

**THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF ST. THOMAS
URBAN DESIGN COMMITTEE**

ROOM 309
CITY HALL

November 25, 2015

The meeting convened at 11:00 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Members

Councilor Linda Stevenson
Councilor Joan Rymal
Beth Burns, Chair, DDB
Tino Clarke, Heritage Committee
Russell Schnurr, Heritage Committee

Officials

Wendell Graves, CAO/Clerk
Matt Smale, Corporate Administrative Clerk
Pat Keenan, Director of Planning and
Building Services
Ross Tucker, Director of Parks and
Recreation
Catherine Spratley, Supervisor of Parks and
Forestry

Guests

Ron Koudys
Rick Smith
Cindy Prince
Dan Kuzman

Introductions were exchanged for those in attendance.

Project Status – Urban Design Committee

The City Manager advised that the Committee had reviewed the concept drawings and the location of the proposed development in the past week.

Comments and questions raised by the Committee regarding the development had been forwarded to Mr. Smith for follow up. Specifically, the members had commented on:

- The location of a loading zone at the corner of Ross Street and Centre Street
- The layout and number of parking spaces on the site
- Exterior design and how to make the facility unique to St. Thomas.

Overview

Ms. Prince provided the members with an overview of the proposed project. The development would have approximately 120 residential suites, 20-24 memory care beds, full dining facilities, etc. It was anticipated that when the facility was fully operational, it would provide employment for approximately 100 people and would contribute significantly to the City's tax base.

Mr. Smith advised that the developer was an Ontario based retirement community operator. The company was anticipating making a \$35 - \$40 million investment in the community. They were also seeking support through the Community Improvement Program.

In addition, 10 townhouse units were proposed. Residents of the townhouse units would still have access to the amenities in the main building.

The members inquired about memory care and about how resident admissions were prioritized.

Ms. Prince advised that memory care was a more secure unit for residents requiring additional support due to afflictions such as alzheimers, dementia, or other mental health concerns.

Mr. Smith advised that the facility would be privately operated and residents were admitted on a first come, first serve user pay basis.

The City Manager inquired about the land selection process.

Mr. Smith advised that 3-4 acres were needed for the development. The location was suitably situated near the downtown area and municipal investment in the area would provide recreation opportunities for residents. The applicant felt that remediation of soils on the site could be managed.

Building Orientation/Loading Zone Location

Mr. Kuzman provided an overview of the site layout and explained the rationale for placing the loading area at Ross and Centre Streets.

The developers had consulted the City's Urban Design guidelines and used the CASO Station as an example when designing the building.

The building layout necessitated a loading area that could service the residences, dining, courtyard and secure care area independently while not interfering with the public entrances to the building.

The loading area could be camouflaged through landscaping, a designed gate, canopy, screening, etc.

The members discussed the fact that with Centre Street now extended to Ross, and the rail/trail network being established in the area. The intersection of Ross and Centre was becoming more of a focal point.

Mr. Schnurr stated that the proposed location of the loading dock was not an appropriate design solution considering the significance of the Ross Street and Centre Street intersection.

The members inquired if there were any alternative locations on the site where the loading area could be situated.

Mr. Smith advised that the proposed position of the loading area was the only location that worked with the proposed building orientation. Every effort would be made to blend and make it as unimposing as possible.

Parking

The members discussed the parking layout of both the main building and the townhouse units fronting on Moore Street.

Mr. Schnurr inquired if the applicants had considered parking accessible from the rear of the Moore Street units. This may allow for a greater setback distance from Moore Street and eliminate the need for garages at the front of the homes.

Mr. Kuzman agreed to look into the possibility of parking at the rear of the Moore Street units.

Mr. Smith advised that the developer had considered many orientations for parking for the main building and limited it as much as possible. It was anticipated that parking would be sufficient for staff, visitors and those residents who still owned vehicles.

The location and design of the building was intended to encourage as much walkability and activity as possible for residents.

Mr. Koudys confirmed that the barrier free parking spaces immediately adjacent to the building were intended for day use by visitors or clients.

Underground parking had been investigated but was deemed unfeasible.

Other Inquiries

The Chair inquired if the company had buildings in other municipalities that could be looked at as examples of the type of development that was proposed for St. Thomas.

Mr. Smith advised that facilities were in place in Brantford, Strathroy, Milton, and a number of other locations. He further added that the St. Thomas facility was intended to be constructed in one phase.

Ms. Prince stated that the applicant intended the facility to be as community friendly as possible. Every effort was made to incorporate local contractors, staff, etc. into the construction and operation of the facility. The economic benefit to St. Thomas would be significant.

The members applauded the proposed investment into the City and noted the need for such a facility.

The building design was crucial as it would be a focal point of a redeveloping area for decades to come.

Next Steps

Mr. Smith stated that the applicant had applied for incentives under the Community Improvement Program and that these incentives were important to the project moving forward.

The members discussed where the project was at in relation to the CIP process and that a report would be going to Council on December 7, 2015 to assess their support level.

Moved by Coun. Stevenson – Rymal:

THAT: Approval be granted in principle for the application with the understanding that the project carry forth for further design review.

Carried.

Mr. Schnurr advised that while he supported the development in principle, he could not support it unless specific design changes were made to the plan such as the location of the proposed loading dock and turning the buildings back to face Centre Street.

The Committee agreed to meet again on December 17th, 2015 at 2:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Moved by R. Schnurr – T. Clarke:

THAT: We do now adjourn at 12:47 pm.