

# URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

SUBJECT: Minutes of January Meeting

DATE: 29 January 2016

FINAL

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The Urban Design Advisory Committee met on Wednesday, January 27 at 10:00am at City Hall since the city was recovering from the recent snowstorm. The following members were in attendance at the meeting:

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

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

Carlos Mejias	AG-OTN SAP
Tom Soapes	NOTICE and AG-OTN SAP
Maya Contreras	P&Z
Heba Elgawish	P&Z
Lawrene MacTaggart	P&Z
Nathan Randall	P&Z
Jim Roberts	P&Z
Michael Swidrak	P&Z
Nancy Williams	P&Z
Shanna Austin	T&ES
Bob Garbacz	T&ES
Kayte North	T&ES
Cathy Puskar	Attorney at Law
Amy Friedlander	Land Use Planner
Krista Di Iaconi	Edens
Alisa Brem	Edens
Eddie Meder	Gables
Chris Harvey	Hord Coplan Macht
Nick Aello	Hord Coplan Macht
Mike Pinkoske	Wells and Associates
Steven Liam	Bowman Consulting

## **INTRODUCTION**

- The meeting was called to order at 10:00am as the second January meeting of UDAC.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Old Town North: Small Area Plan.** Staff (NW) gave a brief summary of the recent activities, actions and decisions associated with the planning process. Essentially, Council has given a “green light” for proceeding into Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the process, and the Advisory Committee (AG) organized into four sub-committees to address the major planning issues. The Land Use, Design and Housing sub-committee and the Open Space/Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation sub-committee both met last week. Updates of all activities will be posted on the city’s website.

## **OLD BUSINESS: PROJECT PRESENTATION, REVIEW and DISCUSSION**

- **Redevelopment of 530 First Street (The Giant/ABC block).** This project was presented to the committee for review on January 6 and previously in October and November (see previous minutes). Since the January meeting introduced additional community concerns and opposition with respect to traffic, parking access to the proposed garage and service loading, and access to the building combined with continuing concerns with the concept design of the proposed building elevation on First Street and a few other minor design issues, the Applicant was asked to present alternative concepts to address these issues.

1. Traffic, Parking Access/Egress and Service Loading for the Building. The Applicant indicated that they have studied alternative site design options for the parking access/egress to the garage and truck access/egress to the internal loading dock. A series of alternative concepts were presented and discussed:

- Options 1A and 1B (all access/egress off Pitt Street);
- Options 2A and 2B (parking garage access/egress off First Street with loading access/egress off Pitt Street); and
- Option 3 (parking garage access/egress and loading access off First Street and loading egress off Pitt Street with a required right turn only, an adjustment to the current concept design site plan narrowing the current opening from approximately 49 feet to approximately 39 feet, and the addition of an attractive vertical-opening garage door to screen the parking and loading openings.

In addition, the Applicant explained a) the exhibit they prepared with respect to the proposed changes to the intersection at First Street and Pitt Street (field of vision improvements and future streetscape bump-outs for pedestrian mobility), and b) the exhibit explaining traffic conditions and proposed signalization improvements at the intersection of First Street and the GW Memorial Parkway.

The following comments were offered:

- The Applicant indicated the desirability and impacts on the project of each option.
- UDAC (DS) indicated that the nature of First Street as a truncated local street combined with a) the status of Pitt Street as a local collector street and b) the proposed intersection improvements at First and Pitt Streets would appear to preclude the feasibility, or desirability, of any vehicular access to the building from First Street. In addition, it was pointed out that the committee is not receptive to back-in loading from Pitt Street (Option 2B).
- T&ES Staff indicated the importance and desirability of the intersection and signalization improvements noted above and the importance of improving pedestrian mobility at First and Pitt Streets. Staff also indicated that they will make these improvements part of the conditions for the DSUP.
- The Applicant indicated that the amount of traffic generated by the project is not an issue and this was challenged by a member of the community (NOTICe). The traffic consultant indicated that the Level of Service (LOS) at all of the intersections will not exceed LOS 'D'; however, a three-way stop at First and Pitt Streets is not warranted at this time.
- UDAC requested comments from Staff (P&Z and T&ES) with respect to larger scale transportation planning for this area of OTN and how it would influence the location of project access and egress. Staff had no comment.
- The Applicant indicated that Options 1A and 1B are not viable, nor desirable, from their point of view; in response, UDAC indicated that there are so many positive aspects to this project that "win-win" solutions need to be found on the remaining issues at hand.
- UDAC (BM) commented on the positive aspects of the newly proposed vertical-opening garage door on the proposed First Street elevation, and inquired about the possibility of using the same solution for the Pitt Street building elevation. The Applicant indicated that this can be accomplished.
- UDAC (SK) gave a summary of the positive aspects of original concept design for the project and the alternative options presented to date, and indicated a preference for the original concept design subject to the improvements identified in Option 3 as presented.
- UDAC (RW) inquired about the proposed route trucks and delivery vehicles could be expected to take to the project. Since truck traffic is nominally excluded on GW Memorial Parkway, it could logically be concluded that trucks would primarily access the project from St Asaph Street introducing the feasibility/desirability of access from that street, and/or the technical feasibility of another right turn at First Street to the current proposed access. It would therefore appear that Pitt Street would be a more straight-forward access route for truck traffic with a Pitt Street building access.
- NOTICe (TS) expressed the preference for Option 3.

**Discussion and Vote:** After extensive discussion of all these and other comments the following motion was offered and voted upon:

- **Motion by BM (second by SK)**

**UDAC supports Option 3 as presented with the condition that the final concept design for the Pitt Street elevation of the project include the same vertical-opening garage door solution proposed for First Street elevation.**

**Yes: BM, SK, RW**

**No: DS**

**Motion Approved.**

2. Adjustment to the Community Open Space on Podium Level facing Pitt Street. The Applicant indicated that they will adjust the lighting such that no direct lighting will be directed toward Pitt Street, and that only ambient lighting will be used in this area of the community open space.

3. Adjustment to the Proposed Building Signage. The Applicant indicated that this has been completed and will appear on the next concept design images for the project.

4. Improved Streetscape Design on Pitt Street. The Applicant indicated that with the reduced parking garage and loading dock entrance there is sufficient space for additional street trees on First Street. They also indicated that the next stage of the retail planning will allow for improved streetscape design considerations.

5. Improved Building Articulation (varied setbacks) on the First Street elevation. The Applicant indicated that the building corner of First and St Asaph Streets has always been considered as different from the primary corner of Montgomery and St Asaph Streets. A long discussion ensued about the undesirability of the uniform building height along this entire stretch of the building, the lack of varied setbacks (defined by Staff as “ins and outs”) and the apparent blandness and banality of this elevation. In addition, the following specific comments were offered:

- UDAC (DS) indicated that this elevation reminds one of a “big box” solution on a retail plinth, and does not justify the maximum 3.5 FAR that the Applicant is seeking. It was also noted by all that the hotel across the street justifies a better building elevation.
- UDAC (BM) indicated that compared to the rest of the project, this elevation does not have the same design vitality, and apparently could generate an undesirable “canyon effect” along First Street.
- UDAC (SK) commented that the perspective of the corner at First and St Asaph is a better reflection of the refined design character that this project has attempted to carefully develop, especially with respect to the proposed character of the streetscape image. DS followed indicating that some of the same design elements utilized on the StAsaph Street elevation could possibly be utilized on the First Street elevation in order to improve and enliven that building façade/elevation.
- UDAC (RW) commented that this project is special because each building side is unique in the design treatment it has received; however, it appears that this First Street side has not received the same ‘special’ design attention that the other building sides have received. It was recommended that it may be appropriate, and advantageous, to repeat successful design elements utilized on the other sides of the building in order to make this First Street side a more inviting space and place.
- Staff (NW) recommended that the committee should consolidate and confirm the positive design aspects of the rest of the concept design for this project and encourage the Applicant to continue to work with Staff on this aspect of the concept.

**Discussion and Vote:** The following motion was offered and voted upon:

- **Motion by BM (second by SK)**

**UDAC supports the conceptual design of this project and the building design and articulation of the project as reflected in the elevations for the St Asaph, Montgomery and Pitt Street sides of the project, but feels that the design of the First Street side of the project needs further improvement and refinement. As such, UDAC encourages the Applicant to work with Staff to resolve the remaining planning and design issues and return to present the overall consolidated concept design for the project.**

**Yes: BM, SK, RW, DS**

**No: -**

**Motion Approved.**

- **Other.** No additional business.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

- The Committee adjourned at approximately 11:50am.