



**DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
September 11, 2014**

PRESENT: Ramzi Kawar, Chair
Roy McBride
Mary Black
Sue Sirrs
Andy Fillmore
Steve Murphy
Louis Lemoine
Cesar Saleh
Anne Sinclair

REGRETS: Kourosh Rad, Vice-Chair
Kevin Conley
Noel Fowler

STAFF: Jacob Ritchie, Urban Design Manager
Luc Ouellet, Senior Planner
Richard Harvey, Major Projects Planner
Jane Crosby, Legislative Support

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

*The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to the Board are available online:
<http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/DesignReviewCommittee-HRM.html>*

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m., and adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – August 14, 2014

MOVED by Ms. Black, seconded by Mr. McBride, that the minutes of August 14, 2014 be approved as presented.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

MOVED by Mr. Fillmore, seconded by Mr. Saleh, that the agenda be approved as circulated.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES - None

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – None

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS – None

7. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

7.1. Preliminary Presentation – Cunard Block – Southwest Properties

Mr. Fillmore declared a Conflict of Interest and took a seat in the gallery.

Mr. Eric Burchill, Vice President of Planning and Development with Southwest Properties introduced the preliminary presentation. Mr. Burchill introduced Ms. Kristin O'Toole, Major Projects Planner with Waterfront Development Corporation, in attendance to present the Cunard Block Public Space Design and Open Space Concept.

Ms. O'Toole reviewed the previous Open Space plan that had been presented to the Committee in August 2013. She explained the themes that resonated from the public consultations that have taken place over the last year including; lawn and softscape elements, creating opportunities for interaction with the harbour, whimsy and play. She indicated that a new design has emerged in light of the public consultations, including the large consultation that took place as part of the October 2013 Nocturne Festival.

Ms. O'Toole presented the revised plan noting some of the key elements and features including a formal gateway evoking the feel of a finger pier, a wave deck, a tide pool feature and a flush-mount water feature. She then described the large plaza area to the south, noting the formal treed alley, a fire feature and presenting some of the soft landscape features. Ms. O'Toole described plans for the Morris Street extension explaining that it would be a pedestrian oriented street. The whole site will limit public vehicle access for a better pedestrian environment. Ms. O'Toole noted the grade changes on the site and indicated that the grades are incorporated in such a way to maintain accessibility. She provided an example of the walls being cut to bench height.

Ms. O'Toole concluded her portion of the presentation and turned it over to Mr. Mansoor Kazerouni, Architect, IBI Group, presenting the architectural and built form perspective. Mr. Kazerouni explained that

the site has two distinct contexts; Lower Water Street and the Waterfront. He described these contexts and how the design adapts the architectural responses to the contexts. He presented the building plans, describing the residential and commercial components of the site. It was noted that the site has a landscaped roof terrace that is not shown in the presentation or in the drawing package. He indicated that this would be incorporated.

Mr. Kazerouni described the animated frontages along Lower Water Street and discussed the incorporation of the site grade. He added that this building does not have a back to it. A rendering was presented and Mr. Kazerouni described the two intersecting bars. He described the East-West bar as being organic and fluid, and the North-South bar as being more restrained. While presenting various renderings, he explained the articulation along Lower Water Street and the Morris Street extension. Mr. Kazerouni then described the plans and elevations noting that variances would likely be requested in the final application. Mr. Kazerouni concluded his presentation and opened for questions from the Committee.

Mr. Saleh asked if the changes to the building's design since 2013 could be described and if the materials used at the streetscape level could be defined. Mr. Kazerouni noted that in terms of layout and planning there hasn't been a significant change, simply design evolution. He added that the exterior of the building has undergone significant changes prompted by public consultation and feedback. He described the materials which are planned for the exterior of the building including clear glass and white fritted glass. Mr. Kazerouni noted that they would likely be using window wall for the residential and curtain wall for the commercial. They are currently reviewing the materials for the base of this site and cannot say for certain what will be used.

Mr. Saleh also inquired about the variances they plan on requesting. Mr. Burchill noted that they are working with staff through some of the known variances to bring the proposal into compliance. Ms. Sirrs inquired about the overall landscape plan and the location of the water feature. Ms. O'Toole noted its location on the 45 degree where the steps come down into the tide pool. Ms. Sirrs then commented that the limit of work on the site is much bigger than the property line. She inquired as to how this would work, as many of the interesting features described are not within the property line. Ms. O'Toole and Mr. Burchill responded that it is somewhat of a joint proposal between Southwest Properties and the Waterfront Development Corporation. Mr. Burchill added that they are trying to maximize the space.

The Chair asked if there would be parking beyond what is shown. Mr. Kazerouni responded that there would be three levels of parking. The Chair then asked for the number of residential units in the building. It was explained that there would be just over 340 units, and there would be approximately 335 underground parking spots. Mr. Burchill added that there would be some hourly parking for the commercial/retail portion of the building. It was also noted that all of the units would be rental units.

Ms. Sinclair commented that the grade change was handled very well at Lower Water Street. She then inquired about the viability of the retail space in the North-West. Mr. Burchill noted that they have had many discussions about this particular space and explained some of their thoughts on this area. Ms. Sinclair noted that it could become something fabulous and described how some of these small spaces are used in Florence, Italy as places to have lunch and hang out. She added that it could be a great urban space. Mr. Burchill noted that their challenge is to have something viable in that space not only in July and August, but also February.

Ms. Sinclair inquired about the challenge of traffic coming in and out of the site. She suggested that they use pavers instead of asphalt at this location and ensure its apparent to people that there would be vehicular traffic in that location. Ms. Sinclair then inquired about the Morris Street extension. Ms. O'Toole explained that they are hoping to have pedestrians, bikes and cars on that street. There is a requirement that the Morris Street side be accessible to vehicle traffic. Ms. Sinclair also inquired about the shadow impact study. Mr. Burchill responded that it has yet to be completed.

Ms. Sirrs inquired about the guidelines for green roofs. Mr. Kazerouni confirmed that the roof spaces would meet the guidelines. Mr. Lemoine asked about the presence of public art at the site. Mr. Burchill

responded that it will be present but the location of the art hasn't been specifically determined at this point. Mr. Lemoine also commented that the treed alley would be more powerful if it wasn't interrupted. Mr. Burchill agreed, however he noted that there needs to be visibility and access for the retail locations. Mr. Lemoine asked if the balconies are thermally broken. Mr. Burchill responded that they haven't completed the energy model at this point.

The Chair requested that a rendering of the property from the water be shown. He commented that the base feels too similar to your typical glass commercial building. He would like to know the type of materials being used. He suggested that the developers think about the rhythm of the site. He added that this could be approached through the palette of materials being used. Ms. Sinclair suggested that the top of the penthouse be changed or removed so that it blends in better. Ms. Black commented that she loves the site and it feels like it belongs in Halifax.

The Chair thanked the presenters for their time.

Mr. Fillmore rejoined the meeting.

7.2 Preliminary Discussion – 5 Year Review of the Downtown Halifax Plan and Land Use By-law – Luc Ouellet

Mr. Luc Ouellet, Senior Planner, introduced himself and noted that he would be discussing the 5 Year Review of the Downtown Halifax Plan and Land Use By-law. Mr. Ouellet then introduced Mr. Jacob Ritchie, HRM's new Urban Design Manager. Mr. Ritchie gave a brief overview of his education and experience.

Mr. Ouellet noted that staff's review began in May of this year. He indicated that he wanted to come to the Committee early to discuss the issues they are encountering. He presented the major issues staff would like to look at during this review including:

- **Process:** Mr. Ouellet explained that staff want to review whether all of the projects that presently come before the DRC really need to come to the Committee. He cited the example of smaller projects.
- **Public Engagement:** Mr. Ouellet indicated that with the open house concept, no public feedback comes back to the Committee. He explained that this is a subject staff is debating. He pointed to smaller projects, such as a residential addition, and questioned whether the open house and kiosk process is needed.
- **Notification:** Mr. Ouellet explained that there is a requirement that staff notify surrounding property owners when a certain area is undergoing a non-substantive application for site plan approval. He noted that none of the usual appeal mechanisms apply to non-substantive applications for site plan approvals. Staff is considering whether the notification is required.

Mr. Ouellet explained that beyond these three major issues, staff is looking at some general document housekeeping. He explained that he is coming to the Committee for input on any other items.

The Chair asked for clarification on the public engagement piece. He asked if the feedback is taken into account by the developer and if so, how is that ensured. Mr. Ouellet responded that there is no specific way to capture the feedback or to ensure that it is captured by the developer. The Chair commented that unless there is a set process of collecting feedback, it is almost a waste of time.

Mr. Fillmore explained the process that the city was trying to get away from, the Development Agreement Process. As a requirement, that process had a Public Information Meeting where all the comments were recorded and put into a report that would eventually go to Council. He explained that the reason that the city wanted to get away from it was because it was time consuming, and often acrimonious. He expressed that it may be a step backwards to go back to that process.

Mr. Saleh noted that there is a healthy dialogue that takes place at the public engagement meetings. He commented that it's a good idea to have these meetings, at least for the larger projects. Ms. Sinclair agreed and commented that the meetings allow for an increased level of dialogue on urban design in the community. She expressed that she would like to continue to see that process occur. Mr. Lemoine agreed with Ms. Sinclair's comments.

Ms. Sirrs commented on the size of the projects relative to the public engagement process. She recalled one project that was a very small house and felt that the process was overkill. Mr. Ouellet explained that staff is considering a two tiered approach based upon square footage.

The Chair inquired about the timeline for the review process. Mr. Ouellet advised that the plan is to engage the public in late November. He noted that the goal is to have it in front of Council in March of 2015. Mr. Ouellet acknowledged the list of items for discussion received from the Clerk's Office. He indicated that some of the items are operational. He noted the comments received from Mr. Rad and commented that these are matters that staff are already reviewing. In response to a question from Mr. Saleh, Mr. Ouellet indicated that the proposed changes to the MPS and LUB would come before the Committee.

Mr. Fillmore commented on a number of items. He indicated that there is value to the public engagement and that it should be continued. He added that the requirement for public engagement should be more generous, so that small projects would not be required to undertake a rigorous public engagement. Mr. Fillmore suggested that the kiosk displays be eliminated. Ms. Sirrs disagreed with the suggestion and noted that setting up the kiosks and the website is not overly onerous for the applicants.

Mr. Fillmore also suggested that they discontinue the noticing for the smaller projects. He then provided a number of headings he would like on the record for discussion including:

- The mechanical penthouse requirement: Mr. Fillmore indicated that there needs to be architectural expression that conceals this.
- The maximum tower width: Mr. Fillmore expressed that there needs to be more flexibility to this.
- The Active Pedestrian-oriented uses: Mr. Fillmore commented that there should be more flexibility and that they should include public art expression.

In addition, Mr. Fillmore suggested that staff may have a difficult time reviewing applications when they are caught up on specific requirements. He added that adding in some flexibility would be beneficial.

Ms. Sinclair pointed out that the current guidelines allow the architect to come up with innovative solutions. She commented that this is a healthy process.

Mr. Saleh commented on landscaped open space and how it is presented in the by-law. He noted issues that have occurred with smaller sites and that it can be too prohibitive. He suggested that applicants be able to provide money towards a park if providing a landscaped space is too difficult. Mr. Saleh also indicated that there needs to be clarification on weather protection canopies. He added that clarification is also required on post-bonus density height, especially where affordable housing is concerned. Mr. Ouellet confirmed that this is an issue being considered in this review.

Mr. Lemoine suggested that the density bonusing have a very well defined net benefit to the community. He suggested that staff may learn from other jurisdictions that have had density bonusing for a number of years. He also suggested that public art be mandatory and that it should be a percentage of the cost of the project. The Chair agreed with Mr. Lemoine's comments.

Mr. Saleh commented on some applications that come back due to a minor change. He suggested that the Development Officer have some flexibility, to either make a call that it's acceptable or not or there could be an expedited process to get that application back in front of the Committee. Ms. Sirrs agreed with this idea.

The Chair commented on applications that are approved but then are built differently from what has been approved. He asked if the City has considered documenting records of the pre and post construction designs. He believes this may be a positive way to highlight the Design Review Committee's work.

Ms. Sinclair asked about the preliminary presentations and whether they were mandatory. She suggested that perhaps they become a mandatory part of the process. Mr. Harvey responded that there may be too much involved with making the presentation a part of the application process. Mr. Harvey suggested that perhaps there be some type of checklist for applicants coming before the Committee.

The Board concluded their discussion and thanked staff for their time.

8. ADDED ITEMS - NONE

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – October 9, 2014, 6:00 pm, Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Jane Crosby
Legislative Support

INFORMATION ITEMS-None
