**DRAFT Planning Division Memorandum**

**Date: June 4, 2012**

**RE:** **Phase 2 of development of Jordan’s Meat Site**

 **Applicant; Opechee**

 **Preliminary Design Review Comments**

**Contributors: Alex Jaegerman; Jean Fraser; Nell Donaldson**

***I. Introduction***

The proposed mixed use Phase II development was reviewed for conformance with the *B3 Downtown Business Zone Design Standards.* The applicant has provided a narrative entitled “10. Consistency with Design Standards” (Attachment X to PB Memo) which addressed the standard s and, together with the submitted (May/early June 2012) elevations, plans and renderings provided the basis for this review.

***II. Review***

Overall staff suggests that the proposed design generally meets the *Design Standards*. However, there are several areas of potential concern that are identified below with reference to the specific applicable standard. The review is organized by the headings in the *Design Standards*.

1. ***Relationship to the pedestrian environment:***

The proposals have addressed the street level pedestrian environment through the incorporation of retail uses with glass windows along the majority of the first level facing the sidewalks. Wide brick sidewalks and new lighting, street furniture and street trees would create an attractive and convenient pedestrian environment along the frontages. The proposed sidewalk café area at the corner of Middle Street and India Street contributes to the street level activity. Staff have the following comments:

1. The applicant should submit samples and/or catalogue cuts of the materials (building and some landscape eg railings) so the staff and Board may better understand the detailing and quality of the materials and how they relate to the Phase I development;
2. Further information regarding the windows and their tinting and visual permeability should be submitted for the Hearing, including their transparency index and a sample of the proposed glass;
3. The corner of India Street and Fore Street (where the building is set back by about 35 feet due to shape of the site) currently shows a set of stairs and a sunken landscaped plaza area. This plaza will also be reviewed to assess compliance with the review of increased building setback. We have concerns that this space as designed will not be a viable public amenity. It has limited seating, significant grade drop from the sidewalk at Fore and India, and poor visibility due to the grades and proposed landscape material, that could create an uncomfortable pedestrian space with security and surveillance issues. We recognize the need for this space and the challenge of the grade change, but request the applicant to review the design and details of this area to ensure that it will be a safe and successful plaza space. (Note: The design of the Hampshire Street stairway area and plaza between the hotel and Hugo’s building has some detailing that might be appropriate here, such as the stair railing system.)(see X below).
4. The applicant has confirmed the proposed street lighting but has not clarified regarding site lighting or any building mounted lighting.

b. ***Relationship to existing development:***

Staff have the following comments:

1. The submitted information does not show the new elevation (west-facing) or integration of treatment in the vicinity of the proposed service access and existing steps down from Middle Street. This elevation and area are readily visible from Middle and Franklin Streets and further information is requested to illustrate how the proposed and existing buildings and features are integrated;
2. The proposed treatment/materials and facade composition of the office building at the above location appear unresolved and do not relate well to the adjacent existing or proposed buildings; We suggest that more consideration be given to the architectural treatment and materials to strengthen or clarify the design intent. A modern or corporate image is appropriate, to contrast with the more traditional form and character of the other portions of the building, which is what we are reading into the elevation drawings. We would like to engage with you further to understand the intent and possibilities for this area. Clarification of materials usage is requested.
3. The new building at the corner of Fore Street and India Street is recessed at the upper levels with dark colored balconies. These read (as viewed from India Street to the south) as voids and it is suggested these balconies could be more effective visually with a brighter finish .

2. ***Standards for increasing setback beyond street build‑to line:***

 The Standard states:

 *A proposed development may exceed maximum setbacks as required in section 14‑220(c) only where the applicant demonstrates to the Planning Board that the introduction of increased building setbacks at the street level:*

*i. Provides substantial and viable publicly accessible open space or other amenity at the street level that supports and reinforces pedestrian activity and interest. Such amenities may include without limitation plazas, outdoor eating spaces and cafes, or wider sidewalk circulation areas in locations of substantial pedestrian congestion;*

 Staff comments: As mentioned in (a) iii above, the change in grade and proposed use of walls and landscaping in sunken areas raises concerns under CPTED guidelines. The proposed design of the open space at the corner of Fore and India Streets does not take advantage of the potential of this south facing area to create a more open and permeable space that may include site lighting and a seating wall or two (eg stepped), and avoid blocking the windows or surveillance of the area with landscaping. Staff suggest that principles outlined in the [*New York City guide to Designing public spaces on private land*] to create a mini plaza would be more suitable for this area where there is a large setback and high pedestrian traffic. Re-design might also include the nearby pedestrian access to the parking garage to ensure it meets the NYC and CPTED principles. We are not clear about the resolution of the site plan as the plaza area turns the corner from Fore up India adjacent to the building. Some drawings suggest that there is an at-grade walkway and floor to ceiling windows on the first bay of the India Street façade, but this is not clearly depicted on the site plan. Either we are missing something, or the plans are not fully resolved. We would like to work with you to better understand elaborate upon the spatial and design proposal. With some focused attention, we believe a better and more successful plaza, that could serve to improve the viability of the adjacent commercial space¸ is possible here.

The standard also includes:

v. *Roof top appurtenances:* *All mechanical equipment, ventilating and air conditioning and other building systems, elevators, stairways, radio or television masts or equipment, or other rooftop elements not intended for human occupancy shall be fully enclosed in a manner consistent with the character, shape and materials of the principal building, as described and illustrated in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines;*

Staff comments: The internal garage will require ventilation equipment in addition to the “normal” roof features for elevator shafts and mechanical equipment should be set back from the roof edges and/or integrated into the roof design rather than be an add-on that requires high screening enclosures.