

ST. JOHN'S

Minutes of Built Heritage Experts Panel

January 15, 2020

12:00 p.m.

Conference Room A, 4th Floor City Hall

Present: Glenn Barnes, Chairperson
Garnet Kindervater, Contractor
Dawn Boutilier, Planner
Rachel Fitkowski, Landscape Architect
Mark Whalen, Architecture
Ken O'Brien, Chief Municipal Planner
Ann Marie Cashin, Heritage and Urban Planner

Regrets: Bruce Blackwood, Contractor
Rob Schamper, Technical Advisor

Others: Lindsay Lyghtle Brushett, Planner
Karen Chafe, Supervisor - Office of the City Clerk

2. PRESENTATIONS/DELEGATIONS

2.1 Information Note dated January 9, 2020 re: 150 New Gower Street - Proposed Hotel and apartment Building - LUAR

Richard Symonds (LAT 49), Vahe Kouyoumdjian (Kingslake Projects) and Eva Mataj (Mataj Architects) will be in attendance.

The Committee reviewed the Information Note dated January 9, 2020 contained in the agenda in relation to the above cited matter. Though the existing hotel at 150 New Gower was removed from the heritage area, the proposed development will remain in the heritage area, enabling the BHEP to consult on the overall design. The Panel has already evaluated the Land Use Assessment Report (LUAR) in July and made the following comments for the developer's consideration/incorporation:

Hotel:

- The ground level should be more reflective of the downtown. Should look like downtown St. John's from the street level. For example, more traditional materials should be used at the base, like brick.
- Some of the colours should be taken off the tower to allow the tower to disappear against the sky, similar to 351 Water Street.
- The hotel should blend more with the residential building.

Residential Building:

- Bring the colours down to the streetscape.
- Building could be stepped back at the second storey.
- Try to make the ground floor blend with the rest of the building.

General

- Reconsider the use of punched windows.
- Try to use elements to tie the three buildings together.

The Committee met with Richard Symonds (LAT 49), Vahe Kouyoumdjian (Kingslake Projects) and Eva Mataj (Mataj Architects).

Ms. Mataj elaborated on the design elements as follows:

- Condominium building:
 - the site restrictions for parking were evident and accommodations have been made for underground parking which is more visually appealing at the street level.
 - Have attempted to incorporate many traditional elements into the design, as inspired by the surrounding neighbourhood, interpreting rather than replicating materials from a different time. The colors are reflective of the City.
 - Glass is a major element which benefits the interiors and takes advantage of the exterior views.
 - The rooftop level shows a recreational area not currently enclosed and that will be treated accordingly to enhance viewing of downtown while hiding it from view. There were no details on this yet.

- Hotel:
 - The focus was to enhance the verticality of the hotel and colors were selected from existing building – the Hilton (orange strips consisting of wood finish) to achieve this.
 - The blue colored elements will be changed to charcoal grey and the use of more modern brick on the stack version will facilitate contrast.
 - The developer feels that the three buildings should and will complement each other's elements, transitioning appropriately between the two commercial buildings on the front and their residential neighbor at the rear.

Comments outlined by the Panel:

- The developer did not make any attempts to incorporate BHEP's recommendations, as outlined above, into the design elements. The Committee referenced the developer's heritage interpretation, noting that some of the suggestions made back in July are not reflected in these drawings.
- Concern was also expressed about the treatment to the lower levels and the proposed use of dark grey. Typically, red brick is more appropriate as well as punched fenestration.
- The grouping of high-rise buildings in one specific area of downtown was felt by one member to be a mistake as it creates an inhospitable pedestrian atmosphere. It was felt that such buildings should be situated throughout different areas. Staff advised that high rise towers are a direct threat to the heritage core of the Downtown and that was the purpose of the rezoning in the western portion of downtown. The proposal does fit with grouping of towers in this area.
- The landscape plan shows only one walkway connection to the side of the building so there is no pedestrian experience. Though the green space outlined is appropriate, there is a greater opportunity to create a plaza that attracts pedestrians throughout the site and enables a stronger connection to New Gower St. as well as Pleasant St. and Hamilton Avenue. The developers advised there is an issue with access of the bank alongside New Gower St. due to a power easement and the presence of a duct band that needs a 10 foot buffer. That strip of land belongs to the City and the developer has no control

over it. Presumably, an agreement would need to be reached with the City on how to deal with that strip of land. The developer was open to the possibility of enhancing the pedestrian experience as suggested.

- Reference was made to the former and existing historic properties on Duckworth St., particularly the visual and the functional components of the lower levels of buildings where restaurants, retail and business occupancies are prevalent. The new development has a great opportunity to recapture that with brick and horizontal lines.
- Reference was also made to the rhythm of downtown, with storefronts that tend to have datum lines that are used as a guide to enable a consistent blend to the streetscape. The relieved porch inset is an example of a consistent element that could be applied here.
- Panel suggested that the design elements be more historically literal and less interpretive.
- Questions were raised as to whether the condominium development could be stepped down to be less severe and more in tune with the residential scale at the side of the building. The developers were asked to explore more gradations at the side near the houses on Pleasant Street, instead of the rear of the building.
- The Panel referenced the unique opportunity to have the traditional scale at the street level incorporated here despite, what the developers argue, is a site somewhat removed from the downtown core. The area is situated at the base of a highway link and as such serves as a prominent entryway into the Downtown as well as other linkages to the north west, i.e. Hamilton Avenue, Pleasant St. and Springdale St. It is anticipated that due to other ongoing new developments occurring in the area, this intersection will experience a lot of foot traffic in future. The proposed new hotel and condominium should complement and encourage that connection between the commercial and residential components as it will become a transitional area between the downtown core and the residential downtown.

The delegation left the meeting at 1:28 pm.

Following discussion, the Panel recommended the following in addition to their original recommendations back in July:

- Landscaping:

- Enhance the pedestrian experience throughout and surrounding the site by creating landscaped walkways that lead to surrounding streets. One area where this could be achieved is via the walkway adjacent to Tamarack Construction on Hamilton Avenue. The entryway from New Gower St. should also be reviewed to determine if any accommodations can be made to provide access to the bank (formerly Andrews' Range), without compromising the required easement.
- Hotel elevations:
 - Though the developer's intent to break up the mass of the vertical elements was understood, the Panel reaffirmed their original recommendation to tone down the high-rise components with more muted tones.
 - Color could be introduced at the street or podium level; however, the proposed use of black, white and grey stone should be replaced with traditional brick material and punched fenestration.
 - Reference was made to datum line throughout the retail sector which creates a cohesiveness and rhythm which should be tapped into at this new location.
 - The use of recessed porches for more urban relief.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

4. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Adoption of Minutes - December 11, 2019

Recommendation

Moved By Rachel Fitkowski

Seconded By Mark Whalen

That the minutes be adopted as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

5.1 Update on Bowring Park (Ove Arup) Bridge

The Chief Municipal Planner provided an update in this regard, noting that the City is still exploring heritage designation of the Ove Arup bridge.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1 Heritage Awards Update

The Heritage & Urban Planner updated the Committee on the above noted. Staff will be coordinating a coffee break to start off Heritage Week on Friday, February 14th. There will be an open house in the Great Hall with the display of some heritage art work and pictures of heritage designated buildings. These will be on display throughout Heritage Week.

There will also be a workshop on the national standards and guidelines for historic places which will be open to the general public but registration is required. Staff will forward more information to Panel members in this regard.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:51 pm.

GLENN BARNES, CHAIR