

MCINTYRE PROJECT
STAGE 2 MEETING 1
MEETING MINUTES

DATE: 02.26.2018, 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm

LOCATION: City Hall Chambers, Portsmouth City Hall
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH 03801

PRESENTERS: Councilor Chris Dwyer, Chair, McIntyre Public Input Blue Ribbon Steering Committee
Gene Bolinger (GB) | Weston & Sampson
Cheri Ruane (CR) | Weston & Sampson

PANELISTS: Public Realm
Terrence Parker (TP), Terra Firma Landscape Architecture
Emily Corbett Chadwick (ECC), Manypenny Murphy Architecture
Nick Cracknell (NC), Principal Planner, City of Portsmouth
Lawrence Cheng (LC), Bruner Cott Architects of the Redgate/Kate team

Design & Historic Preservation
Steve McHenry (SM), McHenry Architecture
Martin Ryan (MR), Historic District Commission
Nancy Colbert Puff (NCP), Deputy City Manager, City of Portsmouth
Henry Moss (HM), Bruner Cott Architects of the Redgate/Kate team

PRESENTATION:

- Councilor Dwyer opened the meeting with general comments about the Stage 1 process, the nature of the Stage 2 process and the timeline for tonight's meeting. Councilor Dwyer introduced Weston & Sampson's role at tonight's meeting.
- Gene Bolinger of Weston & Sampson summarized what was heard to date in Stage 1, reviewed the public input process and where Stage 2 falls within that, described tonight's meeting format, and briefly reviewed the basic components of the site. He also encouraged people to sign up on the website to receive notifications on the process.
- Cheri Ruane of Weston & Sampson introduced the first topic for discussion – Public Realm. She reminded people of the regional destinations, commercial hubs, and neighborhood parks within a 10 to 15-minute walk of the McIntyre site. Ruane touched on the breathtaking views unique to the McIntyre site and then offered a few precedent projects that reflect the type of development that was discussed during the Stage 1 process. She introduced the Public Realm panelists and then opened the discussion with questions for their response. Thirty minutes of public comments and questions followed.

- Bolinger then introduced the second topic for discussion – Design and Historic Preservation. He walked through the architectural look and feel of the surrounding neighborhood and downtown context, noting the dates of construction for particular buildings. He described Portsmouth’s character-based zoning as it applies to the McIntyre site and gave a brief overview of the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and the Historic District Commission Guidelines. Bolinger then introduced the Design and Historic Preservation panelists and then opened the discussion with questions for their response. Thirty minutes of public comments and questions followed.
- Gene and Cheri closed the meeting with a brief recap of tonight’s dialogue and the next steps for the Stage 2 process. Cheri posed a polling question that incorporated the two topics and people voted for their preference.

PUBLIC REALM:

- **How can the Public Realm be leveraged to feel more inclusive to all residents, even those that have stopped coming downtown because they believe “there’s nothing there for me anymore.”**
 - Downtown Portsmouth is very vibrant today (TP).
 - Designers should emphasize connectivity and enhance walkability as well as pedestrian and bike routes into town, so that people don’t feel like they need to drive downtown. Portsmouth is a wonderful small city that is very approachable; the design should enhance the downtown atmosphere (ECC).
 - What you put into the space will draw people there (LC).
 - There are clearly opportunities for new and unique uses like public viewing from roof decks (NC)
- **The idea of an indoor market / district hall / community resource space has come up many times. The precedents that have been cited throughout Phase One and those that we just looked at obviously are different scales and different sizes. Portsmouth is a city of a smaller scale than all of these. How can we adapt this concept to fit the context of Portsmouth?**
 - An arcade is a great opportunity to punctuate the McIntyre building. Think about using texture within the McIntyre building’s interior and then opening up to a large plaza on the Bow Street side that captures views and embraces the 9’ elevational change down to Bow Street. Create a pedestrian experience where people can move through different scales of spaces (TP).
 - Connectivity from Chapel Court through to commercial alley, so there is great connectivity in both directions through the site (NC).
 - The design team needs to work out how indoor gathering space would work from an operational perspective – can people walk through any time of day or is it closed at certain times? (LC)
 - A key element to maintaining vibrancy will be flexibility and adaptability in order to fit the needs of Portsmouth and to leave it open to see what develops. The McIntyre site could become a great economic engine for these kinds of entrepreneurs (ECC).
- **How can (existing and proposed) rooftops be integrated into the Public Realm to ensure free access for all to the stunning views of Portsmouth?**

- It depends on the programming of those spaces, which the developer and architect need to work out and driven by the City interests (TP).
- Public viewing could also happen on a new building roof, not just on the McIntyre building. Recognize the grade change; there is even greater from Chapel Court than Daniel moving down to Bow (NC).
- The street-level design is critical to this project - how this site interfaces and connects to the rest of the City and how people move through the space. Any roof deck must be accessible, visible from the street level, and programmed (ECC).
- It will be technically challenging to put a roof deck on an existing building. A structural evaluation will be needed. Wayfinding and programming will be very important, so people know that the rooftop is a public space (LC).

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- **David Noard, Portsmouth – There doesn't seem to be a lot of available space in the back of the McIntyre Building. Could Penhallow Street be closed to vehicular traffic and incorporated into the development of the site?**
 - There is plenty of space within the existing parking lot for public space. Enclosure gives a public space a sense of safety and territory, but enough penetration is needed so people they feel like they can move throughout with ease (TP).
 - Even with the McIntyre Building staying, the total site is over 2 acres, so internal circulation through the site is needed. What kind of activities can happen internal to the site that bring people in and how can we bring people through the site? (LC)
 - The site will undergo significant change in use. What are the connections in and access through? What is the pedestrian experience around the buildings? What are the crosswalk points and access from other streets? (ECC)
 - To compare scales, consider that the former Connie Bean at the bottom of the bridge and the former ExxonMobil gas station that is now 77 State together are smaller than the space between the edge of parking lot and the post office (NC).
 - Consider narrowing of the street to add sidewalks and improve pedestrian experience along Penhallow (GB).
- **Judy Miller, Downtown Portsmouth – Clarify the brick walls.**
 - Any element of the site needs to be reviewed by the National Park Service. The perimeter walls are characteristic of the site, but there will be much discussion over what can be done to integrate the site with the rest of downtown (NCP).
- **Margot Doering, Jones Avenue – What projects have you seen that have been successful in bringing people back into downtown by addressing pulled people away from downtown?**
 - Public spaces are about people-watching and create the activities that are going to draw people. Design spaces where people have places to sit and gather (TP).
 - Use technology to bring people back downtown (ex. Amazon lockers) (LC).
 - Make public transportation easily accessible for people (LC).
 - In addition to a high quality, high functioning public realm, continue and build on walkability of downtown. Encourage mixed use and active streetscapes. Look at different retail spaces besides boutique shops. Keep the retail post office on site. Consider arts and entertainment as the economic engine of Portsmouth (NC).
 - Build more housing downtown and create diverse mix of retail within a proximate distance. Balance between bringing in those types of retailers with supporting local businesses (ECC).

- Emphasize what makes Portsmouth unique – waterfront, historic character, arts community (ECC).
- **John Tabor, Portsmouth – How do you leverage the grade change to make the site inviting?**
 - Put parking underground and create amphitheater effects that create niches and dynamic spaces (TP).
 - Grade change is an advantage. View corridor from commercial alley to St. John's is a great opportunity; create a grand stair that can become a gathering spot (LC).
- **Richard Katz, Portsmouth – How does the City communicate/work with the NPS through this process? Strong preference for a civic gathering space which would be diminished by building along Bow Street.**
 - The City and NPS have an ongoing dialogue and are in regular communication through this whole process. A final application submittal will have a 30-day response time, but NPS will review pieces of an application at any time.

DESIGN AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION:

- **Given surrounding context, the existing McIntyre Building which is to remain, Zoning and Historic (HDC and Secretary of the Interior) guidelines, and the public's desire to have the project be of a compelling design that "fits," what are some key elements that must be in place to achieve compatibility? What would NOT be compatible? In your response, consider materials selection, opportunities, scale, massing, form, etc.**
 - Building as it stands now does not meet the criteria set up by the Secretary of the Interior Standards. Why the necessity for leaving certain materials and detailing, when they do not meet the standards? We should not be held back completely by the notion that we must preserve this building like it is sacred (SM).
 - This is the reality of working with the federal government, but the City should challenge what is there and whether certain elements remain (MR).
 - Secretary of Interior Standards were created as part of a tax credit program and the federal government realized that, if not careful, they would be bankrolling the destruction of historic properties. They drafted a series of guidelines that were not very prescriptive originally and independent of any specific style, but they do not describe what matters. The ambiguity is in these 'character-defining features' (HM).
 - Balance alterations to the building with what it does to civic life; each feature will be argued point by point. A continuity of setbacks, entranceways that relate to Old City Hall, and frontage along Daniel Street are significant to the City and the building. We are finding ways that do not destroy the integrity of the building, but rather allow for porosity and for public to enter and activate street frontages (HM).
 - Minimize vehicular traffic in and out of the site (SM).
 - Most conducive area for public space is on the north side of the McIntyre Building, so consider ways to enliven this space that has year-round value (SM).
 - There is ample opportunity to discuss the balance between historic preservation and responsible urban design (NCP).
 - Truck docks have great potential to become pop up or retail space (HM).
- **A critical piece of the overall development puzzle relates to the specific build-out of the Bow Street frontage. Bow Street is a much-loved corridor with great period,**

architectural presence. The void represented by the parking lot doesn't necessarily enhance the Bow Street block, yet it doesn't upstage or overshadow it either. Discuss the right approach to the buildout of the McIntyre block at Bow Street, particularly from a scale, massing and pedestrian activation perspective.

- Proportion of open space to mass of building is critical along Bow Street. Parking lot is a public void that has great potential (SM).
- Infill with similar aesthetic across the street along Bow. These are double-sided buildings, where they can have a different character on the interior side (MR).
- The flank wall of Old City Hall along Daniels and the corner of Penhallow and Bow have potential to become very active public spaces. There is a lot of design left to do as the program develops for this (HM).

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- **Councilor Doug Roberts – How do you balance/ resist the tendency of every new tenant to want a large space (restaurant, pharmacy, etc.)? How do you activate that space with very few doors?**
 - If they want all of that space, they can go to a mall (HM).
 - Proportion, depth of space and what is available are constraints for business owners in creating an inviting indoor space (SM).
 - Balance with market forces (MR).
- **Ned Raynolds – Slide, Historic Rehabilitation Guidelines “New architecture should reflect the time in which it was constructed.” We have done enough ‘fake old’. This site is surrounded by actual historic buildings, so do not debase historic property; design something amazing and unique that will reflect the time in which it was constructed.**
- **Bob White, Portsmouth – Optimistic because this is an amazing opportunity. There are amazing examples of alternations done under the Secretary Standards, such as at Ellis Island, visitors center in Old Quebec City (not Secretary Standards but same idea); modern addition to the Chicago Institute of Art. The contrast of the old and the new becomes very meaningful.**
- **Richard Katz, Portsmouth – How are the land use boards involved in the approval process?**
 - The City will bring this project before the boards for an advisory review, consistent with other City projects, and will work with HDC so that all are on the same page (NCP).
- **Kerry Vautrot, chairwoman of the Portsmouth Advocates – The McIntyre is one of the few structures within the downtown fabric that dates to the 1960s. The building is unique and represents a certain time; it is the only example in Portsmouth of the New Formalist style. The Secretary Standards gives a good architect the room to develop a great space for the community within this historic structure. What do we know about the disturbance to the site with regard to archaeology?**
 - There is very little virgin territory left on the site (HM).
 - The Secretary Standards are not intractable (HM).

- **Dan Rawling – Would it be better to have taller buildings along Bow and shorter closer to the McIntyre Building or visa versa? Do you think we should encourage a variety of building heights on the site?**
 - It would be more appropriate that the shorter buildings be built along Penhallow and Bow Street and the taller near the Post Office and the McIntyre Building. Much of this discussion will shake out during massing discussions and deeper three-dimensional discussions (HM).
 - Buildings should be perhaps a 2:1 ratio with the street (MR).
 - The proposal does not build to the maximum under the zoning requirements. Other considerations include sightlines, depth of site, and grade change across the site (HM).

- **Judy Miller, Downtown Resident – Is there any way to bury the utility lines like what was done recently at the High Hanover project?**
 - Great comment, extraordinarily expensive. It will be investigated (NCP).

- **Mike Casino, Bow Street – Surprised that his perspective has started to evolve as he’s started to think about how to make this site a true community space and an asset to locals and residents. What is a good civic use that we can put there that will attract people downtown (art, culture, education, library)?**

- **Rick Becksted, Portsmouth – He hopes that the team considers what is successful by residents and respects adjacencies. Ask what people like and don’t like about past redevelopment projects.**

- **David Noard – How much traffic will be brought to Bow Street by this development?**
 - This would depend on amount of traffic and character of streetscapes along the roadway (HM).

- **Liz Nguyen, work in Portsmouth and live in Dover – What considerations will be given to accessibility on the site?**
 - This question reflects difficulties existing on the site (HM).
 - The design team is exploring all options related to bringing people through these grade changes (LC).

End of Notes. CB