U R B A N D E S I G N A D V I S O R Y C O M M I T T E E

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

SUBJECT: Minutes of October 21, 2015 Meeting

DATE: 24 November 2015

F I N A L

The Urban Design Advisory Committee met on Wednesday, October 21 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:

Rob Kerns,	P&Z
Dirk Geratz	P&Z
Nathan Randall	P&Z
Michael Swidrak	P&Z
Harry Hart	Attorney at Law
Mary Catherine Gibbs	Attorney at Law
Cathy Puskar	Attorney at Law
Amy Friedlander	Attorney at Law
Steve Bannister	CIA LLC
Krista Di Iaconi	Edens
Alisa Brem	Edens
John Rust	Architect, Rust Orling
Scott Fleming	Architect, Rust Orling
Chris Harvey	Hord Coplan Macht
Nick Aello	Hord Coplan Macht
Steven Liam	Bowman Consulting
Elizabeth Chimento	Pitt Street Station
Andrea Haslinger	Pitt Street Station
Elizabeth Spoul	Canal Way

INTRODUCTION

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

OLD BUSINESS: PROJECT PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

- **800 North Washington Street (The Towne Motel site).** This project proposes to replace the existing motel and surface parking lot with a new hotel served by underground parking. Since the project is located on North Washington Street and is subject to the Washington Street Standards, it has been reviewed by the BAR for conceptual mass and scale and for architectural design over the summer. The project has been revised to reflect various BAR comments, and the architectural design of the project appears to be praiseworthy. However, since this project had not been reviewed by UDAC prior to the mass and scale endorsement by BAR, there remain unanswered questions about the project's mass and scale and more importantly, about the urban planning and site planning aspects of the project, i.e. the provision and adequacy of parking, the encroachment into the required Zone Transition setback, the provision of service and loading (vehicular and service), the non-conformance with required canopy coverage, and the character and quality of the proposed streetscape design along Washington Street. The Applicant's provision of elevation studies of the project with respect to Washington Street addresses the general overall scale issues of the project, but does not address the other identified issues.

  According to the Development Fact Sheet, the Applicant is requesting the following:
  1. Modification of the required Zone Transition Setback on the west boundary; and
  2. A reduction of the required tree canopy coverage requirement.

  This project has been submitted as a "by-right" zoning project with the following criteria:

Project Description	Address: 800 North Washington Street Lot Area: 0.45 acres	
	Existing / Required	**Proposed**
Zoning	CD-X	CD-X
Use	Motel	Hotel
FAR	0.75; 2.5 max w/SUP	2.5
Parking	existing: 19; req'd: 69	47 (deficit: 22 spaces)
Setbacks	front: n.a.	n.a.
	west: 50 feet	13.2 feet (deficit: 36 feet)
Building Height	Existing: n.a.; max 50 feet	50 feet
Open Space	n.a.	1,700 sf (8.86%)
		ground level: 1,250 sf
Tree Canopy Cover		not in compliance

After the Applicant gave a presentation of the status of the project the committee offered the following comments at this meeting:

- the shortage of required parking (22 spaces) remains as a serious concern especially as it influences the proposed mass and scale of the building;
- the proposed design of the north wing remains problematic as an urban design element (it does not complement the rest of the well-composed design concept and the rendering makes it appears to be brutalist masonry end wall that will not be a welcoming feature to the city);
- since the rest of the east elevation of the building facing NWashington Street has been carefully composed except for proposed north wing, could the height of the north wing be lowered, and/or adjusted, to present a more hospitable, attractive and compatible concept design; (the Applicant responded that the number of rooms for this type of hotel is at a tipping point and precludes any loss of rooms); and
- the proposed window layout and design on the north wing remains as an architectural design concern.
- the issues associated with the requested modifications (an encroachment into the Transitional Zone Setback and non-compliance with the tree canopy coverage requirements) were not pointed out to the committee by Staff and were therefore not included in the review/evaluation.

The following motion was offered and voted upon:

- **Motion by SK (second by BM) that UDAC endorse the schematic design of this project as currently presented with the condition that the Applicant continue to work with BAR and Staff to clarify the design of the north wing.**

  Yes: 4 (BM, MT, SK, RW)
  Abstain/No: 1 (DS)
  Motion Approved.

- **1101 North Washington Street (The Old Colony Inn site).** This project proposes the renovation and expansion of the existing two-story hotel into a larger hotel with a restaurant on the existing building footprint/foundation. The project includes a partial demolition and re-skinning of the building exterior, the addition of several floors to the existing building footprint resulting in an increase in available hotel rooms and a proposed new restaurant, a renovated surface parking and service layout, and improved landscape design features. The project is being submitted as a DSUP with several modifications, and has received BAR review and work-study comments. The Applicant has also reached out to the community to conduct a number of the meetings in order to receive their input and concerns, and the Applicant has previously met with UDAC on September 9 and October 21.

The following is a partial summary of the proposed project:

Project Description	Address: 1101 North Washington Lot Area: 0.98 acres	
	Existing / Required	**Proposed**
Zoning	CD (Commercial Downtown)	CD (Commercial Downtown)
Use	Hotel (49 rooms)	Hotel (95 rooms)
	Restaurant - n.a.	Restaurant (40 seat)
FAR	0.64 (1.50 maximum)	1.29+/- (1.36)
Parking - total	required: 74	proposed: 62
- othr	n.a.	leased spaces: 10
Setbacks	n.a.	n.a.
Building Height	30 to 35 feet	50 feet
Open Space	n.a.	6,541 sf (15.2%)

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

The committee indicated its concern with the height, mass and scale of the proposed addition, the encroachments into Transitional Zone Setback, the need for a restaurant at this location, the apparent shortage of additional parking required by the additional rooms and restaurant and the resulting significant impact this project will have on the availability of parking in the neighborhood, and the general less than ideal site planning and design for the project. Since this project will be revised to accommodate various comments by the BAR, the community and the Staff, the Applicant was asked to return for a presentation of the updated concept design plan in the future.

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

It appears that there are three main planning and design concerns with the project:

a) the proposed building height;
b) the parking requirements; and
c) the need for a proposed restaurant.

In summary, the committee recognized that this project presents a unique opportunity to improve a major entry to the city, but that it has not received community endorsement to date. The committee also believes that the apparent tradeoffs emerging with this concept design may make this a "win-win" project for all the parties: the Applicant, the adjacent neighborhood/community, and OTN. The Applicant was encouraged to continue to meet with Staff and the community to solicit their comments and to return to the committee to either before, or after, the next scheduled BAR hearing to present the revised concept design.

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

- the proposed height, massing and scale of the project remains a concern; however, the Applicant has continued to try to work with the community by developing an alternative design scheme that attempts to address these issues (the Applicant also indicated that the community is not in agreement with, and does not endorse, either of the alternative concept designs);
- the shortage of required parking (12 spaces) remains as a concern for both alternatives; however, since this project will utilize its existing foundation, it precludes any underground parking (the Applicant also indicated that they have a lease commitment for 10 additional parking spaces and will utilize a shuttle service for employees and to and from the airport for guests);
- the possibility of requesting the Applicant and Staff to evaluate the parking situation one year after the project is completed in order to assure the community that sufficient parking is provided;
- whether the Zone Transition Setback encroachment is eliminated by the alternative lower building elevation concept;
- the appropriateness of each alternative design concept with respect to Washington Street and to the adjacent community; and
- whether the location of the proposed restaurant is appropriate at the southern end of the building or internally at the center of the building.

In addition, various members of the community voiced the following comments:

- the Applicant has not responded accurately to the latest BAR comments, and has designed the new alternative design (November) to be less attractive than the previous (September) concept design (the Applicant denied this allegation);
- the new alternative design does not have the refinement and roof design characteristics/quality of the previous (September) concept design; and
- each of these alternative concept designs fails to meet the parking requirement for this site.

The following motion was offered and voted upon:

- **Motion by BM (second by MT) that UDAC endorse the concept design of this project as presented at the September meeting (i.e. with the higher end wings) and with the proposed location of the restaurant on the south end of the building.**

  Yes: 3 (BM, MT, RW)
  Abstain: 1 (SK)
  Abstain/No: 1 (DS)
  Motion Approved.

- **530 First Street (The Giant/ABC block).** 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%)

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 proposed 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.

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 new 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 architectural style and design of the building elevations does not reflect, and does not do justice to, the proposed renderings of the streetscape retail;
- 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 (with respect to to the proposed building block elevations, the height of individual building blocks, and the impact of the loading dock on street level retail - it is reminiscent of the canyon-like experience now existing at Madison, St Asaph and Pitt streets); 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 with solid planning documentation and quality design efforts as the project proceeds. The committee encouraged the Applicant to return in the near future to present a refined concept design.

- **Other**. No new additional business.

ADJOURNMENT

- The Committee adjourned at approximately 11am.

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