



City of Ann Arbor

301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
<http://a2gov.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

Meeting Minutes Design Review Board

Wednesday, January 15, 2014

2:00 PM

Guy C. Larcom, Jr. Municipal Building,
301 E. Huron St., Basement Conference Room

A CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

B ROLL CALL

Present 5 - Chet Hill, Richard (Dick) Mitchell, Tamara Burns, William Kinley, and Geoffrey M. Perkins

Absent 1 - Paul Fontaine

C APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approved

D APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[14-0010](#)

December 18, 2013 Design Review Board Meeting Minutes

Rampson noted that the minutes are not yet complete, and will be provided at the next meeting.

Postponed to the Design Review Board due back on 2/19/2014

E UNFINISHED BUSINESS

F NEW BUSINESS

F-1 [14-0008](#)

Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters Renovation and Addition: A proposal to create a new two-story corner entrance at Fifth and Washington and construct a third story addition over the rear portion of this bank building. The exterior of the building will incorporate brick veneer, precast stone veneer and anodized aluminum and glass curtain walls. (Midtown Character Area)

Description of Project

Scott and Susan Bowers of Bowers and Associates described the proposed project, a renovation of the existing façade and a third-story addition to the Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters and Branch Office at 125 South Fifth Avenue. The current yellow brick façade will be almost entirely removed and replaced with brown and red-colored bricks and limestone-colored stone accents and trim. A third story will be constructed

over the eastern half of the building (above the cantilevered second story and covered parking area) and the main entry will be relocated from the center of the South Fifth Avenue façade to the corner of South Fifth Avenue/East Washington Street. The new, relocated entry will have a new extended height foyer. The façade changes are proposed for consistency with other branches and the third floor addition will allow more office space for bank operations.

Summary of Priority Issues

The Design Review Board concluded that the project met the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines, however, further refinements could be made to the proposed design for even greater compliance. Examples of especially applicable guidelines are noted in parenthesis; the full text of each referenced guideline is provided at the end of the summary. Please note that the Midtown Character Area guidelines also apply.

Site Planning

- 1. Relocating the main entrance to the corner and increasing the architectural details with the new façade, including a greater variety of materials, enhances the pedestrian experience as well as improves the building's corner presence. (A.1.2; A.1.3)*
- 2. The proposed design could and should do more to compliment and coordinate with the Bell Building adjacent to the east. (A.1.1)*
- 3. The location and size of the site, and building, may allow for sustainable initiatives such as porous paving in the parking lot and green elements on the building roof. Rainwater harvesting should be considered. (A.2.6; A.2.7)*
- 4. The existing picnic table in the landscaped area at the northwest corner of the site seems to be popular with bank staff. It would be an amenity to keep, and perhaps enhance, that space even if additional, private, outdoor space is provided on the roof as part of the renovation. (A.3.6)*
- 5. The existing planting beds adjacent to the building along both South Fifth Avenue and East Washington Street are well placed, well maintained and significantly contribute to the pedestrian experience. Along East Washington Street they also serve to minimize the impact of the covered surface parking spaces. Any opportunities to improve the planting beds buffering the surface parking lot from South Fifth Avenue should be considered. (A.4.2)*

Buildings

- 1. The new entry structure at the southwest corner of the building is appropriately placed but could be made even taller for better proportion with the rest of the building. (B.1.1)*

Building Elements

- 1. The proposed materials are a significant improvement over the rather bland existing façade. The wall surfaces will be much more visually interesting. The proposed canopies are a nice feature but should be enlarged to better match the scale of the streetwalls. (C.1.1)*
- 2. The relocated entry is a welcome and positive change to the current*

configuration. (C.2)

3. *The proposed windows on the third-story addition, and the architectural design of the additional story, should reference the established pattern of the adjacent Bell Building to the east. While the previous building addition (the cantilever over the surface parking lot) did not take the Bell Building into consideration, the proposed addition may correct some of the past design mistakes. (C.3.2)*

4. *The building owners have indicated they intend to use sustainable and/or locally sourced building materials whenever possible. (C.7.1)*

Additional Discussion Points

The Board noted that the application materials were very vague and did not provide adequate written explanations or justifications for context or how the proposed design responded to the design guidelines. It was unclear to the Board how the design team arrived at their design decisions, however, the final results were acceptable.

Given the unusual amount of undeveloped surface area of the site, including the planting beds immediately adjacent to the building and the surface parking lot, a landscape plan should have been provided with the design review application. The proposed landscape plan will be an important piece of the site plan submittal for the petition.

Reviewed and Filed

F-2 [14-0009](#)

116-120 W. Huron Mixed Use Building: A proposal to demolish the two buildings on the site and construct a six-story hotel with retail space along the West Huron frontage. The new building will retain the façade of the Greyhound Bus Depot and use a palette of materials and colors that echo elements of the classic style of the Glazier Building southeast of the site. (Main Street Character Area)

Fontaine arrived.

Description of Project

James Sharba of Hobbs and Black, representing the design team, described the proposed project. He said it will include demolition of all existing structures on the site except for the façade of the Greyhound Bus Depot and construction of a 6-story extended stay hotel with ground floor retail along the West Huron Street frontage. The design features a palette of materials and colors that echo elements of the classic style of the Glazier Building southeast of the site as well as incorporating the bus depot façade along with further art deco elements on the south/West Huron façade.

Summary of Priority Issues

The Design Review Board concluded that the project generally met the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines, however, suggested ways to refine the proposed design. Examples of especially applicable guidelines are noted in parenthesis; the full text of each referenced guideline is provided at the end of the summary. Please note that the Main Street Character guidelines also apply.

Site Planning

1. *The proposed design does attempt to reinforce the positive characteristics of adjacent and nearby sites, in fact, attempting to take on too many positive characteristics in the one proposed building. A simpler, less ambitious design would result in a more elegant feel. (A.1.1)*
2. *Sidewalk level features to enrich the pedestrian experience are provided, but care should be taken to ensure the bus entrance of the depot – proposed to be the hotel and retail receiving bay – does not detract from it. Explore the possibility of relocating this function to the north side of the building.(A.1.2) (A.4.1)*
3. *A kind of turret at the street corner of the building is proposed, offering a dominant architectural feature. Round corner elements are often more successful if they do not extend all the way to the ground level – consideration should be given to inverting the ground level of the turret so it provides an open but covered space at the sidewalk. (A.1.3; A.3.1; A.3.2; A.3.4; A.3.6)*
4. *Coordinating with, and enhancing, the existing pedestrian walkway along the west side of the adjacent One North Main building should be explored. (A.5.1)*
5. *Relocating some of the proposed sidewalk bicycle parking from Ashley Street to Huron Street may prove to be more convenient and more useful for bicyclists, since more people can be expected to bike to the retail establishments than to the hotel.. (A.6.2)*
6. *Consider the use of porous pavements in the patio and other outdoor spaces. (A.2.7)*

Buildings

1. *The tallest element is located at the street corner and variations in the architectural elements are provided to reflect the underlying, and previous, building and lot width pattern. (B.1.1)*
2. *A clear definition between the base and upper floors is provided, but the proportions of each are out of scale as the building is relatively short at six stories. A one-story base and five-story upper should be explored. (B.1.3)*

Building Elements

1. *Expand the proposed use of canopies and awnings. (C.1.1)*
2. *Make the hotel entrance more prominent. (C.2.1)*
3. *As currently proposed, the building materials reinforce the massing and architectural concepts of the character of the building and its context too well. Fewer design elements, taking a “less is more” approach, would benefit the overall design of the building. (C.5)*
4. *Some of the proposed architectural elements, the spires in particular, do not match the existing Art Moderne style of the bus depot. Art Moderne is a subset of Art Deco. Art Moderne emphasizes low, horizontal lines in keeping with its original application for transportation functions. Vertical elements should be de-emphasized and horizontal lines strengthened along the south face for pure Art Moderne design, if that is the desired goal. (C.5)*

Additional Discussion Points

The Board stated they appreciated the effort by the design team and owner to retain and incorporate the bus depot façade into the proposed design but, as currently presented, it was somewhat awkwardly tied in and did not achieve the intended effect. The Board further commented that the bus depot façade is specifically the 'art moderne' style, a subtype of art deco. They noted the spires proposed on the south face put too much emphasis on the vertical axis rather than the horizontal axis. The Board suggested strengthening the horizontal design elements and minimizing the vertical ones to be more in keeping with the style of the bus depot.

The Board also felt the overall design was "too busy," meaning that too many different colors, materials and design styles were proposed. A simpler, more elegant design, while still incorporating both the classical and deco styles, was suggested. Given the diversity of architectural styles within the Main Street character area, the Board commented the context of the site could support a variety of designs and was not limited to only the classic, traditional design of the Glazier Building.

Reviewed and Filed

G PUBLIC COMMENTARY (3 MINUTES MAXIMUM SPEAKING TIME)

Ethel Potts stated that the 120 W. Huron hotel project uses a complex design. She said the firm seems embarrassed by the simplicity of the bus depot, which could be a feature. She felt that the turret is a distraction and dominates the street. She said she hopes the developer does not place the entrance to the hotel across from Ashley Terrace, since it has an unattractive driveway at the street level. She noted in response to comments about moving the facade to another location that part of the history of the facade is this particular location.

Christine Crockett said she likes the look of the building, and the turret provides a sense of adventure. She said she liked the different materials proposed and overall felt this was an adventuresome design.

Norm Tyler provided the Board with a handout containing recommendations to Council on changes to the design review process. He said the recommendations come from a group of downtown neighborhoods as part of the downtown zoning evaluation. He suggested that the role of the Design Review Board be increased in the design review process, including that City Council consider their recommendations in granting premiums. He said that in the DRB's discussion with Planning Commission, they explore changes to the process such as requiring an additional meeting to present a preliminary sketch version of the project before the formal DRB submittal. He said another change would be for a member of the DRB to attend the Planning Commission meeting on the project. He said this would address the concern about the original DRB comments being lost as the project moves through the site plan review process.

[14-0011](#)

Various Communications to the Design Review Board

Reviewed and Filed

H COMMUNICATIONS

I ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:12 pm.

