Memorandum
Planning and Urban Development Department
Planning Division

To: Planning Board

From: Alex Jaegerman, Caitlin Cameron, Jean Fraser

Date: January 23, 2014

Re: **Design Review 133 York Street- for January 2014 Hearing**
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.

4. The final plans submitted for the November 2013 hearing were:

5. The design review comments for the November hearing regarding the final plans (above) were (in summary) that 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. In

addition staff noted that the rear elevation remained weak in relation to the standard; while more balanced with the addition of windows and improved by the larger cornice treatment, it still lacks in articulation and interest. The applicant had explored relatively minor cladding revisions and these do not fully address the Principle F regarding "Articulation".

6. At the November 12, 2013 Hearing the Planning Board tabled the project and requested that the applicant reconsider the design to address the Board, staff and neighbor comments regarding both elevations. The applicant has submitted the following final architectural designs for the elevations:

FINAL COMMENTS FOR HEARING ON JANUARY 28, 2014

7. The rear elevation incorporates greater changes in texture and plane to break up the massing and overall more compatible with surrounding building styles though still lacking in a coherent "design approach" . The modification of the front elevation to remove the blue metal cladding makes the building design more harmonious and compatible, but reduces the prominence of the central front entrance section which faces York Street (which was an earlier design issue/comment).

8. Staff recommend the following revisions to reemphasize the entrance function and address the roof line which does not appear to be completely resolved in these final elevations:
    - The tone of the entire central entrance section should be somewhat darker to contrast with the abutting material;
    - The overlarge and angled central cornice area should be simplified so it relates to the canopy over the entrance door and better ties into the roof line; and
    - Lighting (downlighting) from underneath the entrance canopy should be added.