

**MINUTES
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
ONE JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

7:00 p.m.

May 22, 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Vincent Lombardi; Vice Chairman Jon Wyckoff; City Council Representative Doug Roberts; Dan Rawling, Reagan Ruedig, Martin Ryan, Richard Shea; and Alternate Cyrus Beer

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Alternate Molly Bolster

ALSO PRESENT: Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner, Planning Department

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I. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

1. 7 Hancock Street

*It was moved, seconded, and **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0) to approve the administrative approval petition.*

II. WORK SESSION

A. Petition of City of Portsmouth, owner, and Redgate/Kane for property located at 62 Daniel Street, wherein permission is requested to allow renovations to the existing buildings and the construction of new mixed-use buildings as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 106 as Lot 8 and lies within the CD-4, CD-5 and Historic Districts.

Chairman Lombardi read the petition into the record and noted that the proposed scaling and mass would be prioritized for review, and then the architectural design and style of the new buildings would follow.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff said she was pleased to represent the prospective property landowner. She said the project was unique, in that the City was applying in partnership with the Redgate/Kane team to transfer the Daniel Street property to the City from the Federal government. She explained the process and the project's history and noted that the City was trying to get the property from the Historic Monument Program, whereby the government could transfer one of its assets that it no longer used to the City at zero cost if the public purpose of preserving historic property was the goal. She noted that a number of meetings were held with the public and the Steering Committee and that the City had developed the McIntyre framework

with public input and was approved by the City Council to achieve the public's desire for redevelopment of the site. She said it would be reviewed by the National Park Service and the New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Office, and that tax credits would be sought. She said the General Services Administration (GSA) who currently owned the property expected to vacate the building by the first quarter of 2019.

Mr. Ryan asked if the State Historic Preservation Office had already approved the strategy. Ms. Colbert Puff said they had not and explained that the State Historic Preservation Office's involvement was triggered by certain activities and that they were responsible for Section 106 review, which would be invoked by the Federal transfer of the property. She said that the GSA would submit to the State Historic Preservation Office for Section 106 review, which would be at the beginning of 2019 and would likely result in no adverse effect ruling if a preservation covenant was recorded upon the property.

Steve Perdue said he represented the developer Redgate/Kane and that they had listened to the public realm and their desires for an appropriate scale and open spaces. He said their renderings represented a density on the site that they felt responded to the existing McIntyre Building and the surrounding context. He discussed how the center of the site was re-imagined to draw people in, and that there were several spaces with retail, residential, and public activities. He pointed out that the site was a challenging one and said the project would be a combination of office/commercial and residential space, with up to 45% open space. He also noted that they would provide parking for the residential program required by zoning.

Henry Moss of Bruner/Cott Architects stated that they had heard feedback from Portsmouth citizens, the National Park Service, and the State Historic Preservation Office that altered their original design concept. He said they were working with character-defining elements for the building and understood that the threshold for the property transfer from the GSA had to comply with the Secretary of Interior Standards. He reviewed in detail the building's views, chronology, original footprint, scale, alterations, window fenestration, style, and scale.

Mr. Lawrence Cheng introduced Joe Almeida of DeStefano Architects, whom he said was working with them as a consultant on the site context and various other issues. He said they were trying to reintegrate the site into the City's fabric and transitioning from previous century styles. He discussed in detail the different masses, uses, styles, and materials of buildings up and down the street. He reviewed how the site dropped down to different streets at certain points, causing different levels of building scales and rhythms. He noted the transition of uses in surrounding context, from commercial to residential, which allowed them to introduce residential use into their project. He discussed building materials and said they were leaning toward precast masonry and sandstone, and perhaps metal or fiber-cement panel for the parts of the building that were stepped back. He reviewed in fuller detail the grade changes and the site context.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he liked the public spaces but had a problem with the Linden Way residence because the building suddenly went up to the same height as the Daniel Street residence. He said it was an over-intensification of the use of the land, awkward in design, and took away from the main two buildings on Daniel Street. Mr. Lawrence Cheng replied that the top floor was set back eight feet from the edge of the building. He said they would go into more

details when the project moved into the building's architectural treatment as to the change in materials, setback, and so on to address the massing.

Mr. Rawling said he was thrilled to see the redistribution of the massing from the initial proposal and felt that it was treated just right. He said the center of the site was the place to put the greatest volume of massing. He said he wanted to save the 50-year-old trees at the front of the McIntyre Building because they were unique to Portsmouth and were an important scaling element for the building. He also suggested having some green lawn as a character-defining feature, pointing out that it was a huge relief element in the center of the City and one of the few green spaces. He noted that some of the sidewalk enlargement was needed on the site, even though the valuable pedestrian experience was actually on the other side of the street, and he cautioned against pushing the sidewalks and removing all the parking on that side of the street. He encouraged improving the pedestrian experience on the other side of Penhallow Street and said he was delighted to see a plaza in the area because it was important for people to have a gathering space to rest. He said he had concerns about the views of the church steeple and noted that there was a lot of public input to preserve those views. He said the renderings appeared to show a second-story window on the corner of Market Street, which was at a much higher elevation, so the pedestrian experience of the church steeple would be lost. He said it was the area of the building's masses that he had the most concern with because it blocked the vista.

City Council Representative Roberts noted that Mr. Lawrence Cheng had discussed how the height on Ceres Street was mitigated by the decline in the elevation. He said it didn't look like a 6-story building because it was set down so low, and he thought the buildings along Bow Street seemed to have the opposite effect. Mr. Lawrence Cheng said it was the tallest mass at 4-1/2 stories and that they used it as a reference point. He said it was similar to the building on Bow Street. City Council Representative Roberts said he was thinking of the other corner, where Bow Street went down to the corner of Penhallow Street. He said there was quite an elevation change of between 15 and 20 feet between that building and the buildings at the other end of the street by Ceres Street. Mr. Lawrence Cheng said there was no good way to make a comparison and that the project believed that making a public space there would help the scale and that the corner would be energized by putting retail activities along the Bow Street Plaza. It was further discussed. City Council Representative Roberts noted that some people were interested in having a larger plaza on that corner. Mr. Lawrence Cheng said it would have a similar scale to the Market Street plaza and that they would present a 3D model of it at the next meeting.

Ms. Ruedig said she agreed with a lot of the comments and was pleased with the distribution of the massing. She said the interior was appropriate to have height and that she appreciated the plaza and open public spaces there, especially the creation of Linden Way, where the steeple and the church were given a focused view. In reaction to the public comment that there wasn't enough green space, she said there was a much larger park in Prescott Park just a few blocks away that had plenty of green space. She said the McIntyre project was an urban center where plaza space was a more appropriate public space and that she thought it was very well done.

Mr. Shea said he also agreed with all the comments. He said he had the most difficulty with scale on the Daniel Street side. He said that, looking at the project from Chapel Street, he wanted to see that building relate more in mass to the smaller buildings on that side, as opposed to relating

to the McIntyre Building. He acknowledged that he was one of the few who liked the McIntyre Building but thought it was unfortunate that it was in the Historic District because its massing didn't relate to the surrounding architecture. He said he felt that it wasn't in the right direction to make more of that massing that people didn't like, and that he would like to see the taller buildings broken up. He said he thought Plan 'L' was more successful because the roof was broken up and there were more angles instead of just a box. He noted that there were 2-1/2 story wood frame homes on Chapel Street and that the big wall of mass did not relate to those houses at all, and he said that was the area that he would like to see more focus on the mass and how it related to those smaller structures. He said the overall concept was good and that he understood the challenge with the sidewalks on Penhallow and Bow Streets because they were at garage level and a portion of retail, with no entrances and very different from what was happening on the other side of Penhallow and Bow Streets. He said it wasn't a sidewalk that people would want to walk to because there was nothing there other than going to the corner park. He suggested that Building B be pulled back a bit more so that people could see more into the site. He said the open spaces were very enclosed and didn't feel open enough to be a public space but, rather, felt more like a private space for the residents who lived in those big blocks. He said he wished there was a way to draw people in more because it felt very walled-off inside.

Mr. Lawrence Cheng said the market hall would draw people in and that they planned to have performers that would contribute to a pedestrian experience. He said they would look into pulling the building back. It was further discussed. Mr. Shea said he was looking for more of a hardscape park experience with perhaps a water feature, benches, tables and chairs instead of a tight and enclosed area for that type of entrance. He noted that the tall building in the center might be very dark and in shadow quite a bit. Mr. Lawrence Cheng said they would do shadow studies and look into dimensions.

Mr. Ryan said he agreed with most of the comments and thought the massing was fine. He said he didn't have a problem with some of the building sizes and thought that decent-sized massing was necessary to compete with the McIntyre Building. He said he understood that the developer's hands were tied but was hoping to see more of an adaptive re-use of the building and modifications that would make the project more pleasant and approachable.

Mr. Rawling asked whether there was documentation of the new green area that had become the centerpiece. Mr. Moss said there were originally service bays that ran down that frontage, along with the office area for the post office, and he thought the programming and treatment of the ground level would change the harshness. He noted that the demolition of that wing was non-negotiable and that they would look further into those alterations.

City Council Representative Roberts said he thought it was important that Bow Plaza be the right size because it was possibly the most chaotic corner in Portsmouth due to cars going up the hill to Market Street. He said they had to be careful about not allowing people to spill out into the street. Mr. Lawrence Cheng said they would introduce planters with seating in the plaza and also consider performance use or public art. Mr. Rawling asked whether the applicant was locked into their site plan. Mr. Moss said the National Park Service was aware of the adjacent development but were less interested in the detail there than they were with the McIntyre block itself and the immediate landscape.

Chairman Lombardi said he agreed with much of what the Commissioners said and generally liked the plan in terms of how the space would be used. He said he liked the plaza space and felt that it should be 'greened' but not green space. He said that he had looked at the building from beyond Bow Street and was struck by the dominance of the Linden Way Building. He agreed with Mr. Shea that the stairway going up to the upper plaza was a narrow space and that the upper plaza wasn't actually seen until one was at the stairs. He asked whether that building could be chamfered on the corner so that the upper space was more visible. He said that the Daniel Street residence might be a little large for the abutting small houses but realized that it was 15-ft lower grade, and he suggested that it be looked into more.

Mr. Ryan asked how the great hall space would be used and whether it would be open to the public. Mr. Perdue said they wanted to create a space to accommodate public events but also needed to rent some space. He said they considered doing something like the Boston Public Market but felt that it wouldn't be economically feasible, so they were looking into a public space that people could just sit in without buying anything and that it could perhaps evolve into having retail vendors. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said there was strong public support for a public market and that he liked the idea of renting small spaces and having common seating. He urged the developer not to make the inside of the space cosmopolitan but to make it more exemplary of simple seacoast construction and what a public market from 150 years ago would have looked like. He said the developer could then charge more reasonable rents and allow access to people who couldn't afford to have a coffee shop downtown. Mr. Perdue agreed but said that he also wanted to activate the space, so they would try to balance things out.

Chairman Lombardi noted that the public sessions involved discussions of a rooftop space and asked whether that was feasible. Mr. Perdue said it was still in the plans and that they were evaluating it from a cost standpoint. He said the McIntyre Building didn't easily support rooftop public space but that it was more likely to exist in the new construction.

Mr. Shea asked how and where the service vendors, supplies, and trucks would happen on the site. Mr. Perdue said they created a service passageway that would be activated with retail and residential amenities but that they still had to figure out how to service the retail without interrupting the great hall space. He discussed it further. Mr. Shea said he guessed the post office would have to move, but Mr. Perdue said there might be a retail kiosk.

Public Comment

Margot Doering of 300 Jones Avenue said she agreed with most of the massing comments and thought that a wind study should also be done due to the narrow corridors with tall buildings that got a lot of wind. She hoped that Linden Way wouldn't become an alley of tornado winds.

Kathleen Logan of 21 Blossom Street said she agreed with Mr. Shea's comments about the closed-in look of the public spaces. She said that it just looked like a passageway between buildings and that there was nothing in the middle part to make the public feel welcomed. She said she didn't want to have to go to Prescott Park for green space, and she noted that there was no downtown green space for the public.

No one else rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public comment session.

The architectural style, design, and materials were then discussed.

Mr. Lawrence Cheng stated that the new project could not be shy of scale, height, and so on. He said the windows would be larger and that the step-back would be similar to the McIntyre Building. He said they decided on a flat roof and tried to break down the scale by using darker materials in some spots and brick and sandstone on others. He said they had a new opening going into the open arcade. He discussed the various building elevations, motifs, roofs, dormers, Juliet balconies, setbacks, the existing retaining wall, grade levels, and retail spaces in detail.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the Commission was looking primarily at the Daniel Street residence and that he couldn't stress enough how inappropriate that building design was. He thought the design was brought over from Portwalk Place, with sections from the building that the public was most discouraged with, including the Juliet balconies, into the core of the City. He said he had problems with the depiction shown on Page 28 on one of the City's most historic streetscapes. He felt that the buildings on the other side of Bow Street that were newer did a better job of representing what Portsmouth was and the context of the abutting buildings and that the developer threw it all out the window with their two new buildings in that area. He said he understood the concept for two-story retail and the brick plaza but felt that the Juliet balconies and the large windows were disturbing. He referred to the Linden Way residence rendering and said he didn't know what he was looking at, asking if it was a hospital. He said he was shocked.

Mr. Beer said he recognized all the efforts but felt that what was left off the drawings was the fabric all around the site. He said he saw architectural elements from the McIntyre Building in the drawings but wanted to see more inspiration and detail from the surrounding town. He referenced the picture that showed a flat roof shed dormer, which he thought didn't fit into the character of the surrounding buildings. He said the enormous windows that were almost three stories tall also didn't reflect the surrounding neighborhood. He noted that buildings had a base, middle, and top, and the top was the most interesting, but that a lot of the proposed new buildings were missing important details that were seen throughout the core of the Historic District, like the building that looked like a brick box.

Mr. Rawling said the buildings could use some softening in their details because they seemed a bit stark. He said he was focused on the top of the Daniel Street residence and felt that all buildings needed a top that would pass design review as if they were removed and placed on the ground because they needed to be able to stand on their own. He said he was averse to the metal boxes on the rooftops because they stood out. He said he was pleased to see a roof form on the Linden Way building that related to the context of the neighborhood, even though the detail needed to be softened, and thought it made a tremendous difference in the way the building read because it had a distinctive form to it.

Ms. Ruedig said that she felt the opposite about the new construction buildings taking too much from the McIntyre Building and not enough from the surroundings. She said she didn't see any reference to the McIntyre Building in the new designs, other than the flat roof of the Daniel Street residence. She noted that the historic building being preserved was the centerpiece of the

site and that the surrounding buildings and all of the new construction had to be in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards by being distinct but complementary and referential. She said that old buildings couldn't be faked just to match what was across the street. She said it was a good opportunity for Portsmouth to make the new contemporary design referential and make it fit in, which she felt the new materials and designs did. She said she appreciated the roof forms and bringing in of new materials that were referential to the surrounding area but felt that the design had to speak to the mid-century centerpiece. She said she didn't want to see more copies of the McIntyre Building and brick boxes, and she felt that the original designers of the McIntyre Building tried to reference the historic buildings across the street. She said the building would be more appreciated in the future and that the project was spending a lot of time preserving it and ensuring that it was done right. She said she wanted to see them build a context around it to make it fit in more rather than stick out, and that she wanted to see the design as a whole work together with the McIntyre Building and not just try to ignore it.

Mr. Shea noted that the Bow Street and Penhallow Street intersection was an important one that everyone walked through to get to the tugboats. He agreed that buildings should not look like Disneyland copycats and that elements from across the street had to be brought in. He said he felt that those buildings were leaning in the right direction but should take more elements from across the street, perhaps 90% traditional and 10% modern. He said he didn't want to be bombarded with new architecture when he was walking down that street because he came to Portsmouth to see historic architecture. He said he agreed with Ms. Ruedig that the project had to support the McIntyre Building more. He noted that the applicant initially discussed the fabric of the neighboring buildings and how they were all unique, with different roofs and heights, and he said that was what made the City's core so interesting. He said a big, programmed building wasn't what the City wanted to see, with all the little buildings around it. He said the architecture was just developer-boxed architecture that he could see anyplace and was nothing that he felt would be a great historic building that the City would want to preserve in the future.

Mr. Ryan said that most of the rooftops had some interest but that he'd rather have a genuine architecture. He noted that Portwalk tried to relate historically to the surrounding context but was more flat and decorative. He said the project's buildings were honest, abstract representations of nicely scaled historic buildings while still being modern and referencing some of the areas throughout town, but he thought there was another layer of work needed. He said that some references should be made to the Martingale Building and that some of the arch work from the front of Daniel Street could be referenced throughout the complex of buildings. He said he would hate to see flat, decorative references like a fiberglass cornice. He said he had hoped that the great room would be a 21st-Century covered public space but liked the language of it, as long as it was genuine architecture and not cheap references.

City Council Representative Roberts said there were a lot of approaches to downtown historic architecture and agreed with Mr. Beer's comments about the examples of things he didn't feel fit, particularly the shed roof. He said he didn't care for the large window massing and suggested that they be more tempered. He said he didn't react well to the view on Daniel Street because it seemed too boxy to fit in.

Mr. Rawling said the garage vents on one elevation (page 27) were interruptive to the streetscape and that he hoped the great room would be more than just a glass box. He said the Daniel Street residence referenced the McIntyre Building but treated it a bit differently, and he thought that the detail in general could be softened, like window treatments. He said his biggest gripe was the metal tops of the buildings.

Chairman Lombardi noted that there were a lot of diverse opinions and said that he tended to agree with both sides in different ways. He thought there needed to be more reference to traditional elements and to the McIntyre Building and that the McIntyre Building shouldn't be left standing by itself. He said he agreed about the third-story tall window sizes, which weren't common in the Historic District. He said the Daniel Street residence related somewhat to the McIntyre Building but felt that more could be done. He said the Linden Way residence was very industrial in an area that was residential and business.

Mr. Lawrence Cheng said they were trying to address the surrounding context but also deal with the reality of modern-day housing needs. He emphasized that there were many different building styles in the area, with no real consistency, and that they were considering the project from a more urban design point-of-view.

Joe Almeida said they could address all the Commission's comments and show modifications at the next work session. He said they would also show the 3D model as well.

Public Comment

Margot Doering of 300 Jones stated that a poll was taken about the public's feelings on whether the style of the building should be traditional or contemporary, and that the result was a mix of traditional and contemporary. She said the biggest challenge was to find a harmony of those two styles. She agreed about the loss of modern features in the new buildings and didn't see much mid-century reflections from the McIntyre Building in the new buildings. She noted that the arches from the McIntyre Building weren't repeated on the new buildings and thought it was a lost opportunity, along with the lack of curves to soften some of the spaces. She said the great hall looked like a glass box and hoped that it would be changed.

Matthew Coutes of 69 Woodbury Avenue stated that the apartment building mimicked the shape of the McIntyre Building and thought that was key in merging with the surrounding buildings. He said the Bow Street view was awkward and that the reason he went to Bow Street was for nostalgic reasons and not to look at blended buildings. He said he favored more green space in that area to enjoy the waterfront and the historic points of Portsmouth. He felt that there was too much retail space and that parking would be a problem. He suggested that Penhallow and Commercial Streets be blocked to traffic and that food truck vendors be allowed in to make the area more pedestrian friendly. He said the Bow Street building facades looked too much like Boston's Harborside and suggested they be toned down.

Kerry Vautrot said she was the Chair of the Portsmouth Advocates, who had reviewed the packet earlier in the evening and had positive comments that aligned nicely with Mr. Ryan's comments.

She said they wanted to see the project evolve to be the standard for contemporary-compatible buildings and that they looked forward to seeing what would happen next.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote (7-0) to **continue** the work session to a June meeting.*

III. ADJOURNMENT

*At 9:28 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0) to adjourn the meeting.*

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
HDC Recording Secretary