

Planning and Urban Development Department

Planning Division



Subject: IOZ Design Review – 222 St. John Street (Maine Medical)
Written by: Caitlin Cameron, Urban Designer
Date of Review: Monday, August 27, 2018

The proposed garage at 222 St. John Street for the Maine Medical Campus was reviewed for the Planning Board workshop by Caitlin Cameron, Urban Designer, Nell Donaldson, Senior Planner, and Deb Andrews, Historic Preservation Program Manager. This project was reviewed according to the adopted IOZ IDP and Regulatory Framework standards.

The new construction is a large garage with no other uses on-site and is set back from the street. Therefore, the design evaluation is focuses on the impact on the overall campus design, long views, safety and CPTED, and the St. John Streetscape.

Design Review Comments: *(Staff questions/comments and unmet guidelines in red for Planning Board consideration)*

- Provide updated renderings including the monument sign

Historic Preservation Advisory Design Review:

Previous Comment: The one aspect of the current proposal that HP staff suggests be given further consideration is the color/tonal palette. The current proposal features a high level of contrast, which is visually striking, but also demanding. In staff's view, were the colors warmer in tone and "knocked down" in terms of contrast, the building would likely achieve a greater level of compatibility with its surrounding context.

Updated Comment: Staff are now satisfied with the selected materials – samples provided during the meeting. The greys include warm tones and a degree of aggregate is revealed in the finish to soften the affect of the spandrel panels. The upper story, dark grey panels will also have the metal fins in front of them which will mitigate the dark color.

Signage:

Previous Comment: The site plan application includes signage proposal which must be consistent with the existing MMC Sign Master Plan. A monument sign is proposed at the sidewalk; building signage is minimal with wayfinding signage only. Staff support the choice to not use upper story signage on this building.

Updated Comment: Upon review the sign design and branding is consistent with the new MMC sign master plan also submitted as part of this application. *Staff commented that the hierarchy and design of this sign differs from those proposed elsewhere on campus – please clarify. Staff should verify this sign does not interfere with traffic sight lines.*

IDP Design Guidelines

Summary of Design Review:

Staff believe the proposed design now meets the applicable standards and concerns have been addressed with one exception. **Some revision are requested below to the fence and lighting** on the path from St. John Street to the side entrance to address both Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards as well as the Historic Preservation advisory comments as the new design is adjacent to and relates to the historic landmark railroad building.

1. New buildings will be designed to contribute to the campus vision and organizational goals identified in the Master Facility Plan and the Transportation Plan, and best practice design standards for healthcare.

Previous Comments: The architectural character of the new garage is consistent with the campus vision as presented in the IDP and subsequent project proposals. In addition to furthering the transportation and campus design goals of the MMC master plan, the building architecture is intended to have a relationship with the main campus which is only really seen from long views. This is not intended to be a gateway building to the campus and MMC does not want to confuse visitors as to the orientation to the main campus. The City's priority is the long views of this building, however, **staff are also considering how this project contributes to the activity and streetscape of St. John Street as stated in the IDP design guidelines and principal statements.**

Updated Comments: The design was revised to provide activity and transparency to more portions of the St. John Street-facing façade with an extended canopy at the entrance, bike parking, windows and transparency at the mechanical rooms for “eyes on the street.” The park space is not design for extended use – amenities such as benches are not provided.

2. The overall composition and experience of the campus will be considered for cohesive identity from approaches along Congress Street and I-295.

Previous Comments:

- Staff recommend in order for the garage to be visually cohesive with the MMC campus and the surrounding context, **the material color palette should be coordinated to include warm tones of the grey and white.**
- **Consider whether the high level of contrast is appropriate – though staff are supportive of the grey and white materials, the level of contrast may bring too much attention to the garage that otherwise is intending to be recessive.**

Updated Comments: The applicant selected two grey materials with the staff comment in mind. Staff are satisfied by the selection which is grey but with warm tones and not too high contrast.

3. Building entrances will be oriented toward, located adjacent to, accessible from, a sidewalk in a public right-of-way to create a pedestrian-oriented environment.

Previous Comments: The building placement is set back from the street. There are two primary entrances into the garage – one on the side accessible from St. John Street via a path along the railroad building and the other oriented to St. John Street.

- **Staff suggest more emphasis can be brought to both entrances** – increase scale of entrances, canopies, lobby area, etc. to increase scale of these entrances in relationship with the scale of the building and the distance from the street.

Updated Comments: More emphasis was brought to the St. John Street entrance with an extended canopy. The entrance here will also be emphasized by the circulation tower element which has glass in the stairwells and will be lit at night. The paths in the park area lead directly to this entrance for additional emphasis.

4. Building designs will relate to and be compatible with the existing, or – in areas of change – planned character of residential and commercial neighbors. Design elements and characteristics to consider include:

- *Building placement and relationship to the street*
- *Overall massing and scale*
- *Roof forms*
- *Proportion, directional expression, and composition of facades*
- *Rhythm of solids to voids*
- *Rhythm and proportion of openings*
- *Rhythm of entries and projections*
- *Relationship of materials, texture, and color*

Previous Comments:

- The building use and placement away from the street do not further the vision of improving the activity and streetscape of St. John Street. However, given the scale of the building, setting it back from the street has advantages for mitigating the scale impacts of the building.
- The overall massing and scale are largely dictated by the functional needs of the garage and the capacity needs for growth of the hospital. As seen in the long views – the height is not overwhelming and being set back from the street, allows the older and smaller scale buildings to create the street wall relationship to the sidewalk.
- The material selection and placement relates to the function of the garage but is designed in a consistent and dynamic way to bring some visual interest and texture without having gimmicks.
- There is a frequent solid to void ratio given the need to have an open garage. The vertical fins provide rhythm and bring a finer grain to the large façade.
- **The gap between floors has uneven spacing** – would suggest that the spaces should be consistent with the spandrel modifying in height instead.
- As stated previously, **staff would like to see further detail on the material color palette in relationship with the surrounding buildings which tend to have a warmer tone and less contrast.**
- The roof is simple and where projections are needed, are glass and low in height.

Updated Comments: Material palette has been addressed. The uneven spacing between floors was revised – floor spacing is now equal. No additional comment.

5. Façade materials of buildings will be of high quality, and contribute to an attractive public realm.

Previous Comments: The proposal uses a material palette of concrete, glass, metal screen, and aluminum fins. These materials meet the quality criteria, convey the garage use, and balance the desire to mitigate the scale of the long building while providing visual interest from the long views as one enters the city. The design of the central circulation tower contributes to the public realm using height and material changes to provide an accent point along the façade and indicate to the street where to enter the building. The design and material placement were simplified in response to the Historic Preservation Board and staff review – the general direction proposed is a consistent application of materials that provide visual interest and texture without calling attention to the building.

- **What is the material of the ramp roof? Is that depicted in the renderings?**

Updated Comments: Ramp roof will be concrete and is shown in the elevations and renderings. Staff agree these have been mitigated from long views as much as possible.

*6. The design process will **consider long views** of new buildings including roofs and associated structures to minimize visual impacts and **provide visual interest**. Rooftop appurtenances will be either screened from view or integrated into the building design, and will not be visible from adjacent streets, Western Promenade, or the Congress Street approach (helipad excluded).*

Previous Comments: The project successfully balances the goals of being recessive while visually tying into the overall MMC campus and providing visual interest from views from I-295 and the Veterans Bridge. This is accomplished with the height being capped at seven stories and the consistent use of texture and articulation elements. **There are some outstanding questions regarding the roof level design in relation to long views:**

- **Are the ramp and circulation tower roofs adequately depicted in the renderings?** It is difficult to tell how visible these will be with the materials provided.
- **Concern about the visibility of the roof lighting poles and light levels, especially the impact on the Western Promenade.**
- The roofs at the top level are proposed to be glass to mitigate their visibility.

Updated Comments: The applicant confirmed the rooftop appurtenances are depicted in the renderings. The nighttime rendering shows the impact of the lighting at night from the Western Promenade – the ideal condition is for no lighting at this rooftop level. The applicant responded by placing all the poles as far away from the building edge as possible, selecting fixtures that will not spread glare outwards, and the roof will not be open for parking at night if not needed. Staff are satisfied with this aspect of the project.

7. Vibrant, contributing and sustainable active ground floors will be provided to add activity and a sense of place to the priority node identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Previous Comments: The project proposes limited activity at the ground floors – the building use is garage only and is set back from the street. There is a garage entrance oriented to St. John and shuttle activity and an entrance facing the side surface parking.

- Consider ways of introducing more “eyes on the street” facing St. John Street whether that be more glass on the circulation tower, increasing the size of the entrance lobby, adding windows to the security/utility area of the façade (clerestory, 2nd level waiting lobby, etc.).

Updated Comments: The design was revised to provide activity and transparency to more portions of the St. John Street-facing façade with an extended canopy at the entrance, bike parking, windows and transparency at the mechanical rooms for “eyes on the street.” The park space is not design for extended use – amenities such as benches are not provided. Consider having the mechanical rooms lit at night so those windows are activated.

8. In areas where the occurrence of limited blank facades along public right-of-ways are unavoidable due to changes in topography or building use requirements, the following strategies will be used to mitigate visual impact:

- providing elements of visual interest along any blank walls facing public streets, and,
- working with the City of Portland to ensure adequate lighting of public sidewalks to create a safe pedestrian experience.

Not applicable. Landscape design addresses the standard adjacent to sidewalk.

9. Any parking structure within the IOZ will:

- screen views of cars from the public rights-of-way
- provide elements of architectural interest on upper floors to contribute positively to long views and gateway approaches
- for garage structures within 20’ of the public right-of-way, meet street activation intent according to street type

Previous Comments:

- Staff request more information regarding the screening of cars. Screening methods include solid concrete spandrel wall with metal mesh railing on the ground floor. It is not clear whether the spandrel panels will conceal the headlights of cars. Will cars be screened from view on the top floor, from the Western Prom?
- Visual interest is provided by the textures and composition of the materials – the angled fins provide texture, shadow lines; the contrasting color materials break up the scale of the building.
- The building is not within 20’ of a public right-of-way.

Updated Comments: The spandrel panels are high enough they will screen headlights of cars. The top level parapet is also tall enough to screen the headlights. However, no additional screening above the parapet is proposed on the roof level so if there is nighttime activity, there will be some visibility of cars and headlights. Again, the applicant is proposing to limit the rooftop parking at night.

Building Relationship to Public Street

Urban Commercial Arterial (St. John Street) While it has some elements of a walkable street such as sidewalks and on-street parking, large stretches of the street prioritize the car with frequent curb-cuts, and street-facing parking lots. . . . To the extent possible, extend the character developed for the Congress Street frontage along St. John Street.

Previous Comments: The building does not contribute directly to the St. John streetscape because it is setback from the street. The open space, paths, and building entrances will enhance the existing conditions but does not go as far as to establish a street wall or introduce active uses on St. John Street. The project will provide some streetscape improvements including sidewalks, lighting, and street trees/landscape.

Updated Comments: No additional comments.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

MMC will incorporate the following design strategies that have been demonstrated to deter crime:

- *Providing a clean and aesthetically pleasing campus environment that is designed with vandal-resistant materials*
- *Providing clear and properly-sized signs in safe locations to ensure safe wayfinding*
- *Ensuring that paths from transit stops, bike storage areas, and parking areas to main pedestrian entrances are well-lit, with clear sight lines*
- *Designing street-level elevations to minimize potential hideouts*
- *To the extent possible, given clinical program demands, providing views in and out of building ground floors populated by users to serve as “eyes on the street”*
- *Generating foot traffic on public sidewalks with pedestrian entrances*

Previous Comments: There are several areas around this building with potential safety concerns and the potential for hiding spaces. The project uses landscape plantings and fencing to limit access to areas between the building and the property lines. Site lighting is provided with wall packs on all sides of the building. The open space between the building and the street is open and has good visibility and includes site lighting along the pedestrian paths.

- **Staff suggest the lobby entrance facing St. John Street could increase in size, include more fenestration, and/or include additional lighting.**
- **Regarding “Eyes on the street” See Comment 7.**
- **Rather than extend a wood fence to the street between the Railroad Building and the residential building, staff recommend using landscape.**

Updated Comments: The “eyes on the street” comments were addressed by emphasizing the entrance, adding windows to the façade, and demonstrating the level of lighting/activity the stair tower will add at night. **Staff continue to ask for landscape and metal fence in the side yard between the residential property and the railroad building for visibility and character. The lights in that pathway are critical for CPTED concerns – please use black fixtures to minimize their appearance next to the historic building.**

Mitigating Impacts Through Design

Minimizing Shadow Impacts - Shadow impacts were evaluated as part of the IDP process. Refer to Plan 13 for shadow analysis of the approved IDP building heights. This project orients its long dimensions north/south meaning the broadest sides of the buildings are oriented to cast more shadow. However, the building position is only directly adjacent to three buildings where new shadow will have some impact. The neighboring properties are primarily commercial, railroad, and prison. The two residential properties and the Eagles property on St. John Street will experience shadow impact in the afternoon from this building.

Context-Sensitive Lighting Design – Lighting at the ground level is adequate per City of Portland Technical Standards.

- **Clarify whether there is building lighting above the ground level – No lighting on upper stories except the poles on roof level.**
- **Concern about light trespass** on neighboring residential properties and level of light visible from the Western Promenade at night. **More information is requested regarding the impact of site lighting from the long views, especially light trespass and visibility of the lighting on the upper stories and roof from the Western Promenade. – Applicant provided rendering to convey the level of light and glare from the roof level.**
- Street lighting in this location is standard cobra head – there is not a special lighting district on St. John Street. **However, the pedestrian lighting within the Western Promenade, a connection between the new garage and the main campus, will be replaced with LED fixtures to be recommended by staff and the Historic Preservation Board and approved by the Planning Board at a future time. – Staff will provide the applicant with the correct light fixture information for the pedestrian path in the Western Promenade once that is approved. This should likely be a condition of approval given the uncertainty at this time.**

Mitigating Wind Impact – No information was provided to evaluate this item. Staff do not anticipate significant wind impacts from the building given its height and permeability.

Preserving and Enhancing Viewsheds – The building does appear within the Western Promenade viewsheds as demonstrated in the three renderings provided from vantage points within the prom. The height of the garage is such that the building is visible from the prom but does not negatively impact the views of the river, mountains, or scenery beyond the jetport.

The garage is also rendered from multiple long views including Veterans Bridge and I-295. The renderings from the long views reveal the general design and height fit well into the context and does not stand out as overly obtrusive.

- **Staff comment that the material color palette causes the building to stand out or be less recessive than desired. Therefore, the suggestion is that the grey and white materials should have a warm tone to be cohesive not only with the existing MMC campus but also the surrounding context. - Addressed, no further comment.**
- **The rooftop design** including light poles, ramp and circulation tower roofs, and any mechanicals **should be accurately demonstrated in these renderings.** It appears in the materials given that these rooftop appurtenances have minimal visual impact and are integrated into the design but **staff would like to clarify whether all these features have been included in the rendering images. – Addressed, no further comment.**

Regulatory Framework

1. **Mixed Uses:** . . . *healthcare facility development fronting onto Congress Street and St. John Street shall activate the public realm, to the extent able, with uses such as service and retail/restaurant, landscaping, active building entrances, pocket parks, etc., on the ground or other publicly accessible level, consistent with the design intent contained in the approved IDP. . . .*

Previous Comments: The project does not provide mixed-uses or active uses. The proposal uses landscape and building entrances to address this design guideline – an open, landscaped area transitions between the sidewalk and the building entrance with direct paths to the entrance emphasized by a canopy, glass, and circulation tower. **Staff has two recommendations:**

- Given the scale of the building and the set back from the street, **the scale of the entrance lobby could increase to be more visible and provide a more “lively” space.**
- **Consider ways of introducing more “eyes on the street” facing St. John Street** whether that be more glass on the circulation tower, increasing the size of the entrance lobby, adding windows to the security/utility area of the façade (clerestory, 2nd level waiting lobby, etc.).

Updated Comments: The “eyes on the street” comments were addressed by emphasizing the entrance, adding windows to the façade, and demonstrating the level of lighting/activity the stair tower will add at night.