

Design Review Board

September 19, 2013

Second review of 624 Church Street

RE: Notes from Dick Mitchell

I had a chance to pick up the drawings from Mia and review them now since I can't attend the meeting next week. Sorry I cannot attend. My comments fell into three categories:

1. Pedestrian experience on Church Street:

Many of the guidelines were written with the goal of enhancing the pedestrian experience on the public sidewalks around the building in question. One of the renderings (the one with the Mini Cooper in front) gives us a view of Church Street. It's not too engaging. Several of the guidelines might provide ideas to help with that:

A1.2: Provide features that enrich the pedestrian experience.

A1.7 and A4.1: Minimize pedestrian/bike/vehicle conflicts at service alleys.

A5.4: Landscaping, seating, historic markers, public art etc.

C1.1: Use building elements to create a street edge that invites pedestrian activity.

C3.1 (c): Potential use of horizontal sun screens to provide pedestrian scale

C4: Awnings

2. Massing of East elevation:

I am the one who urged the design team to consider coordinating material changes with massing changes the first time we saw 624 Church. In hindsight, I was overly critical and I'm sorry about that. I think our role is to keep personal preferences out of the discussion and stick to the guidelines.

I still hope there is a discussion, though, about massing because I think there is opportunity for improvement based upon guidelines B1, B2, B3 and B4.

I attached a scan of one of the renderings.

I think the material change from window wall to pre-cast at the location marked "A" works well because there is a significant change in plane.

The location marked "D" is a material change that does not occur at a change in plane but, I think it's also well done. The alignment of the outer edge of the floor slabs with a horizontal band on the precast is elegant. And the fact that the edge of the floor slabs and the band of the precast match in color tie the two together. That color match and that alignment might be hard to achieve with a floor slab that is poured in place and a pre-cast panel that is factory built but, it's a nice concept.

The material change is more two-dimensional at the location marked "B" because it lacks significant change in plane and a finessed blending of different materials.

Knowing nothing about the program, site or budget parameters, I'm going to stop short of any specific changes that come to mind. I think the most helpful thing we can offer as genuine assistance is to refer to the guidelines. Guidelines B1, B2, B3 and B4 all describe strategies that might be applied. If the designers hear that the middle 110' of the east façade would benefit from more varied massing or increased articulation of material changes we have done our job.

3. Material color choices:

I really like the look of the "color B pre-cast panels" in the rendering. However, it's been our experience that a color that rich is hard to achieve in pre-cast. The range of available reds in pre-cast is more pink than it is burgundy. Over time, exposure to sunlight turns it even pinker.

4. Proportions:

The designers might want to look at the proportion of the cornices to the overall scale of the building.

