

# URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

SUBJECT: Minutes of September 9, 2015 Meeting

DATE: 9 September 2015

FINAL

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

Marie McKenney Tavernini  
Bruce Machanic, co-chair  
Daniel Straub, co-chair.

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

Stephen Koenig	Planning Commission
Maya Contreras	P&Z
Michael Swidrak	P&Z
Yuri Blazar	City Interests
Frank Craighill	City Interests
Ken Wire	Attorney at Law
John Rust	Architect
Cathy Puskar	Attorney at Law
Tom Soapes	NOTICE
Elizabeth Chemento	NOTICE
Andrea Haslinger	NOTICE
other members not signed-in	NOTICE

## **INTRODUCTION**

- The meeting was called to order at 9:00am as the quarterly meeting of UDAC. The purpose of the meeting was 1) to review the revised conceptual design for the historical/cultural and open space/landscape design aspects of the proposed 500 / 501 North Union (RTN) project, and 2) to review the current concept design for the Old Colony Inn project.

## **OLD BUSINESS: PROJECT PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION**

- **500-501 North Union Street (The Robinson Terminal North site).** This project was previously presented to the committee at UDAC meetings in April, July and December of 2014 and in April and May of 2015 (please see previous meeting minutes for the history of project review by UDAC).

This presentation was directed at explaining the four relatively small changes to the site plan that was presented to the committee in May. The following items were discussed:

- Simplified Planting Area on the Pier. The Applicant explained that after discussions with Staff the proposed planting area, and planters, on the pier has been reduced to accommodate views and reduce the technical complications of planting trees on the pier.
- Proposed Shade Structure. The Applicant explained that in order to provide shade on the pier a large fabric shade structure that can be removed has been proposed on the east end of the pier.
- Movable Seating. The Applicant explained that movable bench seating is now being proposed on the north and south ends of the pier.
- Oronoco street Promenade. The Applicant explained that after discussions with Staff the re-location of the bio-sparge equipment shed to the parking garage is not financially feasible. As a result, the shed will remain in its current location, but the Applicant will commit to a financial contribution (\$650,000) to the City to be used in any way that the City determines to be suitable.

### **Discussion and Vote:**

The following items were discussed at the May meeting and continue to remain as planning concerns:

- The technical and environmental feasibility of the proposed 'open section' of the pier.
- The design feasibility of the proposed 'open section' of the pier.
- The appropriateness of the 'naturalized man-made edge' vs a real 'natural shoreline'.
- The need for further clarification of the proposed streetscape along Union Street (and possibly the need for a site section indicating the limits of the proposed garage space and how the proposed street trees are to be implemented successfully).

- The need for the City to address the end of Union Street from an urban design point of view.
- The need to clarify the material palette for open space and landscape items and ensure that this project is coordinated with the overall material palette for the Waterfront Plan.
- The need to resolve and finalize maintenance issues for the public open space.
- The need to resolve and finalize maintenance issues for the waterfront and river edge.
- The need to resolve and finalize the proposed financial contributions for maintenance (for the initial 5 years, after 5 years, and in perpetuity).

The following motion was offered and voted upon:

- Motion by MT (second by BM) that UDAC endorse the proposed changes (and, thereby with the previous votes, endorses the overall concept design for this project).

**Yes: unanimous confirmation**

**Motion Approved.**

**NEW BUSINESS: PROJECT PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION**

- **1101 North Washington Street (The Old Colony Inn site).** This project proposes the re-use and expansion of the existing hotel by incorporating a two-story addition onto the existing footprint and the inclusion of a small restaurant. The project was previously presented to the BAR (September 2, 2015), and the Applicant has reached out to the community to conduct a number of the community meetings to receive their input.

This presentation was directed at explaining the planning, site design and architectural design aspects of the project. The following planning items were discussed:

	Existing	Proposed Concept Design
• Zoning	CD	CD (adjacent: West: POS; North: OCM; East: RM; South: CD)
• FAR	< 1.00	1.38 (max allowable: 1.50)
• Bldg Ht	25' to 30'	50feet
• Rooms	49	104 (or 111 previous)
• Restaurant	n.a.	40 seats + 20 potential overflow seats from meeting room
• Parking	69 (1.41/room)	69 (0.66 spaces/room); no additional parking for restaurant
• Open Space	no reqt	no reqt

The following site design and architectural design items were discussed:

- Relationship to Washington Street. The west elevation of the project will respect the historic character of Washington Street by centering the proposed porte cochere and central portion of the hotel on the existing roadway ellipse in the Washington Street roadway corridor, proposing a Colonial Revival architectural design for the building, and re-constructing the section of the serpentine wall that was previously removed. The committee is favorably pleased with the revisions to the Colonial Revival design concept that the Applicant has already made as a result of previous non-UDAC meetings. However, several comments were directed at whether the scale and mass of the building is appropriate for the historic Washington Street/Mount Vernon roadway corridor. Comments were also offered that at the recent BAR hearing, adjustments to the height of the adjacent wings of the proposed addition were recommended. The Applicant indicated that they will be revising the concept design to reflect those BAR comments. A question was also raised whether this project meets the Washington Street Design Standards (WSDS). Staff and the Architect indicated that the requirements of WSDS are satisfied with the only possible exception associated with the proposed length of the building (please see the BAR Staff Report which makes the case that this project is in conformance with the WSDS, although there may be some continuing questions about appropriate mass and scale of the building).
- Relationship to the Adjacent Community. The east and south elevations of the project attempt to respect the character of the existing community by reducing the originally proposed height of the addition on the east elevation, providing a setback of the top floor, providing for compact parking spaces in the alley while preserving a 22 foot drive aisle, and moving the loading and service area to the north side of the building. Several comments were directed at whether the proposed addition is in conformance with the Transitional Zone Setback requirements, and the Applicant presented a drawing indicating that encroachment conflicts do exist but that they may be able to be rectified. The Architect also offered that adjustments to the height of the two adjacent wings of the east elevation are being considered, and that if the adjustments are adopted they will remove any encroachment conflicts with the Transitional Zone Setback requirements except for the center-entry section of the east elevation. Other community concerns that were raised include:

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- the need for a restaurant at this location;
  - the lack of open space and landscape planting on the proposed rear elevation along with the lack of any outdoor hotel amenities that would help to mitigate the current design;
  - the canyon effect of the proposed current design along the alley corridor;
  - the impact of the proposed height of the current design on adjacent properties;
  - the impact of additional perpendicular parking along the east elevation combined with a reduced drive aisle in the alley resulting in questionable emergency vehicle access.
- **Parking and Loading/Service and Fire Access.** The Applicant indicated that they are proposing to provide no additional on-site parking for the proposed additional 55 rooms and restaurant, but that they are investigating the possibility of providing off-site parking for employees. In addition, the Applicant indicated that they are conducting several traffic studies of adjacent intersections along with a study of the occupancy rates/parking requirements of the existing hotels in the area. In any event, the parking requirement will continue to remain an important issue and the Applicant indicated that a modification will be requested. As noted above, the proposed loading/service area has been re-located to the north section of the building to accommodate community concerns, and community comments were offered that this proposed solution will need additional design attention. Finally, several comments were directed toward the feasibility of the fire and emergency access for this project. Although fire/emergency access may be provided in the public alley behind the proposed project, the viability of turning movements and potential egress to Bellvue Place, a private alley, were questioned.

The committee indicated its concern with the height, mass and scale of the proposed addition, the Transitional Zone Setback encroachments, 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.

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

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

- The Committee adjourned at approximately 11:00am.

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

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