

## MEMO

**To: Jeff Kahan, Planning and Development Services**  
**Fr: Packard Square LLC**  
**Re: Revisions to Packard Square Elevations & Site Plan**  
**Date: December 19, 2012**

As you know, on December 3, 2012 the Ann Arbor City Council reviewed proposed changes to the building elevations for Packard Square. The proposed changes included: A) a reduction in the number of balconies; B) the elimination of some brick on the front corners which had comprised roughly 5% of the project); and C) a revised coloration plan in order to break up the long building facades and provide better contrast and interest.

### **DISCUSSION OF COMMENTS BY COUNCIL AND RESPONSES**

There were a number of **comments** by City Council on December 3, 2012, which we would like to summarize and respond to as follows:

1. New colors. There was some concern about the new dark blue color, and a desire for more subdued colors. However, there were also some positive comments that the use of color variation was consistent with the City's Design Guidelines, as it would tend to break up the appearance of long facades into smaller segments. There were also a few comments by some Council members that the City should not get too involved with selecting colors.

**Responses by developer:** After considering Council's comments, three-dimensional color renderings were created using both the original color scheme and the new color scheme. Looking at those three-dimensional renderings, the original color plan with tans and beiges seemed washed out, and the more subtle differences in color tended to blend together on the long building elevations. When placed into a three-dimensional rendering with all details shown, the color plan using more contrasting colors seems to provide a nicer and needed variation. Emphasis has also been added at the front retail courtyard corners for more visual interest. The updated three-dimensional rendering using the latest colors creates a very attractive and lively finished product for the Packard Square project that the development team believes is superior to the original color scheme and elevations.

2. Questions regarding windows. Some Council member expressed concern about the height and spacing of windows, and noted that the new windows seemed shorter. Some councilpersons liked the original window design better.

**Responses by developer:** After considering Council's comments, ***it was decided to increase the height of the windows at the front corners, and increase the height of the retail windows.*** The windows on the front corners

now look similar to the plans approved previously. However, the height of the other residential windows have not been changed because (A) they were already six (6) feet tall, which is the largest operable window available from the window manufacturers; and (B) six (6) foot tall windows for a residential apartment complex is very tall in comparison to the 9 foot ceilings in the units and much taller than most, if not all, comparable apartment complexes in Ann Arbor. Furthermore, if the windows are reviewed in conjunction with the various unit floor plans, it shows that the windows are nearly wall-to-wall in every room. Therefore, the windows are very tall in the current plans and take up nearly all of the outside wall space in every unit. The natural light in the units at Packard Square will be far superior than most, if not all, comparable apartment complexes in Ann Arbor.

3. Questions regarding Hardie Board exterior material. There were a few questions about the details of the exterior material, and a comment that material samples had not been provided.

**Responses by developer:** Previously, material samples were not requested at any point in the approval process. However, they will be provided at the next Council meeting. The previously approved elevation plans indicated “Fiber cement panel”, which is exactly what the Hardie Board product is. In other words, since the original approval, the developer has simply selected the particular manufacturer of the fiber cement panels, and has supplied a new plan showing the actual Hardie Board colors available from the manufacturer.

Also, a small section of utility brick at the front corners will be replaced by the Hardie Board, so as to be consistent across the project, and to avoid a “heavy” appearance at the front corners which would likely distract from the public retail square - which is intended to be light, lively, and colorful. The brick previously was shown on only about 5% of the project, and its replacement with the same Hardie Board material as the rest of the project was a logical step as the final construction plans took shape. There will still be a brick ledge under the retail windows to create interest and focus on the retailers and provide a substantial and durable base at the retail stores.

4. Reduction of balconies. A few comments were made that the reduction in the number of balconies could create a flatter appearance and a less interesting façade.

**Responses by developer:** The number of balconies has been reduced by approximately one-third. Formerly, every unit had a balcony, but for a few reasons, the final design made most sense with the elimination of approximately one-third of the balconies. Roughly two-thirds of the units still have balconies. It is important to note that the reveals and stepped lines on the facades will remain part of the design, preserving the interest and rhythm. The reasons for eliminating some of the balconies are as follows:

A. Balcony elimination is responsive to neighbor comments about wanting to maintain privacy. With the elimination of some balconies, there will be more privacy for neighboring homes.

B. When unit floor plans were finalized, it became necessary to eliminate some balconies due to waterproofing issues above the retail stores on both the retail courtyard and perimeter sides of the building. Both the architects and the engineers recommended eliminating balconies over the retail spaces to avoid leaks into the retailers' spaces.

C. There was an aesthetic challenge with designing balconies over the retail stores that would both look good and be functional for residents. It is important not to distract from the high-quality retail environment with the potential of personal items of residents on balconies creating a visually objectionable appearance. While lease language could require balconies to be used in a certain way, breaches of this would be difficult to enforce without a court order and would detract from the appearance of the shopping center portion of the development.

5. Prior plans had more details; new design seems flatter.

**Responses by developer:** While the newer elevations may seem flatter, that was primarily due to the fact that the recent emphasis was on the building colors and elimination of balconies, and less time was spent adding shadows and 3-D effects to the elevations. The building reveals and "in-and-outs" along the sides still exist and have not changed. Please see the updated renderings to see a more realistic view of the finished building.

6. Question about building footprint changes.

**Responses by developer:** The only change to the building footprint is at the front along Packard, at each side of the stairwells. This has already been reviewed and tentatively approved by Planning staff as part of an administrative amendment. The location of the stairwells has not changed. However, the residential units on each side of the stairwells have been extended toward Packard by about 8 feet so that they are in line with (or nearly in line, with a slight return on the inside corners of the "U") the front of the stairwells. In other words, the stairwells will not appear to "bump out" in an awkward manner as they did originally; now, there is just a small step-back from the stairwell for visual interest.