Bell Tower

DECEMBER 5, 2019

Lower Downtown Design Review Commission
Mass Form Context Presentation (2nd Submittal)
INTRODUCTION

On September 5th, 2019, the design team made our first formal presentation to the Commission for Mass, Form, Context approval of the Bell Tower project. We received feedback from the Commission with the emphasis on the following:

1. **Resolve CMP Comments:** Specifically, the Commission asked that we resolve the open comments related to Gross Floor Plate calculation at the Ground Floor, and to confirm our interpretation of the Mechanical Balconies. The City staff has approved the design team’s approach to both items and confirmed both are consistent with the PUD.

2. **Study the Massing and Relationship of Solid to Void:** The Commission questioned the conceptual approach to fenestration and urged the team to look for opportunities to add articulation and to add perforations / fenestration to the more solid facades.

3. **Convey the Connection to the Historic District:** The Commission felt the design team demonstrated the relationship of the tower design to the broader city context, but requested additional analysis and information to understand how the design relates to the immediate context from a pedestrian experience.

4. **Define the Pedestrian Experience:** As part of conveying the connection to the immediate context, the Commission sought additional information and images to understand the pedestrian experience with an emphasis along Market Street and Promenade.

The team has received approval of the Concept Master Plan and been released from the Concept Phase. The team continues to work with staff to resolve the Tier III Encroachment comments as we work towards submitting for SDP review.

We’re eager to re-engage with the LDDRC and welcome constructive feedback as we work collaboratively through the LDDRC review and approval processes. We’re looking forward to bringing this landmark project to life with you and the other community stakeholders.
RESOLUTION OF CMP COMMENTS
The design team developed several concepts and worked collaboratively with City staff over the course of several meetings on the overall site design and terrace design to resolve the Floor Plate calculation at the Ground Floor.

Ultimately, following criteria were identified as means to resolve the CMP comment:

1. Create a wholistic site / landscape approach to the entire site
2. Create thoughtful transitions between ground plane and elevated terrace level
3. Create opportunities for pedestrian engagement and project activation with an emphasis on the Promenade.
4. Perforate the vehicular circulation areas along the Promenade, view corridor, and Speer side to allow the spaces to be unenclosed.

The plan shown above, along with landscape design concept, was approved by City staff and subsequently closed the accompanying CMP comment, thus releasing the project from the Concept Master Plan phase.
The design team prepared this exhibit and presented it to City staff. The exhibit conveyed the design intent that the mechanical balcony was fully outdoor and unenclosed, and would ultimately be detailed similarly to a conventional balcony.

City staff determined that the proposed solution was consistent with the PUD, which specifically excludes “allowing the exclusion of balconies, terraces, decks as well as other similar exterior features…”
Both staff and Board comments sought a stronger presence along Market Street. The tower design and floor plans were modified to organize additional functional spaces and residential units along the Market Street frontage. This provided the opportunity for the creation of two vertical facade elements to engage the ground along Market Street, defining a much stronger street presence, urban edge, and street wall as a connection back to the Historic District.

Furthermore, the design team created a strong horizontal band between the second and third floor to align with a strong horizontal datum line that exists along Market Street. This provides the desired connection and consistency for a pedestrian as they traverse in and out of the District along Market Street.
As the design team developed the design of the tower in concert with a more detailed contextual analysis, the team chose to move away from the previous curvilinear balcony expression towards an orthogonal massing with flared ends at opposing corners. This emphasizes the connection to the corner of Speer Boulevard / Market Street and Larimer Square.
Renderings are conceptual and not intended to represent facade materiality but rather to convey mass, form, and scale only.
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VIEW FROM LARIER SQUARE & BELL MONUMENT, LOOKING NORTHWEST

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LDDRC MASS FORM CONTEXT PRESENTATION
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DENVER, CO
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IMMEDIATE SITE & CONTEXT ANALYSIS
Connection to Historic District

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The existing context is incredibly diverse and rich, with a wide range of building typologies of varying height.

The closest buildings are more than 300’ away from the site. This 300’ buffer will always be present with the existence of Speer Boulevard, Cherry Creek, and designed green spaces on the Bell Park development sites as mandated by the PUD and HUED Guidelines.

Existing buildings visible from the tower site range from 30’ to over 600’ in height.

Given the diversity of the surrounding scale and typologies, the urban context needs to be observed and analyzed at the macro level.

The Commission agreed and felt the design team showed an appropriate relationship to the larger urban context and urged the team to evaluate the immediate context in a similar manner.
Contextual relationships and perceived connections are easily made within the Historic District due to the rigorous city grid and consistent spacing of blocks and streets. Actual and perceived connections are more difficult when the rigor decreases. A proximate and continuous three-block section through Market Street reveals a westbound departure from the historic district.

As someone traverses out of the District, the grid shifts at 14th Street and continues over Cherry Creek towards the CU campus. This shift, coupled with the physical gap that is Cherry Creek and Speer Boulevard, experientially detach the Bell Tower parcel from the immediate Historic context.
The transition from the historic LODO district to the site shows that the rhythm of the urban fabric changes. Additionally, a grid shift at 14th Street further challenges the perceived connection between the two.
To enhance the connection, it is necessary to relate common massing elements that are perceptible from long distances. A datum line is struck, and its relationship across the section is analyzed.
The datum is respected along Market Street by various building elements including cornices, floor plates, and window heights. An articulation at the podium level of the proposed design offers a connection in a manner perceived at the pedestrian scale. To accentuate this connection, the massing shifts at the datum, and the roof of the porte-cochere extends outward towards Cherry Creek and the corner of Speer / Market to mark the transition and bridge between the Historic District and Auraria campus.
To understand the pedestrian experience, it is important to study the intensity of circulation around the site. Through observation, a hierarchy has been established to inform and enhance the design of pedestrian-oriented amenities.
A variety of seating options, pedestrian scaled lighting, plant material and pavement patterning create a welcoming and comfortable pedestrian experience along the Promenade. Potential Art Walls offer elements of surprise while decorative metal panels on portions of the building facade create a unique rhythm.
Street trees, pedestrian scaled lighting, and a variety of plant material along the Speer Boulevard frontage provide visual interest and shade. The Pedestrian Promenade is lined with a double row of trees in ground level planting beds and a combination of pedestrian and bollard lights, creating a welcoming and safe experience.
Patterns in the landscape reflect landscape treatments found along Speer Boulevard and throughout the Auraria Campus.
The entrance to the Pedestrian Promenade is celebrated through an extension of enhanced paving, the double row of trees, and informal seating.
Street trees, pedestrian scale lighting, raised planters and a variety of plant material create a comfortable pedestrian experience along Market. Informal seating is provided with planter walls and seat walls.