

Burlington Design Advisory Board

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MEMORANDUM

To: PKSB Architects / BTC Mall Associates, LLC
From: Burlington Design Advisory Board
cc: Development Review Board, Austin Hart, Chair
RE: ZP16-1258SP; 49 Church Street (Burlington Town Center)
Date: June 22, 2016

The Design Advisory Board held a sketch plan review of the proposed mixed use redevelopment of the Burlington Town Center on June 14, 2016. The purpose of a sketch plan review is to introduce a project to the Board and for the applicant to solicit feedback prior to the submission of a permit application. As requested by the applicant, the Board is following up with these written comments summarizing the issues discussed during the sketch plan review.

Our recommendations are based on the materials submitted by the applicant: the Burlington City Center Preliminary Sketch Review Set dated May 9, 2016, including preliminary floor plans, exterior elevations, and perspective views; a 3D flythrough digital animation; and sun study animations. Additional perspective views were shown at the meeting which was not included in the posted materials, including 3D views of ongoing design development of the garage elevations.

The Board's review of this project is based on the Burlington Comprehensive Development Ordinance Article 6, Development Review Standards, specifically: Part 2, Site Plan Design Standards; and Part 3, Architectural Design Standards. The Board recognizes that a proposed amendment to the CDO is currently being considered by the Planning Commission and the City Council, which would establish a Downtown Mixed Use Core Overlay District and prescribe specific dimensional and urban design standards. The Board believes the following recommendations nonetheless fall within the spirit and intent of Article 6. The proposed zoning amendment, if adopted, would reinforce these recommendations and provide more specific design guidelines.

Comments in italics were not specifically mentioned during the sketch plan review but are added here as additional recommendations.

Building form, massing, and façade articulation:

1. The first 5 floors of the building should incorporate more variation in the horizontal plane, stepping in and out from the street to break up the massing of the building. Stepping the building in at the middle of the block on the west side of the St. Paul Street extension was offered as an example, to separate the north building from the south building (visible in View 2).
- 2). The applicant presented further design development to the corner of Bank and St. Paul

- Street, where the first 2 floors aligned with floors 2-4 above, but were set back in the adjacent bay. This is a good move that starts to better define the corner, and should be pursued further throughout the project.
2. A setback is currently shown at the top of the 4th floor continuously along Cherry, Pine, Bank and St. Paul Streets. Some variation in this vertical plane should be introduced, to provide more visual interest, to break up the apparent massing of the building, and to deemphasize the horizontal length of the building. This could be accomplished if the setback did not occur at the same story for the entire length of the block, or with variation in the parapet height.
 3. The materials and composition of the façade at parking levels 2-4 are too dissimilar from the floors below and above. The treatment of the façade at the parking levels should be more consistent with the other floors, integrated into the façade as a whole, so the parking levels are indistinguishable from the rest of the building.
 4. Currently the same pattern of façade articulation is continued along the entire length of Bank St and Cherry St, between Pine and St. Paul. The materials, composition, and pattern of fenestration should change at periodic intervals within the street block to decrease the apparent mass of the building and to emphasize the vertical proportion within smaller sections of the building.
 - a. This approach should be extended to the upper floors as well, so the upper floors maintain a relationship with any changes in the façade happening below.
 - b. The form and articulation of the lower stories on Bank Street and Cherry Streets should relate better to the structures above. On Cherry Street, for example, the articulation of the lower 6 stories should acknowledge the presence of the towers above and the locations of the courtyards between the towers.
 5. The major entrances into the office and residential lobbies on Bank Street and Cherry Street should be more distinct from the rest of the facade. This could be a good opportunity to introduce changes to the form and articulation of the façade, to highlight the location of the major entries, and to break up the massing of the building.
 6. The rendering of View 10 – NW Corner of Cherry and St. Paul Streets – dated 23 Dec 2015 – portrays a large expanse of glazing for the entire length of Cherry Street on floors 5 and 6. The amount of glazing should be decreased and supplemented with other materials, to increase visual interest, to break up the apparent mass of the building horizontally along the street, *and to meet the requirements of Article VI Energy Conservation, Section 8 of the Burlington Code of Ordinances, which adopts the Vermont Commercial Building Energy Standards (CBES).*
 7. *The treatment of the façade at the parking garage at floors 2-4 should be different on Bank Street than it is on Cherry Street, to acknowledge and integrate with the commercial office building above.*

Roof design

8. The applicant presented a modified design with a sloped roof on the office tower facing Bank Street. The Board approves of such a direction and encourages the applicant to continue exploring variations in roof forms for the different buildings. (This recommendation is supported by Part 2 (Roofs and Rooflines) of Section 6.3.2 of the Architectural Design Standards which states, “Large expanses of undifferentiated roof forms shall be avoided.”)
9. *This will be the tallest building in the city of Burlington, the roof forms will be visible from multiple vantage points, and the project will be a significant addition to the Burlington skyline. The project should therefore include roof forms and architectural elements that enhance the city’s skyline.*

Design Approach

10. *This project would be the tallest building in the city of Burlington, it has the potential to dramatically improve the downtown core by adding a significant amount of residential, commercial and retail space, and it would promote a more vibrant and active streetscape. This is a unique and significant project. While the contextual approach to the building design is appropriate and appreciated, the project should also reflect its prominence and importance to Burlington, by incorporating architecturally distinctive and prominent forms. Such a move would be particularly appropriate for the office building on Bank Street, as this is a commercial building (and includes an observation deck presumably for public use).*

Community Center:

11. The Community Center shown on the 2nd floor plan, sheet A-104, should have an improved presence on St. Paul Street. The community center should include an entrance and storefront display at street level. The community center should be accessible directly from the street (via a street-level lobby with elevator) without needing to enter the Mall Arcade.

Parking garage interior

12. Safe pedestrian routes should be provided within the parking garage to lead pedestrians from their car to the stairs and elevators.

Pine and St. Paul Street extensions

13. The extension of St. Paul Street should be designed to feel and act like a public street. View 2 on Sheet V-02 and View 9 on Sheet V-09 shows the St. Paul Street extension with brick pavers and flush curbs with bollards. The applicant stated that they proposed this street design to match the character and feel of Church Street, but the Board feels that the St. Paul (and Pine Street) extensions serve a different purpose and function than Church Street, which is a pedestrian marketplace. The St. Paul and Pine Street extensions serve to reconnect the vehicular street grid, decades after it was severed with Urban Renewal. These street extensions will be public streets, owned and maintained by the City of Burlington. Extra effort should be made so that the streets feel like public streets, not private driveways. (This is even more critical due to the misalignment of the new street extensions with the existing street grid, and its proximity to the NBT Bank driveway, which may confuse some drivers.) Therefore, we suggest that the streets be paved to match the surrounding streets, and conventional curbs be used instead of flush curbs with bollards. The applicant indicated they had developed the current design in discussion with the Department of Public Works. If our suggestion conflicts with an agreement the applicant made with the DPW, then we suggest further discussion with all parties to determine the best approach to the design of these new public streets.
14. The St. Paul Street extension intersects Bank Street directly adjacent to the private driveway for NBT Bank. This is shown in View 2 on sheet V-02. The design of this intersection should ensure safety for pedestrian crossing. As currently shown, there is a long distance from the northwest corner of the Bank-St. Paul intersection (middle of rendering) to the east side of the NBT driveway (right side of rendering), where no clear pedestrian path is provided.
15. *As shown on the St. Paul Street Elevation on sheet A-203, the St. Paul Street extension rises at a 6.9% slope from Bank Street to the middle of the block, and then slopes down to meet Cherry Street. This is due to the presence of the Burlington Arcade below, at the Concourse Level. The 6.9% slope is a dramatic difference in rise compared to the existing Bank and St. Paul Streets to which it connects with, and the 6.9% slope hampers the ability of the new St. Paul Street extension to act and feel like it is naturally integrated with the downtown street*

grid. The Burlington Arcade at the Concourse Level should be modified or depressed to allow for a street slope of 5% maximum, 4% preferred.