

Memorandum

Planning and Urban Development Department

Planning Division



To: Planning Board

From: Alex Jaegerman, Caitlin Cameron, Jean Fraser

Date: November 8, 2013

Re: Design Review 133 York Street
R6 Design Standards

BACKGROUND

1. Staff reviewed the submitted black and white elevations in early September and considered the proposals generally met the principles and standards of the R6 Design guidelines except regarding C-1 and F-6 (main entrance), where it was recommended that the central entrance at ground level be more strongly emphasized through the introduction of features such as transom windows, wider door, more robust canopy articulation. Staff also asked for information as to why one half of the building is higher than the other, and confirmed at the Workshop that the comments were preliminary as staff had not seen color renderings nor samples of materials.
2. At the Workshop color renderings were shown which staff had not previously seen which showed large areas of blue metal cladding on the rear and side elevations. The Board and neighbors raised concerns over the materials and the bland rear elevation. These issues were discussed at a staff meeting on September 23, 2013 with Bob Howe the applicants architect. Staff were given to understand that the applicant was committed to the proposed materials (including colors) but open to some redesign. The discussion also reiterated staff concerns regarding the weak entrance area at the front.
3. The architects submitted revised elevation treatments as part of the October 1, 2013 submission. Staff welcomed the improvements to the front door area but considered that the rear elevation was still unresolved, with little articulation and no obvious design aesthetic. The roof cornice at the rear was suggested as an aspect that could be improved, along with less blue cladding and more/larger windows. A revised elevation was submitted on October 4, 2013 that included more windows, less blue cladding and with the cornice at the rear to match the cornice round the rest of the building. This remains as the final submission for consideration at the hearing.

COMMENTS ON FINAL PROPOSALS

4. The proposed design of the building needs to “...contribute to and be compatible with the predominant character-defining architectural features of the neighborhood.” (R6 Principle A) and the materials need to meet the standard (R6 Principle G-1) that requires the use of “...appropriate building materials that are harmonious with those in buildings within a 2-block radius of the site that contribute to and are compatible with the predominant character-defining architectural features of the neighborhood”. In view of the mixed character and cladding (most are white or light colored vinyl horizontal clapboards) of the nearest surrounding buildings, the proposed materials in and of themselves appear to meet the standard- but the choice of specific colors, trim and the scale and location of contrasting materials does not relate to any local design character.
5. The proposed design should also address the Principle F re “Articulation” (extracted below) and the rear elevation remains weak in relation to this standard. Staff remain disappointed in the rear elevation treatment. It is more balanced with the addition of windows and benefits from the larger cornice treatment. However, it

still lacks in articulation and interest. The applicant has explored relatively minor cladding revisions and these do not fully address the Principle F regarding “Articulation”.

6. It should be noted that the “Multifamily” Design Standards also apply to the project and are discussed in the main Hearing Report. These standards include:
The exterior design of the proposed structures, including architectural style, facade materials, roof pitch, building form and height, window pattern and spacing, porches and entryways, cornerboard and trim details, and facade variation in projecting or recessed building elements, shall be designed to complement and enhance the nearest residential neighborhood. The design of exterior facades shall provide positive visual interest by incorporating appropriate architectural elements;
7. In addition, the proposed building is located within 100 feet of the West end Historic District. The Historic Preservation Manager Deb Andrews had noted at the Workshop that between the historic area and the proposal site there are many relatively recent developments that are more modern in design and therefore the overall design and the materials (which she saw in black and white) were generally compatible. Ms Andrews has reviewed the final design that incorporates the blue metal cladding and has provided a separate review Memo that confirms compatibility is not an issue in this case.

EXTRACT from R6 Design Principles & Standards

PRINCIPLE F Articulation

The design of the building is articulated to create a visually interesting and well composed residential façade.

Explanatory Note: Articulation refers to the manner in which the shapes, volumes, architectural elements and materials of a building’s surface are differentiated yet work together. A well-composed building articulation adds visual interest and individual identity to a home while maintaining an overall composition.

STANDARD F-1 Articulation Buildings shall provide surface articulation by employing such features such as dimensional trim, window reveals, or similar elements appropriate to the style of the building. Trim and details shall be designed and detailed consistently on the facades visible from the public right of way.

STANDARD F-2 Window Types Window patterns shall be composed of no more than two window types and sizes except where there is a design justification for alternate window forms..

STANDARD F-3 Visual Cohesion Excessive variations in siding material shall not be allowed if such changes disrupt the visual cohesion of the façade. Materials shall be arranged so that the visually heavier material, such as masonry or material resembling masonry, is installed below lighter material, such as wood cladding.

STANDARD F-4 Delineation between Floors Buildings shall delineate the boundary between each floor of the structure through such features as belt courses, cornice lines, porch roofs, window head trim or similar architectural features.

STANDARD F-5: Porches, etc. Porches, decks, balconies, stoops and entryways shall be architecturally integrated into the overall design of the building in a manner that compliments its massing, material, and details. Multilevel porches and balconies on front facades shall not obscure the architectural features of the façade. Use of rail/baluster systems with appropriate openings between rails, stepping back balconies from the front plane of the building face, or other appropriate design features shall be employed to achieve this standard.

STANDARD F-6: Main Entries Main entries shall be emphasized and shall be integrated architecturally into the design of the building, using such features as porch or stoop forms, porticos, recessed entries, trim or a combination of such features, so that the entry is oriented to the street.

STANDARD F-8: Articulation Provide articulation to the building by incorporating the following architectural elements. Such features shall be on all façades facing and adjacent to the street.

1. Eaves and rakes shall have a minimum projection of 6 inches.
2. All exterior façade trim such as that used for windows, doors, corner boards and other trim, shall have a minimum width of 4 inches except for buildings with masonry exteriors.
3. If there are off sets in building faces or roof forms, the off sets shall be a minimum of 12 inches.
4. Pronounced and decorative cornices.