



PROJECT MEMORANDUM

Date: July 12, 2012
To: Jeff Kahan, City of Ann Arbor Planning Dept
From: Rob Sherman
CC: Stephen Kromkowski, File
Project: 1041.6366.00 – Ann Arbor Transportation Authority
Blake Transit Center Design and Construction
Subject: City of Ann Arbor Design Review Board and Plan Response

The following is a summary of issues as provided in the Design Review Board meeting report (April 18, 2012) and our design response to comments and recommendations received from the Design Review Board are provided in **bold**. The Petitioner acknowledged many of the DRB recommendations as valid considerations and many were discussed at length with the Design Review Board members. The plans have been further developed and revised since that meeting. In addition further comments have been gathered from City staff following submission for Site Plan Review.

Summary of Priority Issues

Fifth Avenue Street Frontage/Façade

1. The pedestrian experience at the street level could be enhanced. Pedestrians should be able to see the main entrance to the building from the sidewalk. The Fifth Avenue façade could be enhanced by creating a focal point in this location. The site could be softened in a number of ways. The canopy should be clearly visible from the right-of-way. The building is very geometric and could be improved by creating variation in the massing so that it appears less box-like. A small canopy could be placed on the southeast corner of the site. A change in building materials that enhances texture and color would help. The windows should be set back (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.1.2, A.4.2, B1.1, B1.3, B1.4, C.1.1, C.2).
 - 1.1 The pedestrian experience was enhanced by providing an exterior canopy extending west of the proposed building and further refined along the north side of the proposed transit center.**
 - 1.2 Additional building signage was provided on the east and south building faces. Signage provides clear identification with ATTA's logo.**
2. Consideration should be given to relocating the building to the northwest corner of the site. A temporary transit center could be provided during construction in the City owned lot south of the site. The NW location would help facilitate safer pedestrian movement including mid-block crossings from Fourth Avenue to Fifth Avenue and connecting across Fifth Avenue with Library Lane. The NW location also allows for superior opportunities for solar access.

- 2.1 The location in the northeast corner of the site defeats the Petitioner's long-term goal that a transit mall could be established, assuming AATA is able to acquire the Fifth and William Parking lot site a some point in the future.
 - 2.2 A priority of the project is to keep the existing Blake Transit Center open to customers throughout construction of the new Transit Center. While bus traffic would not enter the site, AATA's intent is to keep the Transit Center in operation.
 - 2.3 The new building location moves the building out of the afternoon shadow line cast over almost half the westerly side of the site by the 4th and William Parking Garage. This should help to improve the microclimate for the passengers depending on seasonal sun angles and time of day.
 - 2.4 Solar Access. New building location moves the building out of the afternoon shadow line cast over almost half the westerly side of the site by the 4th and William Parking Garage. The location will improve the microclimate for the passengers; however, much of the pedestrian area is covered by an exterior canopy to shelter passengers from inclement weather. The north building face provides ample windows to provide for natural day-lighting, without increasing potential for glare and solar heat gains to the building's interior space.
3. The building is very rigid and could be softened; architectural details should provide a sense of scale. Sunscreens should be provided; clear glass is recommended. The wall on the street edge on the first floor, Fifth Avenue side, is very blank. Building operating systems need to be thoughtfully located. The use of sustainable and locally manufactured materials is recommended. The primary pedestrian access point to the building should be near the main corridor, not deep within the building. (see Guidelines B1.1, B1.3, C1.1, C6.1, C7.1).
- 3.1 Clear glazing is provided on the pedestrian level glazing. The larger window opening located on the east and south building faces include sun screens. Access to the building interior is provided directly from 5th Avenue; entries are also provided on the west and north building faces.
 - 3.2 The strong geometric form of the building is softened by the layering of the building planes and through the use of varying finish materials. In addition the west stair tower includes glazing which wraps the southwest building corner to further reduce the strong geometry at the transition between the perpendicular exterior planes.
 - 3.3 The building exterior faces have been further developed to include signage to further identify the building on the pedestrian level.
 - 3.4 Project is seeking LEED Gold certification. The use of locally manufactured building projects is encouraged and expected of the project.
 - 3.5 Pedestrian access for public and transit patrons is located to provide clear and immediate access to the building.

Base Treatment

1. A clear definition between floors should be created. (see Guideline B.1.3).

1.1 The use of different building materials and layering of building plans define floor levels.

Walkway along the North Side

1. The 10 foot wide pedestrian path proposed on the north side of the site should be designed to encourage active pedestrian use and provide visual interest. Providing well considered landscaping would help. (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.5.1, A.5.5).
 - 1.1 The Petitioner has an on-going dialogue with the Government Services Agency (GSA), who controls the Federal Building; a sidewalk could be constructed to provide a pedestrian connection north of the proposed bus lane connecting 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue.
 - 1.2 This dialogue with the GSA would require establishment of a sidewalk easement fully located on the GSA's property and site perimeter security provisions for clear line of site as required for by the federal government.
 - 1.3 It is unlikely that an easement greater than 10' could be obtained due to the use and operational needs of the GSA property users and the existing site constraints posed by the GSA's existing off-

street parking stalls for staff.

- 1.4 GSA has stipulated to the Petitioner, that the installation of vertical elements and visually screening the GSA property from the adjacent property will not be permitted.**

Plaza

1. The plaza area could be enhanced by providing opportunities for art, a place for community announcements, and other points of interest. Uses that activate the plaza are encouraged. (see Guidelines A.3.1-2, A.3.6-7, A5 (all), A6.1, A6.2, C.1.1, C.3.1).

- 1.1 The plaza area on the west side of the building has been enlarged to provide additional area for bicycle parking.**
- 1.2 The physical width of the site has been maximized by recent purchase of an additional small parcel from the City of Ann Arbor in the southwest side of the site.**
- 1.3 Landscaping. Greenscreens were incorporated into the initial site plan submittal in response to comments from the Design Review Board. Based on comments received from City staff, the landscape plan was revised, deleting the Greenscreens, and providing additional landscape plantings.**
- 1.4 Decorative concrete pavement is shown the site throughout the pedestrian/boarding areas.**
- 1.5 Space for public art in the plaza west of the building has been discussed, but specific artwork installation has been commissioned at this time.**

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