City of Ann Arbor
Formal Minutes
Design Review Board

301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
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Wednesday, September 16, 2015 **3:00 PM** **Larcom City Hall, 301 E Huron St, Basement, conference room**

A CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairperson Bill Kinley called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

B ROLL CALL

Staff Present: Alexis DiLeo

Present 6 - Richard (Dick) Mitchell, Paul Fontaine, William Kinley, Geoffrey M. Perkins, Shannan Gibb-Randall, and Gary Cooper

Absent 1 - Tamara Burns

C APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Agenda was unanimously approved. On a voice vote, the Vice Chair declared the motion carried.

D APPROVAL OF MINUTES

D-1 **15-0866** May 20, 2015 Design Review Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes were unanimously approved and forwarded to City Council. On a voice vote, the Vice Chair declared the motion carried.

D-2 **15-1040** July 15, 2015 Design Review Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes were unanimously approved and forwarded to City Council. On a voice vote, the Vice Chair declared the motion carried.

E UNFINISHED BUSINESS

F NEW BUSINESS

F-1 **15-1156** McKinley Technology Centre Phase 2 - Design Review - A proposed design for a new 3-story, 30,000-square foot office building with parking underneath at the rear of the McKinley Technology Centre, located at 310-320 Miller Avenue. The proposed building is raised above the 100-year floodplain and placed outside of the easement containing the piped Allen Creek which bisects the site. Brick, with limestone accents and large industrial-inspired windows are proposed to compliment the First Street Character area. The site is 81,800-square feet and zoned D2/First Street (Downtown Interface) - First Street Character Overlay Zoning District

Tom Gritter of McKinley, Inc. and David Esau of Cornerstone Design presented an overview of the proposed project to the Board.

Boardmembers asked clarifying questions about design of the building and about other proposed site improvements. The Board criticized the design team for not providing or proposing a site plan, noting that the Board in general and the landscape architect members in particular did not have anything to comment about since so little information about any improvements other than the building itself was included in the application.

Regarding the building itself, the Board noted that industrial buildings typically express their structure and have brick as an infill material whereas the proposed building is entirely clad in brick. Members suggested the design be less symmetrical and be different, edgier and have more fun. The Board also felt the best views from the building were to the north and west and that the upper floor outdoor spaces be relocated towards those views.

For context and site planning, the Board believed a strong connection between the proposed building and the streetscape was essential. No clear entry is currently identified and it is not clear if the building is supposed to front Miller Avenue or North First Street. When developing the site plan, the Board said a clear entry must be established and a direct connection must be provided between the entry and one of the streets. Members felt the proposed building would be a destination for at least 100 and perhaps 150 people as their place of employment. A sense of place is currently lacking as well as a sense of arrival.

The following Guidelines were identified as applicable to the proposed project, almost all of which were found to be wanting or under developed.

A. Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning

A.1 Urban Pattern and Form. When considering urban pattern and form, the petitioner should assess the character of the adjacent streetscape, open spaces, and buildings to determine how they function as places and facilities supporting human use. The project team's assessment should seek to define opportunities to enrich the design excellence of the project.

A.1.2 Design sidewalk level features and facilities to provide enrichment of the pedestrian experience.

A.1.6 Where adjacent properties are underdeveloped and/or the block lacks inviting and interesting characteristics, consider a building, site and streetscape design that helps to create a vibrant pedestrian setting.

A.2 Site Planning and Natural Systems. An urban setting can be a challenging environment in which to respond to natural systems. Consider natural systems such as sun and wind patterns, climates and seasonality, rainwater harvesting, and significant individual features such as street tree patterns and landmark trees on public and private sites.

A.2.6 Where location and site size allow, consider use of a rain garden or vegetated roof to retain rainwater and serve as a site amenity, and employ rainwater harvesting methods for use in landscape irrigation systems.

A.3 Open Space. Open spaces can include public and private courtyards, plazas, patios, terraces, alleys, and gardens. Throughout downtown, site features and elements that invite use should be provided. In commercial areas, open spaces should have an urban quality and character that enliven the street and enhance the pedestrian experience. Outside the commercial core and in civic areas, open spaces may be more park-like settings for human activity. Private property open spaces should be sized relative to the intended use and level of anticipated adjacent pedestrian activity.

A.4 Parking, Driveways and Service Areas. Parking, driveways and service areas are necessary functions, which should be designed to benefit the urban experience.

A.4.1 Locate and size driveways, access points, service entries, alleys, loading docks, and trash receptacles to minimize impact on pedestrians and maintain pedestrian safety, circulation, and comfort.

A.4.2 Provide a pedestrian-friendly street edge at street level adjacent to surface parking areas and enclosed parking structures. Provide a landscape buffer appropriate for urban conditions at the edges of surface parking areas.

A.4.3 Locate a parking structure or a surface parking lot behind or to the side of a building, minimizing the visual presence of parking on adjacent public right-of-way.

A.5 Pedestrian Connections. Pedestrian connections include sidewalks, alleys and arcades that provide pedestrian access within, through and among properties. Such connections provide access to buildings, courtyards, plazas and other site elements.

A.5.1 Pedestrian walkways should be well integrated with the existing infrastructure in a way that supports pedestrian connections within and outside the areas of the proposed project.

A.6 Cycling and Transit. Walking, cycling, transit and other multi-modal means of transportation are to be considered in the design of streetscapes.

A.6.2 Consider use of convenient bicycle racks, including proximity to building entries, weather protection and security when selecting a location for bicycle parking and storage.

B. Design Guidelines for Buildings

B.1 Building Massing

B.1.2 When a new building will be larger than surrounding structures, visually divide it into smaller building modules that provide a sense of scale.

C. Design Guidelines for Building Elements

C.1 Street Edge. Building elements and architectural details used at the street front have a direct impact on the quality of the pedestrian experience and should be combined to create an active and interesting street front. Creative use of materials, textures and architectural details is especially important where there are few windows at the street front of a building.

C.1.1 Use building elements to create a street edge that invites pedestrian activity.

C.2 Entries. The location, spacing and general pattern of building entries impact the quality of the pedestrian experience downtown. Building entries should be located to enhance the street level experience and help give a sense of scale. Entries should be clearly defined, accessible, and located to express rhythm and visual interest along a street front. Although traditional building entry designs may be appropriate, creative and contemporary interpretations are also encouraged.

C.2.1 Clearly define a primary entrance and orient it toward the street.

C.3 Windows. Window design and placement should help establish a sense of scale and provide visual interest.

C.3.2 If contextually appropriate, upper floor windows should reference established patterns of adjacent and nearby buildings in size, shape and spacing by aligning sills and headers and using similar window proportions.

C.3.3 Window depths should be appropriate to the building design concept. For example, windows flush to the wall surface are often appropriate for modern designs, but traditional concepts should have punched or recessed windows.

C.5 Materials. Building materials should reinforce the massing and architectural concepts and enhance the character of the building and its context.

C.7 Sustainability in Building Elements. Consider sustainability when selecting structural and façade materials and designing functional building elements.

First Street Character District

The First Street character area lies to the west of the Main Street and Kerrytown districts, and forms the eastern edge of the Old West Side Historic District. The topography forming the Allen Creek Valley with its flood plain, the buried/piped Allen Creek, the Ann Arbor Rail Road track with its historic, turn-of-the-century industrial architecture, and the proposed future Allen Creek Greenway, are distinct aspects of this district

needing recognition during any First Street District proposed project design. The mixture of historic and non-historic residential and industrial architecture, and the valley land form, gives this area a distinct difference from other downtown character districts.

The area is a mixed use linear district (north to south) that follows the railroad tracks' older industrial railroad buildings, some of which have been converted into occupied industrial, construction, and other office uses, occasional art and dance studio activities, bars and nightclubs. The district also includes residential frame two and three story structures. The relatively quiet mixed-use neighborhood streets are highlighted by elevated train tracks with trestle bridges above east-west crossing streets from Washington Street north to Miller, and with wooden warehouse-like structures along the tracks, some of which are currently empty. The presence of the Allen Creek Flood Plain and the railroad track and its trestles are unique attributes worthy of design consideration.

The district's urban landscape largely consists of tree lined streets with relatively consistent lot spacing, and an occasionally vacant parcel. At times, a triangular shaped parcel caused by the orientation/alignment of the tracks is in contrast with the local streets. The future Allen Creek Greenway should be given design consideration as a potential element of all First Street Character District proposals.

The Board asked the design team return with revised drawings for further discussion.

G PLANNING COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS - STAFF REPORTS

H COMMUNICATIONS

15-1157 Various Communications to the Design Review Board

Received and Filed

I PUBLIC COMMENTARY (3 MINUTE MAXIMUM SPEAKING TIME)

Nancy Schewe, 428 Spring Street, encouraged whatever is built at this site to be good urban design. First Street is a gateway to downtown for many and the First Street streetwall starts at this property.

Ray Detter, Downtown Citizens Advisory Council, said he is still piecing

together how this project fits and would like to see it revised and return to the Design Review Board also.

Kathleen Canning, 430 Spring Street, worries about development pressures on the Water Hill neighborhood and does not want to see a towering or looming building from her home or anywhere in Water Hill. She is concerned about views south in the winter when trees are bare.

Alice Ralph, 1607 East Stadium Boulevard, spoke of the need to reserve the opportunity for connectivity across and to the site. She is a member of the Allen Creek Greenway board and noted the Greenway was not consulted on this project nor gave its approval for use of its logo.

Sandy Levitsky, 436 Spring Street, had great concern about the view from Spring Street. She noted the dominant presence of the Ann Ashley Parking Structure already on the downtown view from there, and also worried about commercial creep.

J ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 4:15 p.m. On a voice vote, the Vice Chair declared the motion carried.