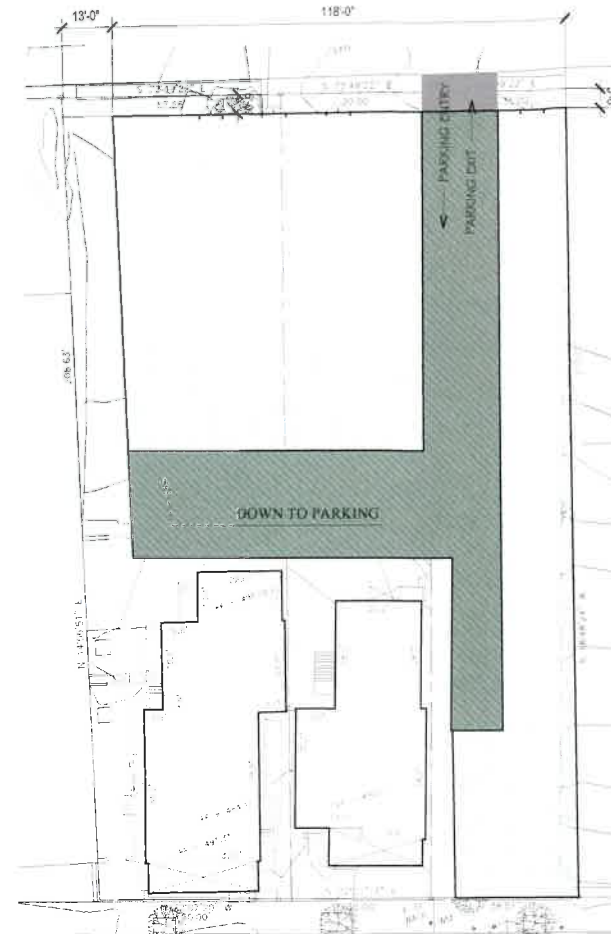
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SHEET #:

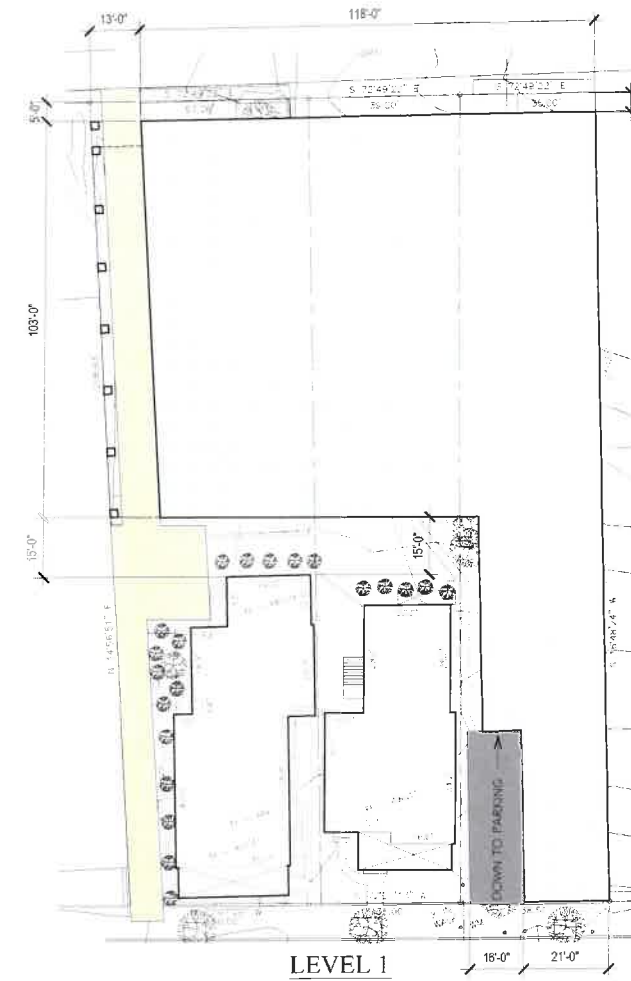




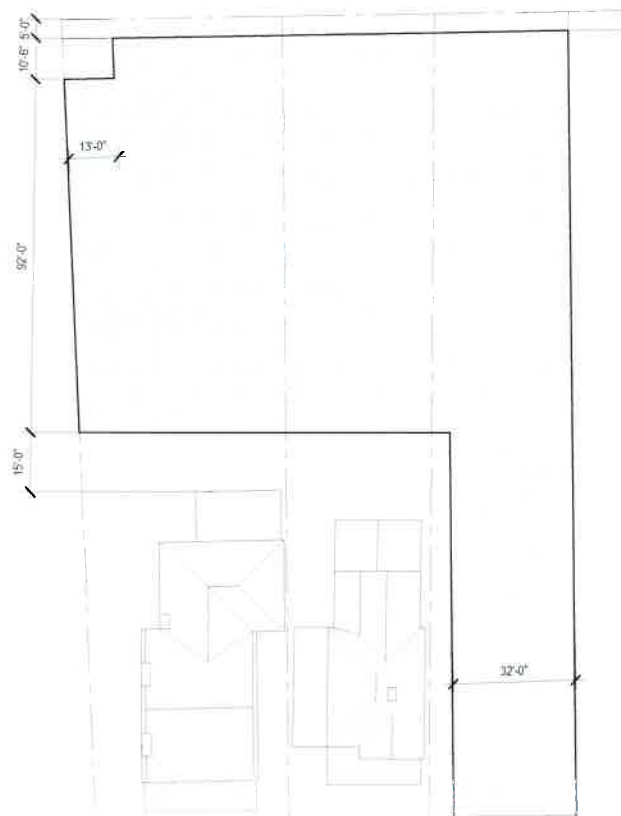
LEVEL -1 & -2



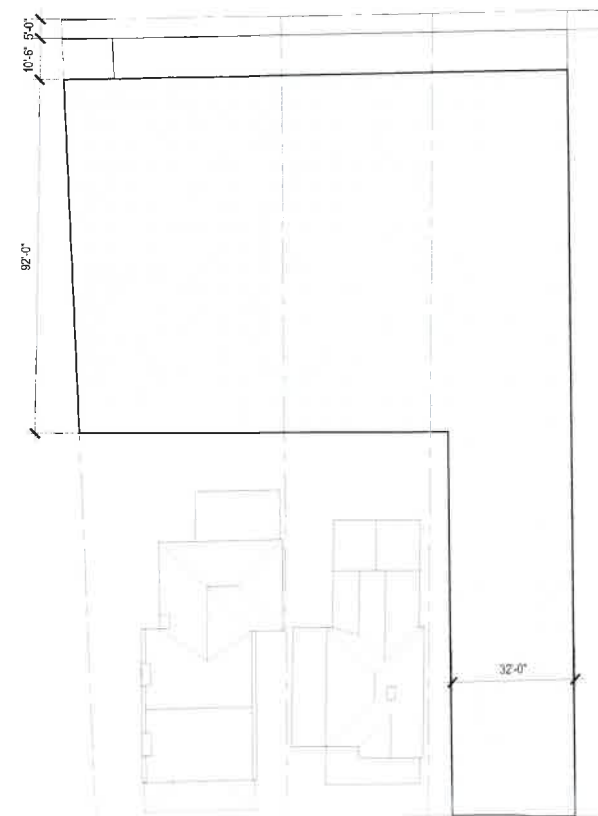
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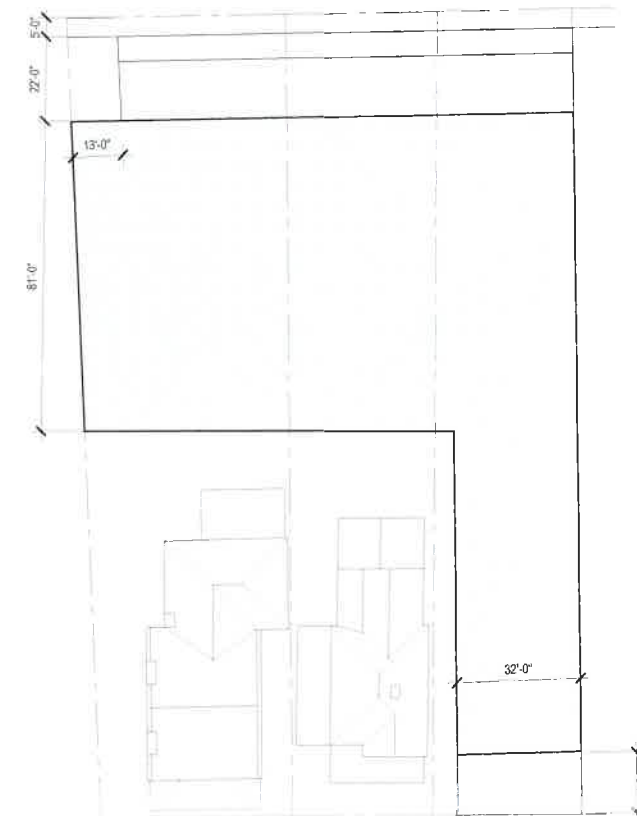
LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2



LEVEL 3



LEVEL 4

GENERAL NOTES

1. NOTE

THE ATLANTIC



LOCATION:

501 WEST MAIN STREET
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

FLOOR PLANS

SHEET NAME:

ISSUE REVIEW

DATE 11/30/2015

A1.1

SHEET #:

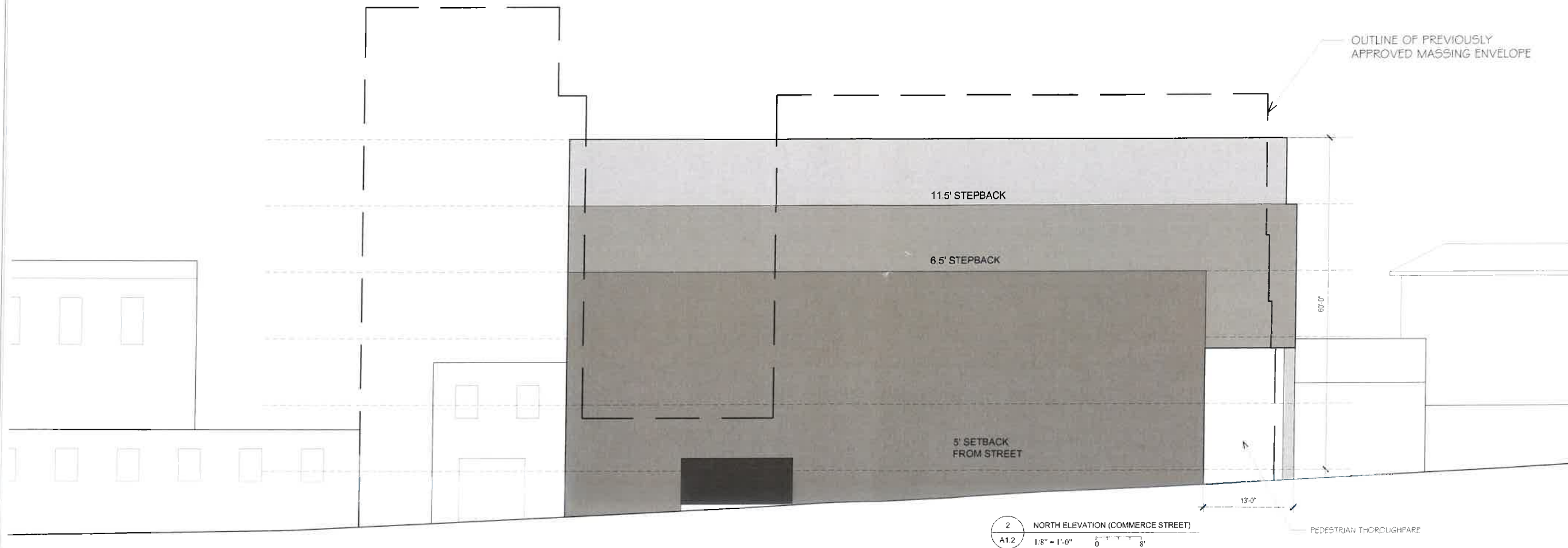


OUTLINE OF PREVIOUSLY
APPROVED MASSING ENVELOPE



1 SOUTH ELEVATION (WEST MAIN STREET)
1/8" = 1'-0"

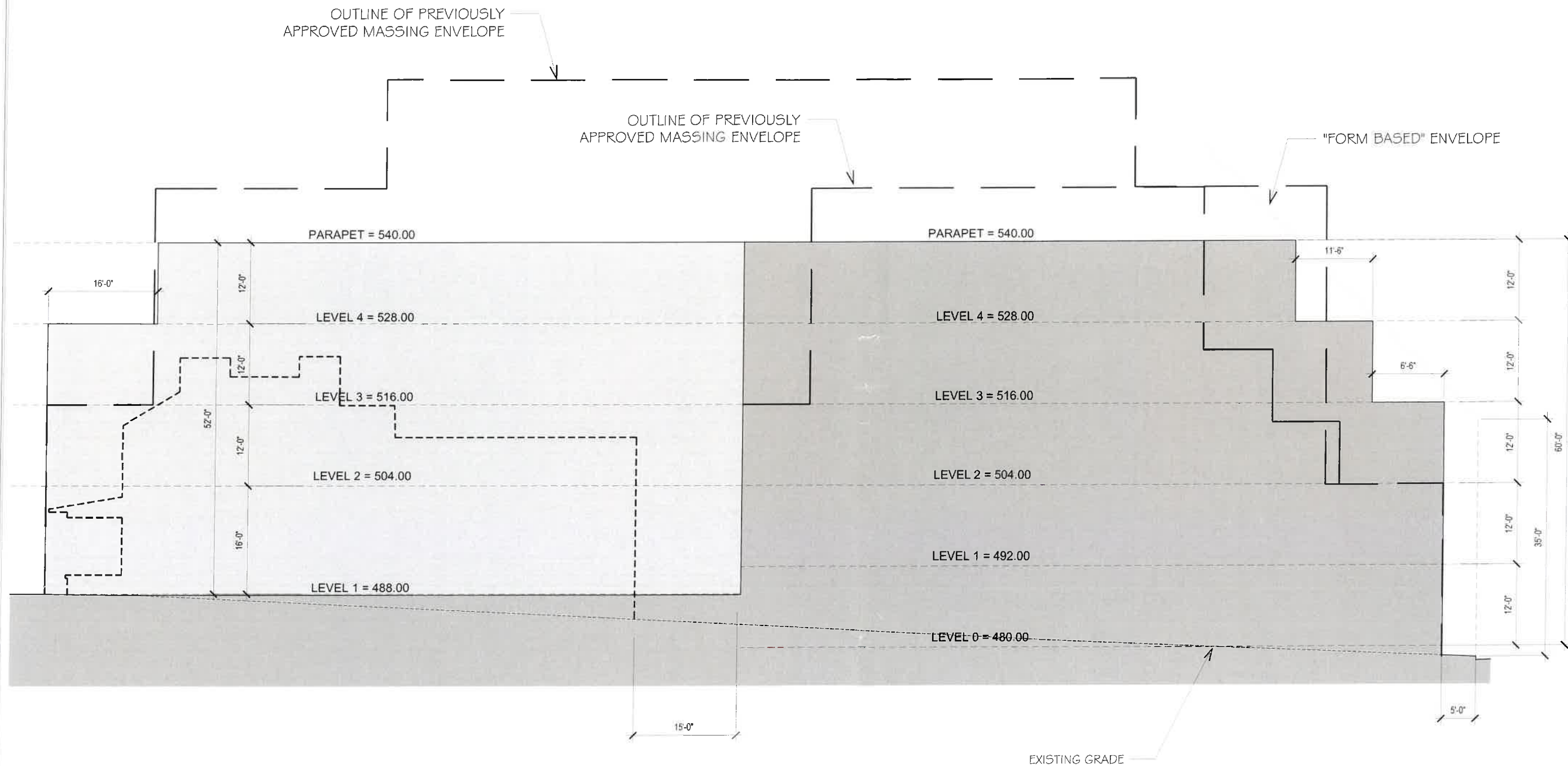
OUTLINE OF PREVIOUSLY
APPROVED MASSING ENVELOPE



2 NORTH ELEVATION (COMMERCE STREET)
1/8" = 1'-0"

GENERAL NOTES:

1. NOTE



1 SITE SECTION
A1.3 1/8" = 1'-0" 0 8'

THE ATLANTIC



LOCATION

501 W MAIN ST.
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

SITE SECTION

SHEET NAME:

ISSUE: REVIEW

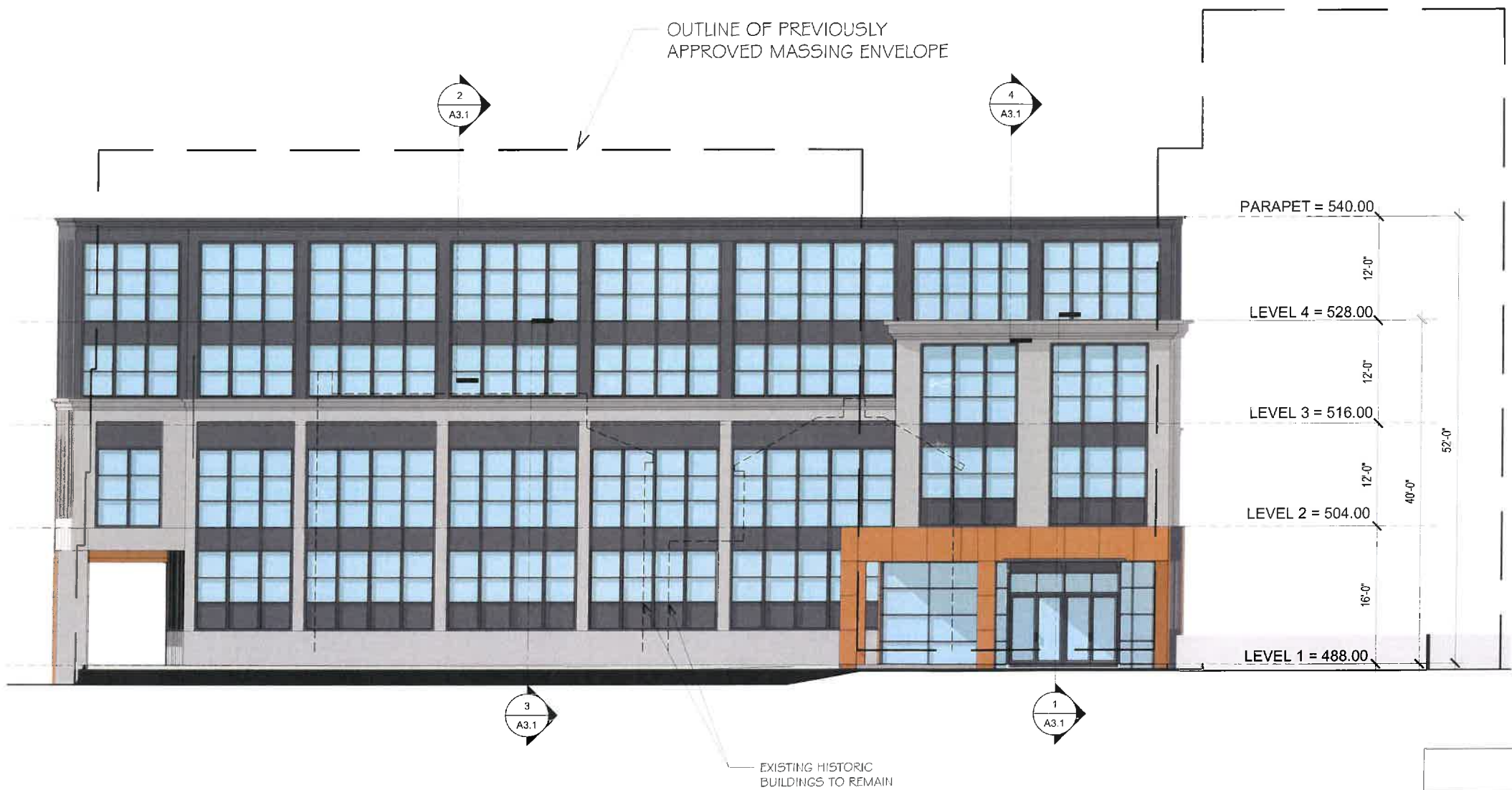
DATE 11/30/2015

A1.3

SHEET #

GENERAL NOTES:

1. NOTE



THE ATLANTIC



LOCATION:

501 W MAIN ST.
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

W MAIN
STREET
ELEVATION

SHEET NAME

ISSUE REVIEW

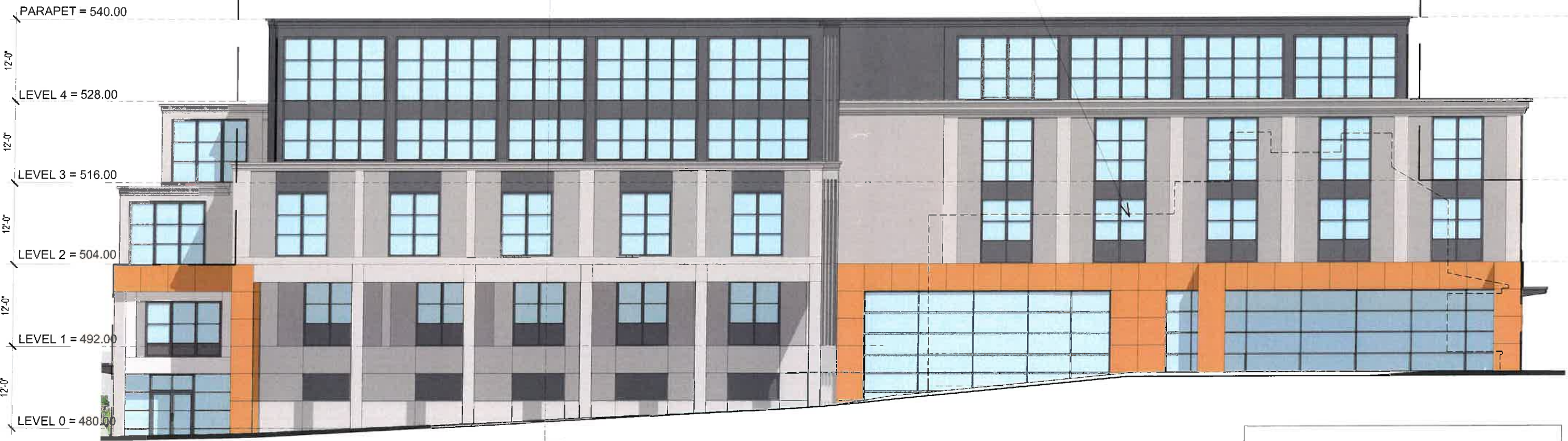
DATE 11/30/2015

A2.1

SHEET #

OUTLINE OF PREVIOUSLY
APPROVED MASSING ENVELOPE

EXISTING HISTORIC
HOUSES TO REMAIN



1 WEST ELEVATION
A2.2 1/8" = 1'-0" 0 8'

THE ATLANTIC



LOCATION
501 W MAIN ST.
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

WEST
ELEVATION

SHEET NAME

ISSUE: REVIEW

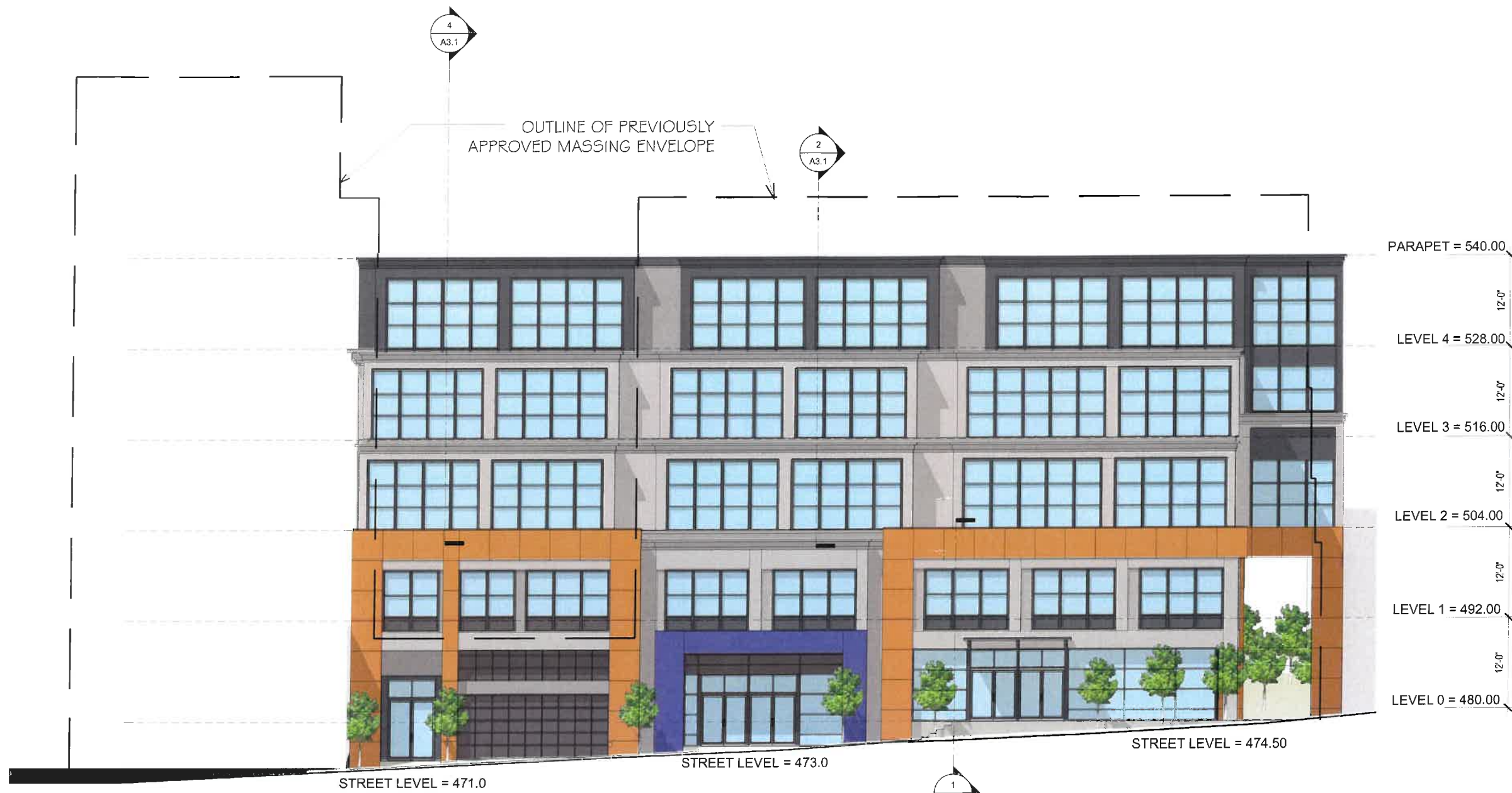
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A2.2

SHEET #

GENERAL NOTES

1. NOTE



1 NORTH ELEVATION (COMMERCE STREET)
A2.3 1/8" = 1'-0" 0 8'

THE ATLANTIC



LOCATION

501 W MAIN ST.
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

COMMERCE
STREET
ELEVATION

SHEET NAME

ISSUE REVIEW

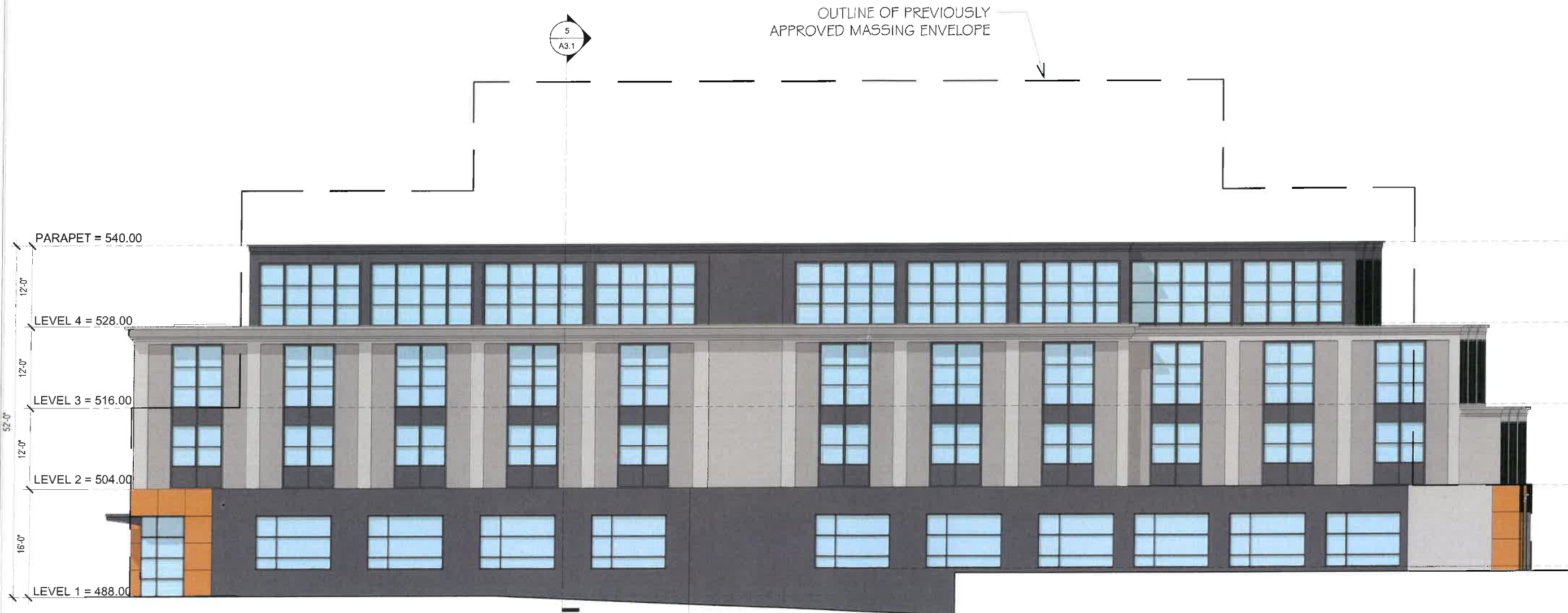
DATE 11/30/2015

A2.3

SHEET #

GENERAL NOTES:

1. NOTE:



1 EAST ELEVATION
A2.4 1/8" = 1'-0" 0 4 8'

THE ATLANTIC



LOCATION:

501 W MAIN ST.
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

EAST
ELEVATION

SHEET NAME

ISSUE REVIEW

DATE 11/30/2015

A2.4

SHEET #

Commerce St. Looking East



West Main St. Looking East



West Main St. Frontage



Commerce St. Frontage
Looking from 5th St. NW



W. Main St. Looking West



ATWOOD

SCS
STUDIO

planning, designing, developing

WILLIAM H. ATWOOD, ARCHITECT
214 WEST WATER STREET
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

GENERAL NOTES

1. NOTE

THE ATLANTIC



LOCATION

501 WEST MAIN STREET
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

MASSING
STUDIES

SHEET NAME:

ISSUE REVIEW

DATE: 09/29/2015

A3.1

SHEET #: