

**MINUTES**  
**URBAN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

**Date:** December 20, 2011

**Location:** Council Chambers – City Hall

**Members present:** Scott Allen, Brian Clark, Todd Garner, John Hearn, Marlon Mormann, Tim Rypma, Aaron Todd and Greg Wattier

**Members absent:** David Abler

**Staff present:** Rita Conner, Terrance Vorbrich and Glory Parks – OED; Mike Kelley and Roger Brown – Legal; Phil Delafield, Mike Ludwig, and Jason Van Essen – Community Development

**Guests:** Rox Laird – Des Moines Register, William Lillis and Dan Manning - Lillis, O'Malley, Olson, Manning, Pose and Van Dyke, L.L.P., Russ Bitterman – Shiffler & Associates Architects, Gary Hammers – GSH Landscape Architects, Scott McMurray – Midwest Realty Advisors, Dr. Mike Eberle, Dr. Jon Hade, Mike Draper, Dr. Isobel Osius, Paula Feltner, Steve Howard, Joe Mowers – area residents

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**A. Call to Order:** meeting called to order at 7:31 a.m.

**B. Approval of Minutes from November 1, 2011**  
Motion to approve by Garner. Seconded by Clark. Motion carried.

**C. Review and Recommendation on Proposed Design and Financial Assistance for Waterfront Lodging, L.L.C. (2<sup>nd</sup> and Water Street).**

Rita Conner introduced the project. At an informational review on June 21, 2011, Waterfront Lodging, Inc. (Hawkeye Hotels Inc., Ravi Patel, vice president, 1701 Mount Pleasant Street, Suite 1, Burlington, Iowa 52601) presented an informational proposal to the Urban Design Review Board for construction of a 129 room hotel with 96 surface parking spaces to be located at 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Water Street.

Board comments included the need to increase density and mass of the site, propose an alternative to the planned surface parking area, provide opportunities to activate the site by integrating with the surrounding area on a pedestrian scale, explore the ability for constructing a sustainable site with green design elements, reduce or eliminate the use of EFIS as a building material, provide architectural variety and interest, and to provide speculative space for other commercial uses as part of the project.

The revised proposal now includes development of two hotels as well as structured parking on the site, and commercial space on the first floor of the parking structure. One hotel and the parking garage will be constructed in 2012; the second hotel by 2017. The proposed projects total an estimated \$32 million of private investment and will provide net new taxes to the City of Des Moines over 23 years totaling over \$10 million, including property taxes and hotel motel taxes. The net taxes to the City are totaled after the economic development assistance is accounted for, as the project's taxes are generating that assistance. The financial assistance is contingent upon several additional parameters designed to protect the City's long term interests and ensure the successful completion of all three elements of the total project. The premise for the assistance is the addition of the structured parking and the increased density to the site, which were added at the City's request.

Russ Bitterman of Shiffler and Associates presented an overview of the proposed project. UDRB had requested ways to assist the integration of the new uses into the broader environment. The revised site plan has included a patio area on the east side of the Hampton Inn & Suites Hotel as an extension of the breakfast area, as well as providing pedestrian connectivity on all sides of the site. The addition of 2400 sq.ft. of commercial space in the first floor of the parking garage will open the site to the neighborhood. The planned exits from the parking garage on the east and west elevations will have hotel guests able to exit the structure directly to the sidewalk, where they are able to walk to the Court Avenue District, the Riverwalk, Science Center, Principal Park and other downtown amenities. Walkways have been recommended to connect the internal site with city sidewalks, to improve pedestrian flow through the site. It has been recommended to open up stairwell corners in the parking structure with windows and glass, to allow natural light in and to be seen at night. Site access points at Market Street and Water Street and internal site

circulation have been designed to optimize vehicular flow in and out of the site. Hotel patrons will have the ability to leave their vehicles in the parking structure and utilize walking, biking and transit alternatives to experience the city.

### **Public input**

Dr. Mike Eberle, 100 Water Street, Apt. 402 stated he has a lot invested in the unit as do others in the building. The project looks great; we have no issues with the intent of the project. Some items we do worry about and have concerns with are:

- The elevation, there may have been a variance granted for the height of the proposed building. Our building is approximately 45' and we are unsure of the proposed elevation. What will our view be? Will there be a roof on the parking ramp?
- What we will be looking at is a concern. The use of the 2400 sq. ft. retail space is unknown.
- Serious concerns of the traffic flow. Already gone through seven years of construction and this will add more time. Most of the traffic from the north will end up coming down Water Street.
- How the signage and increased lighting from the parking ramp will affect us.
- Would like to see the greenspace to continue with any new projects in the area.
- Train issues include whistles 2-3 time each night after 11:00pm and safety with no arms over the tracks at Vine and Water Streets.
- Currently there is a 58% occupancy on hotels in Des Moines and the industry feels there is room for 3-4 more hotels. How will this addition affect the business of established hotels?
- Feel that Browncamp Lofts will be isolated by the increase in traffic on MLK Pkwy and the addition of the hotel.
- The neighbors were involved late in the planning and there is a feeling that decision may have already been made.

Dr. Jon Hade, 660 Foster Drive stated he is renovating and will soon move to 100 Market Street, Apt. 504. When we purchased the unit the original plan was a 4 story with 1<sup>st</sup> floor retail. The hotel is very different and is now 6 stories with a seventh floor sign. The elevation is an issue we were excited about the prospect of a boutique type hotel with retail. An individual shop of 2400 sq. ft. will have a difficult time. Unsure of the use of the restaurant that does not have a kitchen. The value of our new investment at 100 Market will decrease because of the obstructed view caused by the height of the hotel.

Mike Draper, 100 Water Street, Apt. 404 stated his concern of the investment of the \$1M grant that will be paid back at 0% interest over time and make \$4M over 23 years in taxes. The City is banking on the hotel/motel tax at \$6M if both hotels are built within the 5 years. A better investment may be to invest in General Electric stock. This does not seem like sound math.

A building like the one his business is located in (SOHO, 400 East Locust) that uses TIF money to put in 30 residential units and 11 retail bay is a lot different than TIF money for a hotel that will not do anything for the neighborhood.

Currently the site is 100 parking spaces where people arrive in the morning and leave at night. A hotel will be the same, only coming in, in the evening and leaving in the morning. No resident will ever use the hotel unless they receive free access to the pool. The driveway is very inconvenient, surrounding streets are very narrow. A solution may be to make all entrances and exits on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. The hotel will be a closed structure that residents will not use. There is not a restaurant and only a few conference rooms. The hotel and residents will not interact. The main concern is the height of the parking garage that is proposed to be approximately 15 feet higher than 100 Water Street.

Dr. Isobel Osius, 118 Water Street, Apt. 422 moved to Des Moines from New York City therefore is familiar with urban noise and construction. After seven straight years of construction there is a serious concern to minimize the impact of construction to the residents. Having water shut off and electric service interrupted is an ongoing issue. May not have purchased if she had known of the continuous construction in the area. There is a traffic issue that affects pedestrian safety; while exiting from Water Street unto MLK Pkwy. passing cars do not yield to pedestrians even with the blinking pedestrian sign. With the additional traffic of the hotel it may not be long until someone will be injured.

Wonders how the planning process works that the outcome is a parking ramp (to block noise for hotel patrons) on one of the last remaining prime properties on the riverfront. What she says is the planning process does not seem to be driven by a overall vision of what downtown should be - what downtown should offer. What the planning process is driven by is - can we do it? and by the time we work out how we do it - people have forgotten to ask why should we do it? Is it really what we want for the \$15M Riverwalk area? Paula Feltner, 100 Water Street, Apt. 402 would like to compliment the architects, the pictures makes the hotel looks very much like the Water Street condos and they have done a nice job making it fit into the neighborhood. Decided to invest in the Water Street unit after visiting the Riverwalk in Indianapolis and learning that the same firm would be doing the Riverwalk here. Concerned about the signage. Worried about the parking garage not having a roof and the additional lighting needed for security reasons. There is a very diverse group of residents in the Water Street condos, from 3 months old to 86 years of age, who will be affected by the added lighting. Please be fair with the residents and require a roof on the parking garage. Agree with Ms. Conner's comments to make the project as esthetic pleasing as possible and appropriately filling into the area.

Not crazy about the height of the project and does not feel the brick board should not be acceptable according to the Court Avenue Downtown Des Moines plan calls for brick.

Steve Howard, 309 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street and owns several units at Browncamp Lofts and was involved in the development. Feels that anyone who moved into Browncamp anticipated that the site would be developed. Have questions about the financial aspects of the project, not sure that if we don't build this project it will still be a parking lot in 23 years. Major concern is the exit onto Market Street. What is the city going to do about the traffic south of Market and the parking on the south side? Will all the cars exiting shine their lights into my bedroom? Where does that exit line up, would it be better exiting onto 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue? The signage and lighting is an issue. Disappointed that there have been no meetings with the residents in the area.

Joe Mowers, 100 Market Street, Apt. 501 is the current president of the Browncamp Board. The Browncamp board met recently and had approximately 30 residents in attendance, a much higher than normal turn out. Expressed appreciation for Ms. Conner taking time to speak to the residents, it was very helpful. The residents of Browncamp would very much like the opportunity to speak with the development group. The issues of the Browncamp residents are:

- Existing views
- Heightened density
- Variance – these items negatively impact their view
- Greenspace
- Couldn't it just be something else?
- Traffic safety
- Significant disappointment regarding commercial space, the hope was for restaurants or something similar to the E300 and several other developments.

Dr. Isobel Osius noted that the meeting with Ms. Conner the week of December 12<sup>th</sup> was the first with residents. There is false information going on because the plans and drawings have not been shared with the neighbors. Feels the developer and the City should have started working together with the neighbor earlier on in the project.

Mr. Lillis stated the hotel wants to be a good neighbor. Also noted that the process is threefold – there has been no request for variance, the height of all building are within the ordinance. The drawings were only complete last week. The Plan and Zoning Commission will review the site plan at their next meeting on January 19, 2012. The City Council will deal only with the development agreement (the economics) at their meeting on January 23, 2012. The development team will make arrangements to meet with the two immediate neighbors to the north and south.

Chair Wattier expressed appreciation for the comments and input from everyone. Suggested that the board stay at a higher level conversation and not too specific as this is a preliminary approval.

Rita Conner clarified that the City Council has only approved a preliminary design and financial assistance review - to refer the project on through the review process including UDRB and Plan and Zoning Commission.

#### **Board questions and comments**

- What is the timeline for building Hotel #2?
- What would the issue be with the signage?
- Do the residents feel that their concerns could be worked out through a meeting with the developer?
- Clarify the direction from the City Council referring the project to the UDRB.
- The project is not to the point that the board can approve it. Would like to see discussions between the residents and developer to come to some kind of a compromise on the project.
- Complaints and concerns regarding the signage, lights and traffic need to be addressed by other boards or commissions.
- Everyone understands that views are not protected by zoning ordinances or purchasing a piece of property with the thought that you might be able to see something; although you can be sensitive to the situation.
- If this is private property, is there a condition of development to vacate the alleyway?
- The tallest point of the Hotel #2 is 5" taller than Hotel #1 which is within the zoning ordinances, therefore there are no variances.
- The project is within the Court Avenue guidelines and the Downtown Riverfront standards and they have been provided to the development team.
- Would like to see section through a wall of parking ramp, showing where the headlights will be shining. The north elevations of the parking structure appear trite and a similar structure may be better structure. Would like to see more refinement of this element.
- Has the proposed project been through the pre-application process? Traffic and Transportation have seen the exit and entrance plan.
- The plan is an approved land use and site plan and the density of the plan is good.
- Streetscape and landscape meet the City ordinance and requirements and the project has a good landscape architect.
- Would like to see the hotel elevations consistent throughout.
- Would like to see consistent higher level of drawings showing the context of the hotel. Two and three dimensional drawings showing how both hotels and parking ramp relate to the adjacent buildings relative to height. The contextual drawings will pull everything together and may answer many of the questions the neighbors have.
- Suggest that the design and development team meet with neighbors as soon as possible. Believe it is important to have resident input in the process.
- Do not believe that all elements of the project are up to the standards of the riverfront and there may be services that could be added.
- Is it a common practice when using TIF funds to get a letter of support from the neighborhood?
- Feel that the hotel use is a valid use of the property. Living in and visiting other community hotels nestled within residential areas is very common.
- This project needs to be place specific - specifically designed for this site, on that road, with that solar orientation. The parking ramp is far from place specific.
- Commercial space needs to be more than a token space; it needs to be an important and larger component of the project. A small 2,400 sq. ft. space alone has a slim chance of survival.

A motion for both portions of the project, the financial assistance and a thorough, complete and integrated design package, to return for consideration of final approval by Hearn. Seconded by Clark.

#### **D. Informational Review and Recommendation of Southridge Mall Repurposing (1111 Army Post Road)**

Rita Conner gave a brief introduction of the repurposing of Southridge Mall and requested the Board provide input into the proposed design of the overall conceptual redevelopment plan, as well as proposed building elevations for the new north facade, the pedestrian plaza and entrances.

Scott McMurray of Midwest Realty Advisors representing the ownership group of Southridge Mall which consists of the Macerich Company and Simon Development gave a brief summary of the timeline of the project. SDG Macerich, L.P., owners of Southridge since 1998, have determined that a new strategy for the mall is in order, and have proposed a repurposing plan that involves the introduction of reconfigured retail space and the addition of educational, recreational, and housing elements on the site. The repurposing would propose to maximize the assets and resources of the site's location, the existing parking lot, several of the current anchor tenants, and the ability to reuse parts of the current physical structure in a form that will be beneficial for retail tenants and patrons.

SDG Macerich representatives and city leadership met with representatives of Des Moines Area Community College and representatives from the Iowa Soccer Association and Iowa Barnstormers. DMACC had been looking at space options for the relocation of several programs and the development of a career academy, in a space that could offer future growth opportunities for additional educational program uses. The Iowa Soccer Association and the Iowa Barnstormers had joined forces to begin fundraising efforts for a State Indoor Training Center capable of hosting state and regional sporting events. All entities saw benefits from selecting Southridge Mall as their future location.

The addition of these two new uses will bring traffic and other public and private components to the area such as library, police substation, community center, residential, student housing, hotel, and a water park. The participation of the City is very important to the success of the project.

As in the Zoo plans there is a hotel and water park included in the working master plan. The hope would be for the Zoo train to come under SE 5<sup>th</sup> Street to Southridge to pick people up.

There will not be an initial invest of financial assistance the request will be for a rebate TIF, to share in the increment based on what the mall can generate. Although, DMACC and the Iowa Soccer Association are non taxpaying entities, the hope is for them to help do better projects in other places that help the community.

The timeline is aggressive. Plan and Zoning Commission has approved the C-4 plan. The hope is to begin demolish to develop exterior walls for Sears and Younkers that are currently interior, in February 2012. The goal is to deliver spaces to tenants by August for their build out.

Because of the short timeline and the zoning there will not be a master plan as with a PUD including building massing, etc. The previous planning that has been done with the Super Block and Urban Renewal Plan will define much of the task of staff and the board.

When the project comes back before the board they will be asked to review and approve preliminary terms for financial assistance with the design components as they are ready to go forward. Included will be a full set of plans for the first phase of the project.

#### Board questions and comments

- How does this integrate with the Super Block and Blank Park Zoo?
- Would like to see the movie building integrated into the project more.
- What will the board be asked to review and approve when the project comes back next?
- Would like to see other retail projects that have previously come to the board and especially any that may be beyond the TIF funding.
- The board will be looking for a higher level of design, materials, and sustainable responses than without City assistance.

#### **E. Additional Items**

Nominating committee of Clark, Garner and Wattier will meet to select a slate of officers before the January

17, 2011 Board meeting.

**E. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9:48 a.m.