

Excerpt from Design Review Board memorandum from DRB meeting on October 21, 2014

Present: Jonathan Salvon, Derek Noble and Michael Hanke, Design Review Board members
Jim Wald, Select Board liaison
Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Members of the public and applicants

DRB 2015-00010 – Archipelago Investments LLC – One East Pleasant Street – (site is currently known as the “Carriage Shops”) – Review proposed mixed-use building with 78 dwelling units and retail/commercial space and associated site improvements – continuation of discussion begun on September 30, 2014

Recommended approval

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Williams had appeared before the Design Review Board on September 30th and had received many comments from Board members as well as from members of the public. They returned to the Design Review Board on October 21st and presented a revised design.

Mr. Williams thanked the Board and members of the public for their previous comments.

Mr. Wilson presented new façade elevations and new floor plans and site plans. He stated that the new building would not be built right up to the property line. Previous comments had included how the building addresses the cemetery, the institutional look of the building, how the building coverage overwhelms the site and the window proportions, among other things.

Mr. Wilson stated the windows now have a reduced scale and proportion. The mural is pulled back into the building. It will now be 5 to 6 feet from the property line and will be more integrated into the building. The building will also have reduced “building coverage”.

Most of the murals painted by David Fichter are painted on an existing building, so the new proposal for the mural fits that pattern. A portion of the building at the southeast corner will turn the corner and be visible from East Pleasant Street.

There will be wayfinding signs, including a low wall with lettering, along the walkway between the Toy Box building and the new building, leading people back to the cemetery. The new building will have a continuous precast base along the south wall to unify the building and draw people back to the cemetery.

The grade changes along the southern and western walls have been modified. The floor plan has been reduced. On the north side, there will be two brick elevations, interspersed with a wood façade that wraps around the courtyard. The continuous green roof has been eliminated and replaced with an open parking area with trays supported by steel posts that will serve the function of a green roof by catching and controlling stormwater. The north façade no longer needs to be 16 feet tall at the garage entry, but can be shorter (about 8 feet tall) with wood screens rather than metal walls. The screens will be in the form of an 8 foot tall transparent wood fence with sliding gates for the garage entry. The gates will be operated by a key fob.

There will be planting along the northern property line on the border of the Summerlin property.

Mr. Wilson stated that the building coverage was now reduced to about 62% rather than the previously proposed 80%.

There will be a café on the southwest corner which will be consolidated into the collaboration space. The collaboration space on the 4th and 5th floors has been eliminated, along with the cut-out in the façade at that level. The new collaboration space on the ground floor will be larger and accessible from the street.

Mr. Wilson presented the engineer’s plan (prepared by SVE Associates). He described the 6 foot grade change along the façade and how it would be handled both on the interior and the exterior.

The parking lot design is approximately the same in terms of layout. There will be solid “green roof” trays over two bays of parking. These will be 10 feet high and constructed of metal. Service trucks and trash will still be able to get through, in the aisle beside the “green roof” trays.

The transformer and electrical room will be located at the northwest corner of the building.

There will be a granite curb on the northern side of the alley driveway, to create a planting area along the northern property line. The pavers on the "Woonerf" will be granite.

There will be improved sidewalk all the way from the southern property line to the north side of the alley driveway. Columnar Red Maples are proposed for the streetscape along East Pleasant Street. The area between the sidewalk and the street will be grass, to take up the grade change. The trees will be planted in planters with native shrubs in the planters as well.

The unit mix in the building has changed with many more 2-bedroom units. The 2-bedroom units are efficient and appeal to a broad demographic. There will be 84 rather than 78 units, with more apartments, but fewer beds per apartment. The number of bedrooms will be 192, rather than 182 as in the previous proposal.

There may be an opportunity to plant trees along the southern side of the property, possibly on town land. Also, trees can be planted in the cemetery, along the mural side of the building. The developers could work to save the trees along the cemetery side, but the trees will die shortly after the construction is completed. It is better to remove the trees and plant new ones. The small crabapple along East Pleasant Street will need to be removed.

The grade will be lifted up along the mural, so that the mural will be at the level of the viewer.

Hilda Greenbaum of Montague Road asked about the relationship of the mural, the fence and the edge of the building on the cemetery side. The mural will be painted on the building, with the property line about 5 feet away and the fence another 3 feet from the property line.

Mr. Salvon commented as follows:

- The applicants took the comments from the last meeting and made a strong attempt to integrate the comments into the new design;
- The building is less dominating when seen from the cemetery side;
- There is more wood on the façade and the modulation on the street side is better;
- He likes the wood corbelling at the corner.

Mr. Noble commented as follows:

- He likes the new design;
- The building is now much more successful on the north side;
- He would like to see more space on the street side of the building but understands the need for space within the building; but he'd still like the building to be pushed back a few feet to gain more pedestrian space along the street;
- The façade at the entrance is the fulcrum of the building; can it be wrapped with wood for one more bay and also can there be wood along the top of the southwest corner section?
- He supports this type of scale and density in the downtown area;
- This is an exciting project.

Mr. Williams described the "frame and plane" concept of the design and stated that the building needs to be brick all the way to the top at the southwest corner.

Mr. Hanke commented as follows:

- He liked the edginess of the previous design;
- He would like to see the southwest corner as "its own building";
- With the new wood added, the building appears to have a lot of stripes;
- He misses the canopies from the previous design and doesn't like the "balconettes";
- The wood detailing is fussy and the wooden facades may not hold up over time;
- What will the visual impact be when the wood weathers?
- The mural placement on the new design is better;

- The north façade is improved;
- The building is less aggressive than the previous design;
- However, given all of these comments, this is still a “nice building”;
- It will provide tax benefits to the town;
- The building will also be a LEED-certified energy-efficient structure, which is a “win/win” for the town.

There was further discussion among the Board members. Mr. Salvon supported the new design and stated that it is markedly better.

All Board members praised the new illustrations, stating that the design is easier to see now that it has been put into context.

Ms. Greenbaum commented that the building has too much wood. She would prefer that the building be all brick. She supported the changes to the fenestration. “The windows are a major improvement”, she said.

The Board voted 3-0 to recommend approval of the application.

