

COMMUNICATION
URBAN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA

JANUARY 25, 2012 MEETING

Subject:	Recommendation	Prepared by:
FINAL DESIGN REVIEW FOR WATERFRONT LODGING LLC (SW 2ND AND WATER STREET)	X APPROVE DISAPPROVE NO ACTION OTHER (INFO)	RITA CONNER 283-4019
Attachment Listing: http://www.dmgov.org/government/boards/UrbanDesignReviewBoard/Pages/Meetings.aspx		

Summary:

Waterfront Lodging, Inc. (Hawkeye Hotels Inc., Ravi Patel, vice president, 1701 Mount Pleasant Street, Suite 1, Burlington, Iowa 52601) is presenting a final plan for the project at SW 2nd and Water Street. The project was previously reviewed by the board on June 21, 2011, December 20, 2011 and January 17, 2012. At the January 17 meeting, the board requested a review of the revised parking structure design and a final review of the exterior building materials for all three buildings on the site.

A revised design of the parking structure has been prepared and provided for board review. Colored building elevations for the two hotels will be presented again, with specific details of the proposed materials and their application. The developer and design team will be available to respond to questions from the board.

Scope of Review – Board to make recommendation to City Council on:

- Design review of renovation /remodeling/new construction for City-owned or leased project
- Design review for urban renewal project with specific development requirements
- Whether a proposed urban renewal project qualifies for funding from tax increment.
- Whether the level of financial assistance funded from tax increment revenues proposed for a specific individual project are reasonable and appropriate.
- The selection of urban renewal sites for clearance or rehabilitation and problems relating to acquisition, clearance or rehabilitation of property, relocation of displaced persons and disposition of acquired property.
- Skywalk System
- Other /Informational review

Urban Design Review Board Action:

The board is requested to review the proposed project design and provide recommendation to City Council.

Staff Recommendation: Final approval of the design including the revised parking garage and the exterior building materials.

Additional Information

At the January 23 City Council meeting, Council approved the development agreement with Waterfront Lodging, Inc., including the proposed financial assistance package and the conceptual development plan for the construction and placement of the two hotels and parking structure. Review of the revised parking structure design and the exterior building materials was referred back to the Urban Design Review Board.

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Revised Parking Structure

Board comments regarding the original parking structure included concerns that the design was not compatible with the rest of the site or the adjacent properties. The revised design is more in line with area architecture and will be an element that successfully integrates into the site and the neighborhood.

The relocation of the parking structure to the 2nd Avenue side of the site was proposed following input from adjacent property owners. This relocation was supported by staff and board members, and was presented in the conceptual plan approved by City Council. With this relocation, adjacent owners to the north will have a view of the extended stay hotel rather than the parking structure, and the extended stay hotel patrons will have river views and more direct access to the riverfront. Incorporated with the overall site density, pedestrian access to nearby amenities and events, and street plantings that will border all sides of the site, staff believes that a successful urban design has been achieved.

Staff and board members have discussed the possibility of including commercial space on the first floor of the parking structure, in an effort to activate the 2nd Avenue frontage. A number of concerns were raised about this proposal. The first floor is currently programmed for parking space and vehicular circulation, leaving no room for commercial space. Elevating the structure to provide an additional floor would add significant cost to the project. The height of the first floor could be proposed to accommodate future conversion to commercial space, to allow time for the area to fully develop and be able to support additional retail. However, the speed and volume of traffic on 2nd Avenue is not seen as conducive to attracting commercial uses and pedestrians, and there is interest to focus commercial development on nearby Court Avenue, where a successful commercial district already exists and additional commercial spaces are currently proposed.

Building Materials

The primary exterior materials proposed for the two hotels consist of a combination of architectural thin brick and fiber cement panels. In response to earlier comments from board members, the building appearance has been enhanced through offsets in the design, providing architectural differentiation and visual appeal. EFIS has been reduced or eliminated and balconies added. Window design and selection should be detailed for the board, as an important component of the project both in terms of function and aesthetic appearance. The parking structure materials are architectural thin brick, pre-finished metal, glass and metal mesh.

Discussion has taken place among staff, board members, the developer and the design team about the proposed use of architectural thin brick. The location of this project along the downtown riverfront prompts the use of durable, long lasting and strong materials that will provide a quality, attractive appearance. Staff has reviewed industry information and publications regarding architectural thin brick and provides the following for discussion and consideration by the board:

Architectural thin brick is viewed as a strong and durable material, created from the same raw materials as full dimension brick. The appearance is close to that of full dimension brick; it can be difficult to distinguish one product from the other when viewed on a building exterior. The costs to create and transport full dimension brick, in addition to the higher costs of repair and maintenance, have increased the appeal and use of architectural thin brick. Thin brick has positive reports for its life cycle, less difficult and less costly repair processes (individual affected bricks can be removed and replaced more easily than full bed brick), a lower demand for use of natural resources such as raw material and natural gas, and increased R values, contributing to building performance and sustainability.

A critical detail for building construction in the State of Iowa is recognition of the freeze/thaw cycle and the assurance that building materials can meet performance expectations. Reports for thin brick cite spalling reduction and less absorption than full brick, which can mean greater resistance to harsh Iowa temperatures, and less future warping and need for repair. With the prominent visibility of the Waterfront Lodging hotels and parking garage, the appearance, durability and permanence of the exterior materials is essential; architectural thin brick appears to meet or exceed those requirements.

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Full dimension brick does not have the same function that it did in earlier days of construction, when brick was consistently a load bearing material integral to a building's structure. Staff has worked to review whether there is a performance difference in the proposed material, or if full dimension brick is simply viewed as a more prestigious material. With the recognition that 80% or more of full dimension brick is never seen, and does not perform an essential structural function, staff can support and recommend the proposed use of architectural thin brick with the condition that its method of application is fully detailed to the board and adhered to during construction. In addition, the use of fiber cement panels/cladding should be done with a water resistant application, and its thickness and density also detailed for the board.