



Carlisle | Wortman
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MEMORANDUM

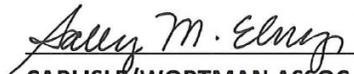
TO: City of Northville Historic District Commission
FROM: Sally M. Elmiger, AICP
DATE: March 9, 2020
RE: 150-156 N. Center St. – New Construction – Third Conceptual Discussion

At the January 15, 2020 HDC meeting, the applicant presented ideas for a new building for a second time. This new building is located on the southeast corner of N. Center and Dunlap streets. They are returning to the HDC for a third time with revised concepts for a second conceptual review.

Comments from the Commission at the January meeting are reflected in the DRAFT meeting minutes, attached to this memo.

We will evaluate the application for conformance with the HDC Application requirements once the project is submitted in the future for a formal decision.

Please don't hesitate to call if you have any questions or need additional information.



CARLISLE/WORTMAN ASSOC., INC.

Sally M. Elmiger, AICP, LEED AP

Principal

Cc: Pat Sullivan, City Manager
Shari Allen, Building Department
Brent Strong, Building Official
M Architects (Robert@marchitects.com)

white, and with no changes in the exterior moldings, design, or colors, unless the applicant first returns to the HDC for further approvals.

MOTION carried unanimously.

CASE #3

M ARCHITECTS

150/156 N. CENTER STREET

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Robert Miller, M Architects, 114 Rayson Street, Suite 2C, Northville, was present on behalf of this second discussion regarding a conceptual design for new construction at 150/156 N. Center Street. Greg Presley, 108 N. Center, Suite 205, Northville, was also present. The applicants had been before the Commission at the November 20, 2019 meeting for a first conceptual review.

The project involved demolishing the existing single-story building at the southeast corner of N. Center and Dunlap Streets in order to construct a new 3-story mixed-use building at that location, with residential units on the 2nd and 3rd floors. They were also proposing to build a third story on top of the adjacent building – Tuscan Café – at 150 N. Center St. That work would require demolition of a portion of the rear of the building.

The applicants had made changes to the design based on the comments received in November. The third story was now pulled back from Center Street, so that the Tuscan Café building had pride of place on the street. The new design had reduced the facades on Center Street to two: the Tuscan building and the new building. As requested, the new building included some of the elements of the original Opera House building, including pilasters, rhythm and massing, and height. A tower element had been added at the corner to help accentuate the building as a gateway corner coming south along Center Street. The applicants had worked to reduce the height of the building, so that the height to the top of the roof level had been reduced by 2 feet, and the height to the top of the parapet had been reduced by 2.5 feet. They were permitted 42 feet height at this location.

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Miller showed existing conditions along with renderings of the proposed new building, which would wrap around the Tuscan building. The Tuscan restaurant would remain, and a new restaurant space would open up in the new portion of the building with outdoor seating at the corner. A portion of the curb would be removed along Dunlap, creating a drop off area for deliveries and to offer private drop off for the restaurant. The residential units on the 2nd and 3rd levels would have frosted glass balcony rails. The 2nd floor windows of the Tuscan building had been made taller.

The Dunlap Street elevation had been given more interest by removing the metal awnings. Phenolic wood was proposed for the restaurant element and outdoor seating area, balcony elements, etc., thereby warming up the façade and design. The rear elevation now offered a stronger design as well.

Regarding building height, there already were downtown examples of 3-story buildings, and the original Opera House had been higher than 50 feet high. The proposed building would be lower than what was there historically, and would be lower than some areas in the downtown area currently, including the MainCentre and Long Building. There were also downtown examples of 3-story buildings next to 2-story buildings.

In addition to referencing elements of the original Opera House, including pilasters and the round

window that was part of the tower design, they were also trying to relate to the Edison building to the north, emphasize the Tuscan building to the south, and tie in some elements of the Albert Kahn Water Wheel building at the corner of Main and Griswold Streets. They were using two colors of brick and limestone accents, along with phenolic wood, to help accentuate the tower element and horizontal and vertical rhythms of the structure.

As requested in November, Mr. Miller showed a perspective rendering of the proposed building from the northwest corner of N. Center/Dunlap.

Commissioner feedback included:

- The guidelines considered a knee-wall an important element in the downtown.

Mr. Miller said they had considered using exterior knee walls but they wanted to create an open, inviting space for outdoor eating. Ultimately the outdoor patio area would have a fence, since alcohol would be served there.

- The proposed building, while improved from the concept shown in November, still seemed too massive and dark, and it appeared to be overpowering the bike shop building. While it was acknowledged the building could be 3 stories tall per ordinance, the HDC needed to feel the building was a good fit for the Historic District.
- The guidelines said that the building height should be within 5% of the surrounding structures.

Mr. Miller said there was no easy solution to the height question. In context with downtown generally, there were other 3-story buildings in the area, and some newer buildings had been built close to smaller buildings. The bike shop building was itself 3 stories. Again, the proposed building was not as tall as allowed per ordinance. They would continue to be aware of height and mass as they worked on the design.

- Discussion focused on reducing the perception of mass. Windows could actually add mass to a building such as this one. Most buildings downtown had a different architecture and window style on the 1st floor than the upper levels. Similarity of style from ground to building top created a sense of heaviness.

Other design characteristics were discussed, as the applicants asked for feedback for specific design elements. For instance, perhaps the tower cap could be reduced or modified, even if the round window needed to be removed. The bases of the corner columns seemed clunky and should be modified. The vertical portion on Dunlap that contained the street address did not seem to fit with the overall design. The rear design seemed more contemporary than the rest of the building (Mr. Miller pointed out this was intentional), with the upside down L design seeming awkward. Further suggestions put forward during this concept discussion included lightening the perceived mass by using arches, curves, less windows or different windows on the 2nd and 3rd floors than at the ground level, lighter brick with a change in brick pattern rather than 2 brick colors, metal rather than glass balconies, a modification in the tower pillars at the corner, and a reduction in overall tower size.

- There was concern regarding snow drift from the new building to the bike shop building, and how that would impact the structural integrity of the bike shop building (148 N. Center). There was also a concern regarding how the new building related to the bike

shop building generally, especially to the windows on the north side of that building. As shown in the renderings, the top northwest window of 148 N. Center would be partially visible only.

It came out in discussion that the orange color on the balconies was inaccurate – that color would be oak or maple. However, Commissioner Gaines liked the orange color.

Commissioner Gaines spoke to the elegance of using less detail and simplification. He also noted that the District wanted new construction to respect the past but also look forward as well.

Noting that tonight’s discussion was for a conceptual design only, Chair Allen opened the meeting for audience comments.

John Roby, 511 W. Dunlap, handed out materials for the Commission, including:

- Information from the Historic District Guidelines
- Historic Photos of Downtown Northville

Articles:

- *Compatible Infill Design, Principles for New Construction in Oregon’s Historic Districts*, 2011
- *Regulating New Construction in Historic Districts*, by Eleanor Essor Gorslai AIA (National Trust for Historic Preservation)
- “Differentiated” and “Compatible” from Preservation Leadership Forum. 12-09-2015
- *Sense of Place: Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts* (Alliance for Greater Philadelphia)
- *How to Create Sensitive Additions*, by Gordon Bock (Old House Online, Updated Jan. 16, 2019/originally September 28, 2018)
- *5 Ideas for Adding On*, Steve Gross and Susan Daley, (Old House Online, Updated April 18, 2019/originally September 28, 2018)
- *Excellent New Guide for Historic Districts Infill*, by Clem Labine (Old House Online, Updated Oct. 1, 2019, originally Nov. 28, 2011)

Books:

- *The Future of the Past*, by Steven W. Semes
- *Historic Preservation and the Livable City*, by Eric Allison and Lauren Peters

Mr. Roby emphasized the need for scale and humility toward existing structures in the Historic District.

Lenore Lewandowski, 119 Randolph, Northville, said the large windows on the upper stories would cause residents to feel they lived in a fishbowl. She preferred metal railings for the balconies such as those on MainCentre. She liked the cornice detail. She was also concerned about sufficient parking for the new restaurant.

Nancy Chiri, 661 W. Main, Northville, said she didn’t have a problem with the height. She also felt there was too much window – the overall warehouse effect needed to be softened. With the size of the windows as proposed, the interior residences would be very hot at certain times of the day. Also, the windows would have to be kept covered, or the view from the street would be of the back side of furniture, electrical cords, etc. A small knee wall with windows above would give the residents a place to push the furniture against.

Paul Sklut, 512 W. Dunlap, Northville, said the design being shown this evening was improved

over the concept design shown in November. He did feel the proposed building was still too linear, and was too big and heavy in scale. Throughout the downtown there were many arches and curves; this building was all straight lines. He did like the direction the applicants were taking, and he appreciated the fact that they had listened in November and made changes based on that discussion.

Commissioner Gudritz said the comment about the view of the windows from the street was important. What could be placed against ceiling to floor windows would impact pedestrian perception of the building

The applicants thanked everyone for their feedback.

Chair Allen closed discussion on this item.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS:

None.

9. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRPERSON

MOTION by Gudritz, support by Murdock, that David Fields continue as Vice Chair.

MOTION carried unanimously.

10. DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Murdock asked that City staff take a look at the Bloom Insurance awning (108 W Main Street), which was in disrepair.

Chair Allen reminded the Commission that training was scheduled for Wednesday January 29 at 6:00 p.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Seeing that there was no further discussion, Chair Allen adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl McGuire
Recording Secretary