

URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO: **Old Town North Urban Design Advisory Committee**

SUBJECT: Minutes of January Meeting

DATE: 14 January 2016

FINAL

The Urban Design Advisory Committee met on Wednesday, January 6 at 9:00am at City Hall. The following members were in attendance at the meeting:

Steve Kulinski
Marie McKenney Tavernini
Roger Waud
Bruce Machanic, co-chair
Daniel Straub, co-chair.

The following Staff, representatives for the Applicants, and citizen representatives were also in attendance:

Maria Wasowski	Planning Commission and Chair AG-OTN SAP
Chip Carlin	BAR and AG-OTN SAP
Carlos Mejias	AG-OTN SAP
Dirk Geratz	P&Z
Nathan Randall	P&Z
Michael Swidrak	P&Z
Heba Elgawish	P&Z
Cathy Puskar	Attorney at Law
Amy Friedlander	Attorney at Law
Krista Di Iaconi	Edens
Alisa Brem	Edens
Eddie Meder	Gables
Chris Harvey	Hord Coplan Macht
Nick Aello	Hord Coplan Macht
Steven Liam	Bowman Consulting
Scott Rykiel	MahanRykiel
Donald Freedheim	Watergate and VISION
Gerda Freedheim	Watergate and VISION

INTRODUCTION

- The meeting was called to order at 9:00am as the January meeting of UDAC.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Old Town North: update of Small Area Plan.** Staff gave a brief summary of the recently completed Phase 1 of the planning process for the update and described the next steps for Phase 2.

OLD BUSINESS: PROJECT PRESENTATION, REVIEW and DISCUSSION

- **Redevelopment of 530 First Street (The Giant/ABC block).** This project was previously presented to the committee in October and November (see previous minutes below), and the Applicant has developed an extensive community outreach and involvement program to solicit community input. Since there are many remaining community concerns, Staff gave a brief presentation of the existing planning criteria that describes the adjacent properties. The Applicant then gave a summary presentation of the results of various community meetings and the adjustments they have made, or are considering, to the concept plan for the project including the following:
 - the continuing evaluation, and discussion, of vehicular traffic circulation and transportation impacts
 - the possible re-location of the loading dock to Pitt Street
 - the continuing refinement of the parking requirements for the project
 - the changes and refinements to the architectural design of the elevations
 - the updated design for the community spaces and the streetscape.

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Comments by the community were offered with respect to traffic and circulation, loading access/egress, parking access, streetscape design, architectural and urban design character, and compatibility with the SAP update.

The following general items were discussed by the committee:

- the character and compatibility of the proposed architectural design of the project
- the desirability of the programmed community open space element on the podium facing Pitt Street
- the desirability of having the combined loading/parking access on First Street and the need to look at alternative solutions
- the apparent massiveness of this project with respect to the OTN area
- the development impacts of this project (parking, traffic, increased height and the precedent)
- the need to re-evaluate the streetscape design on First Street
- the need to adjust the proposed signage on the building.

The following specific comments were made by a member of the committee:

- it is commendable that the applicant carefully studied the site issues prior to the start of the design. The community input phase and thorough study of site conditions have made for a successful design
- the project fosters a sense of place through the plazas on Montgomery Street and the community green along N Pitt Street. The restaurants and retail enhance the sense of place with their site treatment that provides gathering space. The benches along the sidewalk and the up lighting of the trees will be successful as witnessed at the other Edens owned properties.
- the sense of arrival is clearly addressed by the light monitors (or lanterns as CCarlin referred to them) on the N St Asaph Street corners & the band of signage on identifying Old Town North works signals that same sense of arrival.
- the sense of community will be provided by the retail, restaurants & neighborhood green.
- the buildings address the streetscape by their orientation to the street which creates an urban street wall.
- the attractive pedestrian environment is created through the plazas, sidewalk widths & benches, as well as tree lighting.
- parking is underground & minimizes traffic around the block. The entry & two exits address adjacent parking lot entrances & are located to help separate the more low-key residential of the Watergate complex from the more intense multi-family and retail uses.
- the impact on the neighborhood as a whole will be positive in that it brings street activity, vitality, services & gathering places to Old Town North. These proposed services benefit both existing residents and new residents.

Other committee members expressed stronger concerns with the proposed FAR and proposed building heights for this project and would like to see this project more closely comply with the current Harris Teeter precedent and with the current OTN SAP that indicates building heights should step down from a maximum at the Alexandria House to the maximum of the local district, i.e. 50 feet, and that are compatible with the adjacent community (therefore a potential modified maximum building height of 70 feet and maximum FAR of 3.0+/-).

The Applicant indicated that they are currently evaluating the community concerns with respect to the loading access and the traffic impacts of the project. Based upon the above concerns and the scheduled evening community meeting for this project, the Applicant was asked to return to the committee when their re-evaluations have been completed. Specifically, the committee would like to see an alternative site plan and concept design at the next meeting that addresses:

- **truck loading entrance off Pitt Street (with no on-street back-ins, and a right turn only exit)**
- **adjustment to the community open space on the podium level facing Pitt Street**
- **an improved streetscape design on First Street**
- **an improved building articulation (varied setbacks) on the elevation facing First Street**
- **an adjustment to the proposed building signage (per comments).**

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November Minutes of this Project (for Reference):

This site has been discussed as a potential opportunity for redevelopment in OTN for many years, and previous concept plans have been submitted for review. The current development team has obtained the rights for both the ABC liquor store and the Giant grocery store, and the Applicant explained that they have conducted many outreach meetings with the community to solicit input and to explain how the current team works to develop a unified mixed use project that benefits the neighborhood and the community.

According to the Development Fact Sheet, the Applicant is requesting the following:

1. Master Plan Amendment to change the land use designation from CG to CDD#25;
2. Master Plan Amendment to change the maximum height limit from 50 feet to 77 feet;
3. Re-zoning from CG to CDD#25;
4. Development Special Use Permit to construct a mixed-use building with modifications for vision clearance requirements and height-to-setback ratio; and Special Use Permits for a parking reduction, and Transportation Management Plan

The following is a partial summary of the proposed project:

Project Description	Address: 530 First Street (entire block) Lot Area: 2.0 acres	
	Existing / Required	Proposed
Zoning	CG (Commercial General)	MP Amend + re-zoning – CDD#25
Use	Grocery Store + Liquor Store	Mixed Use:
		Retail (51,000sf)
		Residential (232 rental units)
FAR	0.33 (0.5 max); or 3.5 w/ CDD	3.5 (including loading dock)
Parking - total	existing: 120; reqd: 242+223=465	483 garage spaces
Setbacks	n.a.	n.a.
Building Height	existing: 14' & 34' (50' max)	77 feet
Open Space	n.a.	32,500 sf (37%)

After the Applicant gave a presentation of the updated concept design for this project, the committee offered the following comments:

- the proposed site plan layout of the various floors is commendable, but the uniformity of the building heights of the various building blocks for this concept remains as a serious mass and scale issue that also influences, and impacts, the streetscape viability of this project. The uniformity of the building heights also negatively impacts the potential overall compatibility of the project with the surrounding community;
- the apparent monotone color palette for the building elevations needs attention and refinement;
- the proposed general architectural composition shows a maturity of design skill for this level of concept design but needs to be taken to the next level of design refinement;
- the proposed perspective of the retail anchor of the project at the corner of First Street and St Asaph Streets needs more careful attention and design refinement (wrt to the proposed building block elevations, the height of individual building blocks, and the impact of the loading dock on street level retail); and
- the architectural design of the proposed townhouse elevations is improved but still needs refinement.

In summary, the committee indicated its eagerness to have the experience of the Edens team set the stage for a successful retail environment and streetscape for this project. However, it will also be important to improve on the results associated with other recently completed mixed use projects that maximized FAR along Saint Asaph Street for a large scale rental housing project. Essentially, the proposed maximum building height and maximum FAR being requested with this re-zoning will need to be justified as the project proceeds. The committee encouraged the Applicant to return in the near future to present a refined concept design.

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October Minutes of this Project (for Reference):

The following is a summary of the committee's comments from the October meeting:

- the proposed FAR of 3.5 appears to be aggressive for this site;
- the building setback along St Asaph Street does not appear to be sufficient, especially with respect to the recent results of the Harris Teeter project; additional building setback, or other design solutions should be considered;
- the possibility of additional setbacks for the retail corners was brought up and the Applicant indicated that they are investigating this suggestion;
- the uniform building base/podium for the underground parking, ground floor uses, covered service area with three separate building blocks and private open space areas above is commendable;
- the variation of the height of the three building blocks is commendable;
- the modern design of the major building elevations with new materials and colors is commendable;
- the overall architectural style and rendering is attractive, but the project needs more articulation of the building façade at the pedestrian level and needs to make a stronger statement as it relates to the pedestrian level streetscape (respecting the need for the coordination of utilities and storm-water management);
- the design of the townhouse units along Pitt Street appears to be different from the package mailed to the committee; the design of the TH units needs more attention/refinement, i.e. the building volume and the scale, articulation and elevation needs to relate to the Watergate complex;
- there may be a potential trade-off of additional density on the southern portion of the building for better building articulation and refinement; and
- the size of tenant spaces needs to be identified as the project proceeds.

- **Other.** No additional business.

ADJOURNMENT

- The Committee adjourned at approximately 10:40am.

Please notify the author of any additions, deletions or mistakes in this report.
