

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
JAN 17 2019

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To: Robert Gambale, Chair
Ipswich Zoning Board of Appeals

Re: Essex Road 40 B Architectural Design

Date: 17 January, 2019

This memorandum is intended to summarize the architectural design review process to date for the Essex Road 40B project. It is also a report of the architectural design work session on January 3, 2019. While the Ipswich ZBA had hoped for an expeditious and collaborative process in reviewing the architectural design, this has unfortunately not been the case. The applicant and their architects have not provided requested information or responded to comments provided to date.

PROCESS

The ZBA initially requested comments from the Ipswich Design Review Board, which provided its recommendations on 24 September, 2018. Their summary made several design recommendations but also noted numerous instances where information was lacking in the architectural and landscape drawings to evaluate the design. The applicant did not attend either of the Design Review Board public meetings nor have they provided responses to the recommendations.

The ZBA requested an architectural peer review at the October 18, 2018 ZBA meeting. The peer reviewer (Cliff Boehmer of Davis Square Architects) reported at the November 29, 2018 ZBA meeting, making numerous observations, many which echoed the comments of the Ipswich Design Review Board. The peer reviewer also noted that the design documents were insufficient for architectural review and confined most of his comments to site planning, since this was the only documentation provided. He requested additional documentation including site sections, information on building materials and details, and a three dimensional representation of the project.

At the November 29, 2018 ZBA meeting, a work session was agreed to including the applicant, represented by the design architect (Andrew Zalewski of MZO Group), the peer review architect, the 40B consultant (Ezra Glenn) and one ZBA member (Robert Clocker, also an architect). The purpose of this work session was to review and discuss additional architectural design documentation, most specifically a 3d model, in the interest of helping the applicant make the project more compatible with the town.

WORK SESSION

The work session participants suggested several dates for the meeting; the design architect indicated a need for additional time so the meeting was set for January 3, 2019. The meeting took

place at the office of Davis Square Architects in order to minimize the time and expense for the peer review architect. Andrew Zalewski provided with no new architectural drawing documentation. Instead he shared an updated site plan and some highly conceptual building elevations. As such, discussion was confined to general site planning issues, similar to those previously reviewed. Most of the concerns previously raised remain unaddressed and the information previously requested has not been provided. In sum, the work session was not an effective use of time and the design was not advanced.

Cliff Boehmer followed up with a written request for documentation in order to complete his peer review. All of the documentation types included in this written request are conceptual design documents of the type that are customarily required for architectural design evaluation. More importantly, these types of drawings can go a long way toward helping the ZBA and general public understand how a project will fit in to the neighborhood and will be a benefit to the community. Design peer review has been put on hold until this documentation is provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The State provides many resources to 40B applicants and communities to guide successful design. For architectural design review, the "Chapter 40B Handbook for Zoning Boards of Appeal" refers to the "Handbook: Approach to Chapter 40B Design Reviews" (both available on the mass.gov website). This includes recommendations for design documentation, one of which states:

"A simple method to represent buildings in the early stage of design is by using a three-dimensional graphic software program available for free on-line," such as "... the SketchUp program... The program can be used to illustrate building massing and form. When the adjacent buildings are also drawn in the program, the context of the surrounding area can also be illustrated. "

This Handbook includes several checklists, one of which is for Design Issues for Integration into Existing Development Patterns. This list includes the basic principles that will allow the development team to integrate the design into the community. Communicating these principles requires a basic set of illustrations which are presumed to be requirements for review by the community. An appendix to this memo walks through the key design issues from this handbook, which this board needs addressed in the architectural design documents.

Almost all of the information the Design Review Board, Cliff Boehmer and the ZBA have requested is information that should ideally have been provided when architectural peer review commenced. It is important to this board and to this community that the design of this project receives due consideration for architectural scale, details, proportions, articulation, landscaping, streetscape, edge treatments and screening. In the words of the State design handbook, "affordable housing developments" are to "adhere to high standards of site and building design to enhance the quality of life for residents and the communities in which they reside." Once this project is built it will stand for decades and be home for a large number of Ipswich citizens. We owe it to our future

neighbors to provide careful consideration to the environment where they will live and ensure that they feel like an integral part of our community.

Robert Clocker, AIA
Ipswich Zoning Board of Appeals

APPENDIX

The following is a list of "key design issues" discussed by the 40B Design Handbook that will help a project integrate into the community. These issues are ones an applicant should provide to a ZBA during review and be willing to adapt in order to ensure a good fit with the community. Most of these topics cannot be evaluated using the materials provided to date.

- Architectural and Site Details – examples include trim around entrances and windows, exterior cladding materials, roof types, types of street curb, outdoor lighting, fencing, landscape buffers. *[Little qualitative information provided to date]*
- Scale – the design guide states: "The scale of a structure should be compatible with the surrounding architecture and landscape context. Compatibility of different building scales or sizes may be addressed through building typology, orientation, roof lines, setbacks, and the position of the building on the site." *[No documentation has been provided to help in the assessment of scale relative to abutters, views from the roadway, views at human scale from within the development]*
- Height – the guideline notes that the proposed height should generally be compatible with surrounding buildings and structures. *[No documentation provided to illustrate the height in context, such as 3d views or site sections]*
- Proportion – how building elements provide character and neighborhood compatibility. *[Little qualitative information provided to date]*
- Shape – how the building shapes relate to each other and create outdoor spaces
- Façade Design – how the building facades relate to the context including materials, colors and depths *[Little qualitative information provided to date]*
- Streetscape and Landscape – the perception of the project for people moving through it and the types and sizes of plantings *[No information provided to date]*
- Design Treatments of the Edge – how spaces are defined, activities are articulated and project boundaries are treated *[No visual information provided to date]*
- Setback and screening *[No visual information other than plan diagrams provided to date]*
- Façade Length and Articulation – how the building mass can be broken down where appropriate *[Façade drawings provided to date are flat black and white line drawings and do not illustrate how massing is articulated]*