



Memorandum

To: Chairman Fred Reichle and the Town of Montgomery Planning Board

From: Karen Arent, Landscape Architect

Date: January 27, 2025

Subject: RDM NBP Neelytown Business Park Development DEIS

Consultant: Colliers Engineering

Cc: Ms. Bonnie Franson, Ross Winglovitz, Steven Esposito

COMMENTS:

DEIS sections that pertain to landscaping latest revision dated November 6, 2024 were reviewed. We have the following substantive comments:

B. Soils

1. Based on the EIS, the understanding is that the top five inches of soil on site has been determined sufficient for use as topsoil in planting areas and it will therefore be stripped and stockpiled for reuse. Stockpiled topsoil will be evaluated by a landscape architect for re-use in landscaped areas. The landscape architect should submit a suitability report to Montgomery's Building Department prior to use of the topsoil. Given the extensive planting proposed on site and the large berms which are highly relied upon for screening, the quality and depth of topsoil is of utmost importance to establish and maintain effective screening of the site. FedEx, to the north, had many issues with plant die-off on their berms. Issues mostly resolved once they amended their berm soils. It is best to get it right upon first installation rather than having to go back and replace dead plants. Recommended specification for soils has been provided with the landscape review memo.



karenarentdesign

12 Old Minisink Trail Goshen, NY 10924
845-294-9958 Phone KarenArentDesign@frontier.com

www.KarenArentDesigns.com

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2. As part of the mitigation measures, topsoil will be left in place in pavement areas receiving more than 5 feet of new fill to raise grades. This seems counterintuitive as the topsoil could be stripped for use in the many proposed landscaping areas, especially considering only the top five inches of existing soils has been deemed suitable for use as topsoil.

O. Visual Resources

3. In previous experience, it was important to screen views from Route 84. If this is still the case the entrance to proposed warehouse 2 will be very close to and particularly visible from Route 84. Perhaps a section and vantage point should be provided to determine visual impact of this entrance from Route 84.
4. Warehouse 3 is mentioned multiple times in the visual resources section despite no warehouse 3 being proposed for the site. The supplied renderings correctly label the warehouse but descriptions within the EIS mislabel the warehouses, creating confusion.
5. Under the subheading for Vantage point 3, vantage point 2 and 2B are described rather than vantage point 3 and no proposed viewshed is discussed or shown with a computer rendering. No explanation, drawings or photographs show how views of the warehouses will be screened from Vantage Point 3.
6. The description of Vantage point 4 is incorrect as it calls vantage point 4 vantage points 2 and 2B. No mention is given that this vantage point is located in front of existing residences on the west side of Beaver Dam Road. Proposed warehouse 1 appears to be misdescribed as warehouse 2. Images correctly label the warehouse as warehouse 1. Warehouse 1 is described as not visible but the southernmost corner of warehouse 1 as illustrated in figures 3.O.15 and 3.O.16 will be partially visible until at least year 10 after landscaping is installed.
7. Proposed vantage point 5 is on Neelytown Road but the proposed conditions section for this vantage point describe views from Beaver Dam Road.
8. Renderings for vantage point 6 show that all trees between the corner of Neelytown and Beaver Dam Roads and the edge of proposed warehouse 2 will be removed. There are thriving existing trees at the corner of Neelytown and Beaver Dam Roads and further into the site which should be protected and marked to remain. Proposed screening should be more organic, creating depth to field. It should work alongside existing vegetation, especially as it is easier to maintain existing thriving vegetation than it is to grow hundreds of new trees in the area's poor soils.

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9. Vantage point 7 is incorrectly described as being located near single-family residences and looking east toward the project site despite being on the east side of the project site. There are no residences across the street at vantage point 7 and it does not border the United Natural Foods, inc. property. The vantage point is located on Neelytown Road but views along Beaver Dam Road are discussed in this section. Most of the screening from this vantage point will be provided by existing vegetation with little to no proposed screen plantings along the southern corner and eastern façade of proposed warehouse 1. Views of the western façade will be partially mitigated by a 15' height stockade fence and a row of mixed evergreen and deciduous trees.
10. Vantage point 8 is on Neelytown Road and East of the warehouses. It is incorrectly described as being located on Beaver Dam Road and west of the warehouse. The vantage point is on Neelytown Road and the proposed conditions incorrectly describe visibility from Beaver Dam Road.

P. Animals, Plants, & Threatened and Endangered Species

11. The EIS discusses existing vegetation and habitat cover types found on site. It would be great to have a visual representation of the areas shown on the plan to get a better idea of what grew where. This way it will be easier to determine whether proposed plants will survive where they have been shown.
12. Takeover by invasive species is a potential impact on any project that requires disturbing soils as invasive species are great at taking over disturbed sites and crowding out and suffocating desirable native vegetation. Approximately 86 acres of the site will be disturbed, around 36 of which will be landscaped and/or converted to meadow. A plan for long-term invasive species mitigation and monitoring on disturbed areas of the site should be included as a method of mitigating impacts on plants and animals.

