MEMO | 2017.12.22

Project: Case # 20632 Agricola Street
To: Leah Perrin, HRM Planner II
Subject: Design revisions in response to staff and public comments.
Attachments:

- Architectural Drawing Set (PDF)
- 3D and Pedestrian Views (PDF)

Dear Leah,

Considering the feedback from PAC, the public and HRM staff, we have revised our conceptual design for the proposal and offer the following design summary and rationale with reference to the planning principles as directed by Regional Council:

Summary of Design Changes

1. Reduced streetwall height from 4 storeys to 3 storeys.
2. Revised streetwall and building articulation.
3. Revised FAR to 3.5.
4. Revised unit yield and unit mix to target young urban professional market.
5. Removal of below-grade parking and parking entry.
6. Increased commercial area and commercial frontage.
7. Revised ground floor height from 9'-8" to 12"-0".
8. Revised ground floor articulation including 3'-0" setback at entries.
9. New bike posts within right-of-way, and internal bike storage via the residential lobby.
10. Revised window language throughout from horizontal to vertical.

Urban Design Rational

TRANSITION

- The existing built fabric along Agricola Street exhibits an urban street typology with minimal side-yard setbacks that is typical for commercial corridors. Good urban form within this existing

context calls for a continuum of a built edge, much like what is observed on Gottingen Street or even Barrington Street. The proposed building design is analogous with both the Centre Plan projection in terms of increased density (FAR) and the existing commercial building typology with zero side-yard setbacks.

- The building mass steps down from 5-storeys to 3-storeys forming an urban streetwall which is consistent with the proportional width of Agricola Street and projected Centre Plan parameters.
- Transition to the rear yard property line includes approximately 15-foot spatial setback from the building footprint to the property line. This dimension has been an adequate spatial separation on many pre-approved mixed-use developments in similar transitional contexts to residential neighbourhoods. Additionally, the perimeter of the lot will be enclosed with a 8-foot tall wooden fence with landscaped vines.

PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED

- The building design has been centrally focused on the pedestrian experience and streetscape animation through various architectural measures including streetwall articulation and ground floor interventions as listed below:
- The building mass at 2nd and 3rd floors abuts the property line to maintain and align pre-existing street fabric while the ground floor mass zigzags at entries resulting in a building overhang that functions as an overhead weather protection. The ground floor zigzagging footprint also creates interesting visual depth and rhythm for the passerby.
- Ground floor façade language contrasts the upper floors with the use of a warm wood-grained cladding system, large display windows, sign bands, and integrated benches. These architectural strategies also play a major role in animating the streetscape and drawing the pedestrian eye towards many edges, material tactility, displays, and lounging people.

HUMAN SCALE

- Human-Scale and Pedestrian Orientated principals work hand-in-hand as both objectives and outcomes relate to the *human experience*. As such, we would argue that items listed in each section serve as interchangeable design strategies for both policy objectives:
- The ground floor height has been increased to approx. 12 feet in order to maximize pedestrian spacial comfort. Increasing the ground floor height also increases display window sizes for optimal visual transparency onto the street and into commercial shops. The ground floor also integrates benches into the building setback as a place for people to lounge and encounter social exchange.
- The building mass sets a streetwall datum at 3 storeys (refer to above) as an appropriate height to define a more intimate public realm at a human scale.
- The streetwall is broken into 5 equal volumetric forms at approx. 20 feet wide which is similar in proportion to existing buildings along Agricola street. The characterized forms serve as a consistent urban rhythm that is fitting and appealing for the walking pedestrian.
- Windows are broken up into vertical proportions vs horizontal proportions which some scholars deem as more appropriate for human scale and the human experience.

- Establishing vertical proportions in both the streetwall articulation (defined volumetric forms) and windows creates frequent edges which the human brain calculates to delineate space, depth and form. This neurologically translates as 'pleasure' as stimulated visual interest, rhythm and material contrast.

BUILDING DESIGN

- As mentioned above, the streetwall has been delineated into 5 equal volumes with vertical window proportions to visually enhance the streetscape. Each form within the streetwall is characterized by a change in material that alternates between a lighter-toned brick veneer to a darker-toned brick veneer. In addition, each volume includes an inset balcony that is lined with solid panels to create a subtle 'peekaboo' pop of colour towards the public realm.
- In order not to detract from the highly articulated streetwall, the upper floors are intentionally designed to be uniform in materiality. To create subtle visual interest, vertical banding of aluminum panels has been coupled with various window configurations.
- At grade, display windows vary in size and proportion to create visual variety while sign bands and integrated benches create alignments to keep the environmental experience consistent as a whole.
- The rear of the building is consistent with the architectural language exhibited within the streetwall whereby the mass is broken into vertical proportions, delineated by material change, and includes vertical windows.

CONTEXT-SENSITIVE

- The building design responds to the existing context by virtue of the defined and articulated streetwall as outlined above. The streetwall scale is in keeping with adjacent 2- to 3-storey buildings fronting Agricola, and the overall building is in keeping with the Centre Plan direction by means of increased density through height and step-back transitioning beyond the streetwall.
- Although shingle cladding can be observed as a predominate building material in the surrounding context, it is not the most functional or ideal material for a multiunit building due to prolonged maintenance. Higher quality vinyl systems which mimic wood shingles were ruled out as an option as the production and disposal of vinyl materials is not environmentally friendly. As such, we have assigned brick as our primary building material because it is durable, timeless, of high quality, and is human-scale appropriate (tactile).
- At grade where pedestrians are in direct proximity to the building façade, the cladding system changes to vertical wood siding which is in keeping with surrounding buildings in the neighbourhood.
- Considering removal of below grade parking, the unit yield and mix has been updated to target younger urban professional's vs larger family type units. The likelihood of a family with children wanting to live on a busy commercial street without parking is highly unlikely. As such, the building will be marketed as an eco-friendly building with the potential of including shared bicycles free for all tenants to use.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at
or by email at

Sincerely,

Jacob JeBailey
Principal Architect
RAIC, NSAA, OAA, M.Arch, BEDS