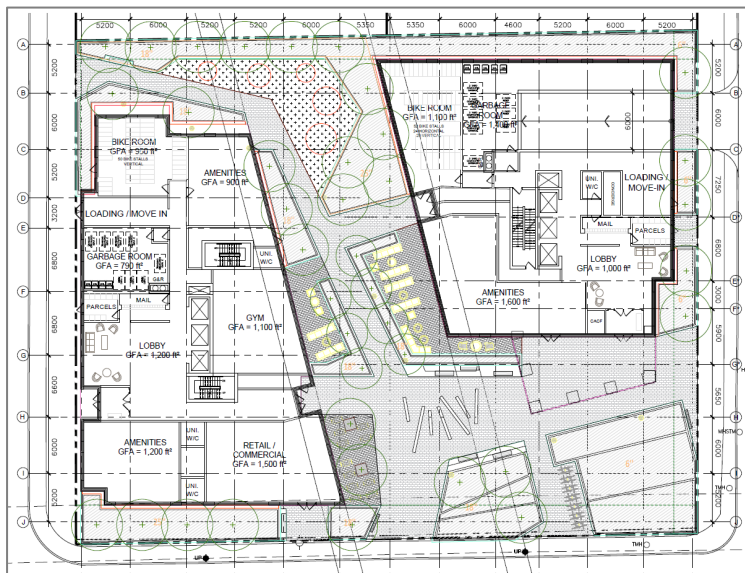


A Special Design Review Subcommittee session was held January 15th, 2021 to review the proposal at 267 O’Connor Street. The meeting was held virtually on Zoom.

Panel Members in Attendance:

- David Leinster (Chair)
- Dominic Bettison
- Josh Chaiken
- James Parakh

267 O’CONNOR STREET | Special Design Review Subcommittee | Taggart Realty Management; Hobin Architecture Inc.; Fotenn Planning & Design



Summary

- The subcommittee members thanked the proponent for participating in a constructive conversation with the SDRS.
- There were significant concerns with the proposal, and the members do not believe that the proposal is meeting the criteria of a landmark building. A two-tower built form was not supported and additional study was recommended for the open space configuration and ownership. Further exploration of alternative massing options was strongly recommended.
- The subcommittee members were advised of some of the applicant’s challenges in terms of meeting the metrics from a developability and economic perspective.

The subcommittee, however, focused their comments on providing architectural and urban design guidance.

- To assist the discussion, the members prepared a presentation of precedent images to outline the varying aspects of landmark buildings which could be brought to this site.

Massing

- The subcommittee members questioned what the drivers were behind the proposed density and whether it was appropriate for this site and context from an urban design perspective. As proposed, the density appears to be causing challenges. The proponent and City staff are encouraged to consider what the right density would be for the site and then study how best to achieve it, in terms of built form.
- The members commended the design team on their efforts to design a two-tower proposal on this small site but felt strongly that a two-tower massing is not an appropriate built form for this site. It is strongly recommended that the proponent continue to study alternative massing options.
- It was questioned whether a high-rise built form was appropriate for this context and the members suggested that the proponent's presentation did not provide sufficient justification for the proposed height in this context. It was advised that having three public frontages is not an adequate rationale to support a high-rise building.
- In the next steps of the process, it is recommended that the design team take the subcommittee members' recommendations and the precedent images provided and return to exploring additional massing options for the site. Study options through rough modeling of built form and configuration of open space, rather than through detailed renderings.
- The subcommittee members felt strongly that the National Capital Commission view plane height restrictions should be respected through this process.

Landmark Building

- The subcommittee members did not feel as though the proposal constitutes a landmark building as currently proposed. It is strongly recommended that the design team take a step back in the process, focus on the "big picture" and consider how this development can meet the criteria to qualify as a landmark building.
- While the economic constraints affecting the project were noted, the members focused on the urban design aspects of the proposal. It was suggested that

landmark buildings often “break rules” but this is typically in terms of design, not planning. Elevating design can often be more costly financially but serves to strengthen the building’s iconic presence. Given that a landmark building in the Nation’s Capital is being proposed, the proponent needs to strive for the highest quality of design, aim to push barriers, and deliver an inspiring architecture that the design team and City can truly be proud of.

- The members suggested that landmark buildings typically are distinguished by three major tenets, which set the standard above other projects. The proposal should aim to achieve these in future iterations:
 - The architecture should be iconic.
 - Site design must be extraordinary – The space has to be an appropriate size and should feature outstanding landscape design.
 - The land use and program should serve a civic and national function – Consider what publicly significant services the project is contributing to the City. A medical service is not sufficient.
- Consider that landmark buildings often strive to achieve excellence on multiple levels, pushing boundaries in terms of building design, providing a generous public gesture at grade, and being exemplary in another area, such as sustainability.
- While the applicant team's position was that it may be realistic to temper expectations of a development in the Ottawa market, that the Panel cited examples from Ottawa where this has been achieved. This perspective does not support the aspiration of building a landmark building in the Nation’s Capital.

Open Space

- The subcommittee members felt strongly that achieving a high-quality open space at grade will be critical to the success of the proposal and that the open space should be entirely public space.
- As proposed, there is a concern that the built form is detracting from the quality of the space. Through the additional massing modeling exploration, carefully study what implications each option will have for the size, shape, and distribution of open space.
- Additional study is needed to determine whether the configuration of the open space would be better if it was consolidated into a single large open space or broken into smaller spaces, as proposed. The sense of the members was that the scheme would be more successful through consolidation.
- It is recommended that the public park component be located on the best part of the site. The members and the design team agreed that the southwest corner was the best location.

- The members cautioned that the impacts of wind on the open spaces should be carefully studied, as downdraft and wind funneling between the two towers will likely create undesirable conditions at grade.