

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

October 10, 2013

- PRESENT: Terry Smith-Lamothe, Chair
William Hyde, Vice-Chair
Mary Black
Suzanne Saul
Jeff Pinhey
Ramzi Kawar
Suzanne Saul
Roy McBride
Sue Sirrs
Mary Black
- REGRETS: Cesar Saleh
Kevin Conley
Anne Sinclair
Ann Wilkie
- STAFF: Richard Harvey, Acting Urban Design Project Manager
Myles Agar, Planner
Jane Crosby, Legislative Support

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 12 and 26, 2013

MOVED by Mr. Hyde, seconded by Mr. Kavar, that the minutes of September 12th and 26th, be approved as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

The Chair indicated that a Correspondence Item had been added. Item 7.2 will be considered prior to 7.1 due to timing.

MOVED by Ms. Black, seconded by Mr. McBride, that the agenda, as amended be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES: None

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS: None

6. CORRESPONDENCE/PETITIONS/DELEGATIONS:

6.1 Letter from the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia – October 9, 2013

The Chair noted that the letter had been received by Committee members.

7. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

7.1 Preliminary Presentation – Case 18848 – Brunswick Street Presentation

Ms. Sirrs declared a Conflict of Interest as she was working on this proposal. She further indicated she would be presenting this evening.

Ms. Sirrs introduced the streetscape project for the apartment towers on Brunswick Street. This project is also being presented by Great West Life Realty Advisors (GWL) and Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum Inc. Architects (HO+K). Ms. Sirrs provided a brief description of the project.

Mr. Andrew Hollins, Vice President of Development at GWL, provided the Committee with the concept behind the project. He noted the project's relation to the redevelopment at the former Citadel Hotel site. The expected outcome is a

revitalization of Brunswick Street. Mr. Hollins indicated that the residents of the towers had been surveyed so that they could gain a better sense of what is expected. The survey results concluded that there was a lack of retail within the area. This project is seen as a reinvestment that will help soften and improve the area, but also allow some general maintenance work to be completed as well.

Mr. Gordon Stratford, Director of Design (Canada) for HO+K delivered a presentation to provide the Committee with a high level overview of the Site Plan Approval (SPA). Mr. Stratford presented the three buildings making up the project and described the changes that would take place at each site. He noted that the high podium walls that currently exist around much of the site would be removed. This space would then be occupied by retail space that would help animate the streetscape and liven the pedestrian experience.

Mr. Stratford presented the ground floor plans, and various elevations for each building. He stated that the new retail roof would be green roofs as part of a sustainability strategy. He described the materials that would likely be used and noted that there will be consistency between the three buildings. Mr. Stratford stated that this is a small project but the hope is that it provides a big change to the current streetscape. He noted that this project has no variance requests and that it abides by the HRM by Design Guidelines.

A discussion ensued and Mr. Stratford, Mr. Hollins and Ms. Sirrs responded to questions from the Committee. In response to a question from Mr. Kavar, Ms. Sirrs noted that all of the vegetation must be removed. This is for maintenance reasons as the podiums are leaking. The Chair noted that he was pleased that the views from Citadel Hill would be enhanced through this revitalization.

Mr. Pinhey asked if there would be encroachment on the existing sidewalk. Mr. Stratford noted that the existing sidewalks are quite narrow and that there would be no encroachment. All of the redevelopment would be within the existing property line. Referencing Mr. Pinhey's concerns, Ms. Sirrs noted that the doors to the retail sites are recessed.

In response to a question about the materiality of the existing towers, Ms. Sirrs clarified that the finishes on the building would not be altered. The Chair inquired about maintaining continuity on the retail additions, if there is no continuity on the towers themselves. He noted that it could have been more playful if there was more articulation. Mr. Hollins responded that this suggestion would be given consideration. The Chair noted that this project would be a great improvement to the street and thanked Mr. Hollins, Ms. Sirrs and Mr. Stratford for their presentation.

Ms. Sirrs returned to her seat.

7.2 Preliminary Presentation – Nova Centre

Mr. McBride declared a conflict of interest and took a seat in the gallery.

Mr. Richard Harvey, Acting Urban Design Project Manager, provided the Committee with the context of the presentation. He stated that part of the Committee's role is to provide recommendations to Council regarding potential changes to HRM's planning documents. He stated that the Nova Centre is currently provided for within the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land-Use By-law, however the design of the building has changed. Mr. Harvey explained that the Committee will consider a staff report and input that is reported from the public at a special meeting taking place at the end of the month. The Committee will then make a recommendation to Council. Mr. Harvey indicated that if the changes to the planning documents are approved, the project will come back to the Design Review Committee as a Site Plan Approval Application pursuant to the new changes in the planning documents.

The Chair noted that he was under the impression that this project was grandfathered. Mr. Harvey explained that the original proposal and design has changed because of public input that has been received.

Mr. Joe Ramia, from Rank Inc. introduced the presentation and provided an overview of the new design for the Nova Centre project. Mr. Ramia noted that construction is currently underway and they hope to have the project to street level by the spring.

Ms. Black excused herself from the meeting at 6:56pm.

Mr. Jacob Ritchie, Director of Planning and Design for Ekistics, presented the history of the planning context. He described the 2009 site plan, noting the two separate towers existing outside the view planes, and briefly described the changes to the new design. He then presented the amendments that would have to be made to the planning documents to accommodate the new building. Mr. Ritchie then turned the presentation over to Mr. Trevor McIntyre and Mr. Jamie Wright from IBI, and also Mr. Noel Fowler, Architect.

Mr. Fowler noted the complexity of the project, mainly due to the scale of the building. He noted the building would be one million square feet. He presented the original foot print of the project and the various view planes. Mr. Fowler indicated that the original design had more of the building's space occurring below grade including the Trade Show space and the Ballroom space. The new design lifts the Ballroom space up above Grafton Street, allowing the street to run through the property.

Mr. Wright and Mr. McIntyre then described many of the above grade features of the new design. Mr. Wright noted that the massing of the site is still controlled by the view planes. The ideas and concepts for the materiality and the public realm of the building were presented to the Committee. Mr. McIntyre noted the potential of a public art

competition to “dress up” the back of the building on Market Street. He also described some of the various uses and scenarios for the Grafton Street public space. Mr. Wright noted the use of materials and elements that would be representative of different parts of the province. The idea of having a water feature that cascades alongside the Sackville Street side of the building was also explained to the Committee. They also presented the concept of having Argyle Street as a mixed-use, shared street that could be used for public events.

The Committee entered into discussion and Mr. McIntyre, Mr. Wright, Mr. Fowler and Mr. Ramia responded to questions from the Committee. Ms. Saul and Mr. Hyde asked for clarification on the intent for Grafton Street. Mr. Fowler responded that Grafton will remain a publicly accessible space, which is privately maintained. Mr. Pinhey noted the Market Street façade as a major design challenge. He expressed concern over the articulation and the scale of the façade. Ms. Sirrs echoed Mr. Pinhey’s concerns. Mr. McIntyre noted that it was a difficult space to work with due to the access doors that are necessary for the site. He indicated this was the reasoning behind the public art competition. Ms. Sirrs noted that the art is a great idea; however it needs to be brought down to the pedestrian level. The Chair also expressed concern regarding the use of the term “back” for the Market Street side of the building. He indicated that the building shouldn’t have a backside. In addition he felt it was unfortunate that there was a crossing between pedestrian and automobile traffic in the interior plaza.

Mr. Kavar expressed concern regarding the relationship between the cars and the pedestrians. He asked for clarification on the parking scheme they are currently proposing. He also inquired as to whether the developer had any plan for the ceiling of the arcade. Mr. Ramia described some of the ideas they are considering for this space and noted that he would like for it to be as beautiful as possible. Mr. McIntyre added that there would likely be more than one treatment.

The Chair suggested that the design team look at softening the arcade by introducing curves. He noted the history of archways in Halifax. Mr. Kavar asked about the sustainability strategy and Mr. Ramia responded that it would be a LEED Gold Building. He described the various options for heat and cold storage.

Mr. Hyde expressed concern over the amount of traffic that would potentially be created within the area. Mr. Ramia responded that a Traffic Study was currently being completed by Genivar. Ms. Saul inquired about winterization of the publicly accessible space. The design team noted that this is something they have considered so that the space may be used year round. Ms. Sirrs noted that she is pleased with the water feature along Sackville Street.

Mr. McIntyre then offered ideas for the Market Street façade that may require an encroachment variance. The Committee agreed that reconsidering the façade would be appropriate.

The Chair thanked the Design Team involved with the Nova Centre for their presentation.

7.3 Lunch and Learn Outcomes (July 15, 2013) – Next Steps

The Committee concluded that this item will be deferred until the November 14, 2013 meeting.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – November 14, 2013

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at

Jane Crosby
Legislative Support