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Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City of Rensselaer Planning Commission
First Floor Conference Room, Rensselaer Community Center, 62 Washington Street
February 22, 2010

Members Present:

Charles Moore – Vice-Chair (acting Chair), Frank Adams, James Ahlemeyer, Tom Cardamone, Bob Campano, George Farrell

Members Not Present:

Christine Van Vorst

Staff Present:

Marybeth Pettit – Director of Planning, Kevin McLoughlin – Assistant Director,

Others Present

Bob Noel, Roger Murman, Jeff West, Aaron Vera, Steve Boisvert

Call to Order:

Acting chair Moore called the regular meeting of the City of Rensselaer Planning Commission to order at 7:01 PM. Roll call was taken, and it was determined there was a quorum.

Adoption of Past Meeting Minutes

No minutes were considered.

Communications

NONE.

Old Business

1. **DeLaet's Landing / Marx Properties Redevelopment, 555-575 Broadway** – submission of revised design guidelines for consideration/approval and Site Plan approval for phase 1 drawings addressing roadways, utilities, and construction phase erosion & sediment control measures.

The discussion centered primarily on the applicant's response and suggested changes to the original draft design guidelines derived from the Clearwater Florida document. Some text amendments were discussed to address various expressed concerns of the applicant and planning commission and the resulting suggested changes are listed as follows:

Access, Circulation and Parking

Appropriate

- For townhouse projects located on low traffic-volume streets with site characteristics that prevent internal parking, parking may be directly accessed from the street provided it is co-located with shared driveways to the greatest extent practicable.
- ~~• Detached garages and carports serving single family uses located in line with or behind the rear of the principal building.~~
- ~~• Residential uses along Clearwater Harbor designed with parking garages or with parking areas internal to the site/building and screened from Clearwater Harbor and any abutting right-of-way.~~
- Parking lots adjacent to rights-of-way that are screened with a ribbon building frontage, landscape buffer, or a solid wall or fence three feet in height.
- ~~• The use of interlocking pavers, brick or other similarly textured materials for parking lot surfacing and/or accents.~~
- ~~• Parking garages as the principal use within the Downtown Core located on Cleveland Street, Fort Harrison and Osceola Avenues with at least 75 percent of the ground floor of each façade on all adjacent street frontages occupied by active uses. Active uses include restaurant, retail, entertainment or other uses/features determined to be pedestrian-oriented.~~
- ~~• Ground floors of parking garages accessory to a principal use with at least 75 percent of the primary facade occupied by the principal use(s)/features or other use determined to be complementary to the principal use.~~

Mechanical Equipment, Concealed Wireless Communication Facilities, Loading and Service Areas.

Inappropriate

- Freestanding wireless communication facilities (i.e. structural towers).

Landscaping

Appropriate

- Landscaping compatible with the climatic conditions of West Central Florida that includes the use of native plant species and Xeriscape landscape techniques the Capital region (USDA hardiness zone 5-6).

Inappropriate

- ~~• Landscaping planted without an adequate irrigation system.~~

Building Design

Coverage

High percentage of ground coverage is permitted pursuant to the approved PDD. encouraged in a downtown to create a critical mass of activity. The amount of ground coverage varies among character districts with the most intense coverage found in the Downtown Core and the commercial areas of the other districts. In addition to a building, coverage can also include plazas, courtyards, outdoor cafés and other public spaces.

Appropriate

- ~~• Corner lots that maintain the location pattern for a distance of two blocks including both sides of the street.~~

Inappropriate

- ~~• Corner lots that do not maintain the location pattern for a distance of two blocks including both sides of the street.~~

- Buildings separated at a distance which ~~does not substantially comply with the approved PDD plan, precludes the provision of Guideline-compliant alleys and open~~

Architecture

The architectural style of new development or redevelopment should be consistent with these design guidelines, desired development in the surrounding character districts or as otherwise envisioned by the Downtown Plan.

Architecture refers to the relationship and culmination of the various features of a building including texture, proportion, entrance design, doors, windows, details, roofs, materials and color in addition to the mass and scale.

A variety of architectural styles are expected and these guidelines do not prescribe one architectural style as being the most appropriate, exist within the Downtown and the Guidelines should not prescribe any one architectural style as being the most appropriate. Buildings in all six Downtown character districts represent a broad range of styles typical of trends of the late-19th to mid-20th centuries with no singular style being predominant. Therefore, no one particular style or theme will be mandated for any district.

New buildings may use a variety of architectural styles as appropriate to the intended use of the building and the context of the surrounding area. New design may use contemporary materials to adapt historic design elements into a new building.

Façade Design

Primary and Corner Facades

Primary facades include those facades located along streets ~~designated on the Master Streetscape Plan or properties within the Downtown Core adjacent to Clearwater Harbor and Coachman Park.~~ The design of the primary facade of buildings is critical for the atmosphere to be created along the street front.

Buildings on corner lots at the intersections of streets ~~designated on the Master Streetscape Plan~~ are considered to have two primary facades and should receive the highest level of design treatment on those facades.

Inappropriate

- Buildings on corners that do not treat each adjacent designated street ~~(as designated on the Master Streetscape Plan)~~ equally.

Secondary Facades

A secondary façade faces alleys, parking areas, and other public spaces or rights-of-way not located along a public road. Old Bay district properties along Clearwater Harbor. The level of design along a secondary façade, while perhaps not as intense as a primary façade should continue the architectural style of the building and use the same quality of materials.

Windows and Doors

Appropriate

- Clear glass ~~(as defined by NYS building code) (88 percent light transmission or the maximum permitted by any applicable Building Codes)~~ installed on ground floor windows of retail and commercial premises, except for stained or art glass provided the stained or art glass is in character with the style of the building and/or use (churches, craftsman buildings, etc.).

Inappropriate

- Entire building exterior of mirrored glass and / or glass curtain walls.
- Tinted or reflective glass on ground floor of non-residential premises except where demonstrated necessary to avoid excessive thermal loading, with less than 88 percent light transmission.

Roof Design

Appropriate

- High-rise buildings which utilize sculpted roofs in order to establish an interesting and enhanced skyline unique to Downtown Clearwater.

Other Architectural Features

Appropriate

- ~~Hurricane shutters, if provided, fitted as an integral part of the storefront design, not visible when not in use and only to be used during the timeframe in which a formally issued hurricane warning is in effect.~~

Inappropriate

- ~~Visible, permanent bars or roll-down type security shutters/bars/gates.~~

Materials And Color

Materials

Appropriate

- ~~Materials compatible with the existing and/or desired context of the surrounding area and that are common to the area's historic construction methods/style.~~
- ~~The use of contemporary materials adapted to historic design elements.~~

Inappropriate

- ~~Unfinished Concrete Masonry Units (CMU or cinder block); and~~
- ~~Any other material found unacceptable by the Community Development Coordinator and/or the Community Development Board, as applicable.~~
- The use of the following materials on the first three ground floors of building exteriors:
 - ~~Hardboard siding;~~
 - ~~Plastic, metal and/or vinyl siding except for rear and side of facade of single-family dwellings;~~
 - ~~Any other material found unacceptable by the Community Development Coordinator and/or the Community Development Board, as applicable.~~

Signs and Miscellaneous

Signs

~~...and design and architectural context. Existing, historic signage should be repaired when possible and replaced only when repairs are not feasible. Should the replacement of historic signage be necessary a replica is encouraged provided it is compatible with the architecture of the building. Signage should not obscure architectural details.~~

Inappropriate

- ~~Signs painted directly on the façade of a building unless documented by physical/historical, documentary and/or pictorial evidence are discouraged.~~
- ~~More than one hanging or projecting sign per street frontage for each business premises/business.~~
- ~~Monument signs on sites where the primary building is located 20 feet or closer to a front property line.~~
- ~~Sandwich board signs.~~

Lighting

Appropriate

- ~~Existing, historic light fixtures preserved in place whenever feasible.~~
- ~~Historically accurate reproduced lighting fixtures documented by physical, documentary and/or pictorial evidence.~~
- Lighting levels conform to standards of the Illuminating Engineers Society (IES).

Corporate Design

~~Corporate franchises typically prefer to build new structures rather than convert existing building to their needs. However, franchises more and more are moving into existing structures within a downtown. Any building occupied by a corporate franchise, whether new or existing, designated as historic or not will need to meet the requirements of these Guidelines.~~

~~While many national corporate chains typically design their buildings to act as signage, they can and do modify the design of their buildings to blend with the character of the surrounding neighborhood and/or comply with design standards when required.~~

Appropriate

- ~~Buildings which meet all the requirements of these design guidelines. New Construction, Rehabilitation of Designated Historic Structures and the Signs and Miscellaneous provisions, as applicable.~~

- ~~Corporate design which visually relates to surrounding buildings and the desired character of the area with regard to mass, scale, height, width and depth consistent with the New Construction provisions of these guidelines.~~
- Corporate design that incorporates an architectural style or architectural elements consistent with the existing and/or desired style of development in the surrounding neighborhood consistent with the se design guidelines.
~~New Construction provisions of these guidelines.~~

Inappropriate

- Buildings which house corporate franchises or businesses which do not relate to the existing and/or desired character of the surrounding neighborhood with regard to mass, scale, height, width and depth and/or are otherwise inconsistent with ~~the New Construction provisions of these~~ design guidelines.

Streetscape Elements

Street Trees

Appropriate

- ~~Deciduous trees that arch over sidewalk and adjacent street lane to form a continuous canopy.~~
- Tree species selected are of a size (average height / canopy spread at maturity) that will provide significant positive shading aesthetic benefits within the streetscape.
- Trees that are hardy to USDA Zone 5-6a (-10°F to -15°F),
- ~~Trees that provide~~Selection of range of species that will provide visual variety in multiple seasons of interest.
- ~~Major shade trees that are planted at no more than 50 feet on center.~~
- ~~Smaller, columnar trees that are planted along sidewalks to accentuate adjacent features. The crown of these trees should not encroach on adjacent travel ways.~~
- ~~Spacing no more than 25 feet on center.~~
- ~~Discrete street segments that are not mono-stands. Tree species that do not exceed two on any street segment and are grouped so that one grouping of the same species brackets the grouping of the second species. Columnar trees in islands in New Broadway can also be added.~~
- ~~Islands in New Broadway that are planted with either smaller, columnar trees with crowns that do not encroach on adjacent travel lanes, or major shade trees with naturally occurring high crowns.~~
- Trees planted within road rights-of way that are identified as suitable to the specified site plan setting in Recommended Urban Trees: Site Assessment and Tree Selection for Stress Tolerance by the Urban Horticulture Institute, Department of Horticulture, Cornell University ~~University as at least moderately salt tolerant, not subject to serious insect/disease factors, and not producing significant management issues.~~

Streetscape Elements

Tree Grates

Appropriate

- ~~Are five feet by five feet.~~

Inappropriate

- Are smaller than four feet by four feet, too small.

Streetscape Elements

Sidewalks

Appropriate

- Are constructed of plain Portland cement, and are ten feet wide where appropriate, including the curb.
- ~~Are a minimum of ten feet wide and include plain portland cement concrete and colored, stamped portland cement concrete.~~
- Accent strips that are no ~~wider than five feet and no~~ less than ~~two~~two feet, adjacent to curbs with colored, stamped concrete are required on New Broadway and the central roundabout in order to echo design elements of that is the same as the color and pattern on the Broadway reconstruction project.

Inappropriate

- ~~Plain concrete for the full width of sidewalks.~~
- ~~Sidewalks that are not Portland cement concrete.~~

Streetscape Elements

Curbs

Appropriate

- Are granite, ~~NYS Department of Transportation Type A with hammered or thermal finish top and quarry split face, on a setting bed of dry concrete mix no less than three inches deep, and backed up a minimum of one foot each side of each joint by 3,000 psi concrete. All joints are mortared, top struck flush, face tooled.~~

Inappropriate

- Portland cement concrete, asphaltic concrete curbs in public right of way.
- ~~Granite curbs with sawn, polished tops.~~

Streetscape Elements

Street Lighting

Appropriate

- ~~Are different than street lights used on the Broadway reconstruction project.~~
 - Utilize energy-efficient light source, such as LED or induction lamps.
 - Use pole and luminaire combinations consistent with the waterfront environment of deLaet's and with the lighting planned for the adjacent sections of Broadway., such as
- _____.
- Poles equipped with integral hardware for displaying banners.

Inappropriate

- ~~Any type of pole and luminaire not mentioned above.~~

Streetscape Elements

Street Furnishings

Inappropriate

- ~~Furnishings constructed of nondurable material such as wood, plastic, etc.~~
- Furnishings placed within the five foot wide travel way portion~~plain concrete part~~ of sidewalks.

Parking Lots

Lighting

Appropriate

- Poles and luminaires that are generally compatible in design, color and attachments with street lights, allowing for use of 'shoebox' style luminaires.
- Utilize energy efficient light source, such as LED or induction lamps.

Parking Lots

Landscaping

Appropriate

- Plantings that include a combination of shade /ornamental trees and shrubs.
- Plants that are hardy to USDA Zone 5-6a (-10°F to -15°F).
- Plantings that provide visual variety across multiple seasons of interest.

Other Business

No resolutions were proposed or considered at the meeting.

Adjournment:

Hearing no objections, Mr. Moore adjourned the meeting at 10:30 PM.

Next Meeting:

The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2010 at 6:30 PM.

Record of Decisions:

An official record of decisions noting the details of motions and votes from this meeting along with any conditions & stipulations of approval has been filed with the City Clerk and a copy maintained in Planning Department records.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marybeth Pettit
Secretary