

Auburn Downtown Design Review Committee
March 17, 2020 – Meeting
MINUTES

The Auburn Downtown Design Review Committee (DDRC) met on Tuesday, March 17, 2020 at 3:30 p.m. in the Development Services Building Conference Room at 171 North Ross Street.

PRESENT

Forrest Cotten, Megan McGowen Crouch, Dan Bennett, David Hinson, Anna Solomon (remote), Scott Cummings, Stephanie Canady, Katie Robison, Logan Kipp, Jay Howell, Ray, Brian Woodham (Auburn Villager), Brett Basquin (Foresite Group-remote), Rodney King (Core Spaces-remote), James Gwinner (Antunovich Associates- remote), Tai Maki (Antunovich Associates-remote), Randy Wilson (John Randall Wilson, Architect), Wayne Alderman (Owner, Housing Corporation for Phi Gamma Delta fraternity)

ABSENT

Forrest Cotten convened the meeting and James Gwinner began to provide an overview of the project's evolution and the changes that had been made in its design since the prior DDRC meeting was held to present the project back on January 21, 2020.

Tai Maki spoke to the inspiration for the design and provided some illustrations of buildings that he considered to be appropriate in providing guidance for this building.

Mr. Maki spoke to the big expression and entrance to the development at the corner of Cox Street and Genelda Avenue. He emphasized the importance of the Genelda elevation in that it was where the students would enter and exit the building. He talked about various elements that had been added to provide variety and break up the massing of the building.

Mr. Cotten asked about the depth of the stepbacks that had been shown.

Mr. Maki said it was roughly three (3) feet.

Dan Bennett commented that he was hoping they would be deeper than that.

David Hinson asked about how the balconies were constructed.

Mr. Maki stated that they would be comprised of pre-fabricated aluminum material. The underside of the balconies would be clad appropriately.

Mr. Hinson said he liked the windows that were shown with the elevation being discussed.

Mr. Bennett asked if there were penthouse type units on the top floor.

Mr. Maki stated that the parapet element caused the upper floor to appear taller than it actually was.

Mr. Maki drew the Committee's attention to the entry of the building and offered that the canopy gave the building a bit of a contemporary edge to it which he thought was appropriate in an urban context.

The Cox Street elevation was discussed next and Mr. Maki stated that they purposefully employed substantive brick building material at the lower two levels and that the building lightened up at the floors above it.

He noted the balconies that were used on some of the upper story units to give some added character.

Mr. Maki then began to present the substance of the Glenn Avenue elevation. An effort had been made to pay particular attention to creating a human-scale at the lower levels to make for a more pleasing and comfortable pedestrian experience.

Mr. Maki acknowledged that the Glenn face was the longest face of the building and efforts were made to break it up in multiple ways.

Mr. Bennett asked about the vines shown on the building and if they were designed to wrap around the pilaster.

Mr. Maki answered in the affirmative and added that the pilaster was roughly 2-3 feet deep.

Mr. Hinson asked about the louvre elements on the building near Glenn and Cox.

Mr. Maki responded that it was an attempt to add some character to the street experience.

Mr. Hinson said that many improvements had been made, but there was still nothing that really looked like a front with any entrances whatsoever.

Rodney King responded that, programmatically, the building was designed purposely to have the one point of student ingress and egress from Cox and Genelda.

Mr. Hinson said that this was not a desirable end result for the City as far as how the Glenn elevation had been treated.

Anna Solomon concurred with Mr. Hinson and stated that the building at the intersection of Glenn and Cox should be treated more similarly to how the building at the intersection of Genelda and Cox had been treated.

Mr. Maki stated that the slope was difficult to work with at the Glenn/Cox corner and providing an entrance at this intersection was going to be difficult for Core Spaces to accommodate.

Mr. King felt that there may be just a difference of opinion on this issue.

Mr. Cotten asked if having some outdoor pseudo-public study space might be an option to help activate that corner a bit more than what was currently proposed.

Mr. Maki contemplated taking the current facades at the corners of Glenn and Cox and, perhaps, flipping them around.

Mr. Hinson encouraged Mr. Maki to take a closer look at that prospect.

Mr. Bennett offered that anything that could be done to activate that corner in some way would be a great improvement.

Mr. Hinson asked the architects to continue to pan around the building for discussion and comment purposes.

Mr. Maki discussed the parking deck and the various building materials that had been proposed to be employed.

Mr. Hinson asked about the bays at the ground floor level and asked what material would be behind the ivy.

Mr. Maki said it would be the same pre-cast material.

Mr. Hinson said that a good job had been done with blending the aesthetic of the parking structure with the student living building.

Mr. Gwinner stated that they would work to enhance the building and its relationship to the corner of Glenn and Cox, specifically.

Mr. Maki concurred that there were some things that could be done to improve that corner.

Ms. Solomon also encouraged the development group to make the Glenn/Cox corner a real statement piece.

Mr. Maki assured the group that a place would be made where that corner could interact with the street. In closing, the Committee thanked the development group for its efforts and the improvements made to the building itself.

Randy Wilson (John Randall Wilson, Architect) and Wayne Alderman (owner of the house corporation for Phi Gamma Delta fraternity) briefly introduced themselves and Mr. Wilson commenced with presenting the proposed enhancements and addition to the fraternity house.

Mr. Wilson stated that the front of the building would be taken down and redone. The dorm rooms will be on the new third floor. The second floor will be entertainment space.

He added that the house will be extended toward South College Street such that it would be more compliant with the current setback requirements in the Urban Core.

He offered that the bulk of the work would be done along the College Street frontage and when finished, it would setback 9.75 feet from the property line.

Mr. Wilson provided details of the building exterior including the substantial outdoor covered spaces. He stated an effort was made to acknowledge its institutional surroundings, while maintaining its residential character.

He stated that all of the brick would match once the project is completed and the roof would be shingled.

Mr. Hinson inquired as to the balcony building material.

Mr. Wilson responded that it would be all brick.

He then reviewed the floor plans for the building with the Committee.

Mr. Wilson reviewed the particulars of the variance that was granted related to the project.

Mr. Hinson and Mr. Bennett expressed satisfaction with the building proportions.

Mr. Bennett suggested keeping the language consistent with the rectilinear roofs.

Mr. Alderman said it was very important to the housing corporation that the building look great as it was in a gateway location.

Mr. Hinson suggested raising the roof height a bit.

The committee reconfirmed its pleasure with the project and indicated that Mr. Wilson had done a great job with the design.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:15 pm.