



STAFF BRIEF

This document is the staff's comparison of the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation, Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures and Districts, the Landmark Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 30, Revised Municipal Code) and other applicable adopted area guidelines as applied to the proposed application. It is intended to provide guidance during the commission's deliberation of the proposed application. Guidelines are available at www.denvergov.org/preservation

Project:	#2019-COA-194	LDDRB Meeting:	June 6, 2019
Address:	1637 Blake Street	Staff:	Brittany Bryant
Year structure built:	n/a – Vacant lot (Period of Significance: 1860-1941)		
Applicant:	SA+R		

Past LDDRB Action:

Meeting Date: April 11, 2019

Description: Infill – Mass, Form and Context

Motion by M. Coughlin: I move to deny application #2019-COA-096 for the Phase I: Mass, Form, and Context at 1637 Blake Street, per design guidelines 4.1-5.3 related to New Buildings, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report.

Second: R. Falkenberg

Vote: Unanimous in favor (5-0-0), motion carries

Project Scope Under Review:

Infill Construction – Phase I: Mass, Form, and Context for a new mixed-use hotel building

Footprint: 125' X 123'

Height: 83'-9"

Staff summary:

The applicant, SA+R, is requesting to infill an existing vacant parking lot with a new mix-used, hotel development at 1637-1655 Blake Street.

The proposed building will have a total height of 83 feet-9 inches and a total building frontage of 125 feet. The building will be broken into two distinct modules along the street, one 77 feet long and one 48 feet long, a 2 foot "zipper" will divide the façade. The proposed building will have a total of 8 floors, with the 77-foot module reading as 6-stories from Blake Street and the and the 48-foot module reading as 5-stories from Blake Street, two to three additional stories will be setback 11 feet from the Blake Street façade. On the 77 foot module, floors 7-8 will be setback 11 feet from the Blake Street façade and on the 48 foot module, floors 6-8 will be setback 11 feet from the Blake Street façade. Each building façade will have regular rhythms of openings, the width of the openings varies from the larger module to the smaller module.

Historically, the site was home to 3-buildings: 1637 Blake Street – 44 feet in height, The Nevin Building – 70 feet in height, and the Western Machinery Co. Building – 37 feet in height. All three buildings were demolished in the 1960s-1970s.

At the April 11, 2019 Lower Downtown Design Review Board meeting, the Board felt that the overall height of the structure was appropriate and met the Ordinance requirement for the height exception. The Board was also supportive of the two modules along the Blake Street frontage and upper story setback for the 7th and 8th floor. The

Board discussed that having a strong base, middle, and top would allow the proposal to achieve the proposed floor-to-floor heights. The Board also encouraged that floors 7 and 8 should look subtle and recede.

The applicant has revised the design from the April 11, 2019 submittal. Major changes to the design include:

1. The appearance of larger storefront bays.
2. A restaurant entrance introduced on the south most bay of the large module.
3. Exterior ramping into the restaurant entrance in the recessed bay.
4. Revisions to the Hotel entrance on the small module.
5. Additional details on the secondary elevations.
6. Additional details on the mechanical screen.
7. Juliette balconies introduced at the top floor of the large module.
8. A new 8” metal channel added to the top of the 6 and 5 story modules.
9. A “thickened” top band added to each module.
10. Planter boxes added to the rooftop deck at the front façade.
11. A trellis structure added to the rooftop deck of the small module.
12. Alterations to the window bay and patterning on the large module.
13. Greater variety in the articulation of the upper story setback.
14. A reduction in the upper story setback from 15 feet down to 11 feet.

No changes have been made to the floor-to-floor heights or appearance of floors.

Staff are concerned that the renderings may do not match the line drawings. The renderings do not appear to accurately reflect all 8 stories with the renderings appearing to be a 7-story building. It is unclear to staff if this is due to the perspective the renderings are taken from or some error in the rendering software.

Excerpted from the D.R.M.C, Chapter 30, Article III

Ordinance	Meets Ordinance?	Comments
<p>Sec. 30-48 (b)(3d) Height:</p> <p>1. Fifty-five (55) feet, excluding cornices, heating, ventilating and air conditioning equipment, stair enclosures and elevator overruns, shall be considered the height by right in the district.</p> <p>2. Buildings between fifty-five (55) and eighty-five (85) feet in height (excluding cornices, heating, ventilating and air conditioning equipment, stair enclosures and elevator overruns) may be allowed by the board if they are in context with any contributing buildings within three hundred (300) feet of any point on the property line of the proposed building, and if the structure includes residential uses anywhere in the building in a minimum amount equal to the floor area above the 55-foot limit. All residential use portions of the building shall be constructed first, or at the very least, at the same time as the remainder of the building.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>A 300-foot radius from property includes 16 contributing buildings, of those 16, 7 are over 55 feet in height.</p> <p>The Sugar Building is the tallest building within the radius, documented at 88 feet, however, only a portion of the building, the front façade, is within the radius. The tallest building totally within the 300-foot radius is 1626 Wazee Street-Rockmont, documented at 72 feet tall. 1514 17th Street-The Barth Hotel, immediately adjacent to the site is the 3rd tallest building totally within the 300-foot radius documented at 65 feet tall.</p> <p>The proposed infill will have a hotel use and meets the chapter 30 definition of residential which states: “residential use shall mean any building or part of a building in which a person or group of persons are</p>

		provided with sleeping accommodations.”
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Excerpted from Design Guidelines for Lower Downtown Historic District (2002)

Guideline	Meets guideline?	Comments
<p>Policy 4.1 Building Heights To encourage new buildings and additions to existing buildings to reflect their context, the guidelines below specify requirements and preferences regarding heights of new buildings.</p> <p>4.1.1 Measuring heights Requirement: In all, cases the height of a building shall be measured according to the Denver Zoning Code, except that measurement shall be to the roof deck at the street façade(s).</p> <p>4.1.2 Minimum heights Preference: All other new building should be at least two stories tall.</p> <p>4.1.3 Maximum height Requirement: Maximum height shall be 55 feet (not counting rooftop elements), except as provided as follows:</p> <p>4.1.3.2 The Eight-five Foot Exception The LDD/DRM may grant an exception to the 55-foot height limit of up to an additional 30 feet, under the following conditions: Requirement: The building must include residential uses in a minimum amount equal to the floor area over the 55-foot height limit; these residential uses may be located anywhere in the building. Requirement: The building must be in context. Requirement: All other design guidelines for new construction shall apply to projects eligible for the eight-five-foot exception.</p> <p>4.1.4 Appearance of height in stories Preference: The exterior expression of the 55-foot-high building should read as up to four stories. Preference: The exterior expression of the 85-foot-high building should read as up to 6 stories.</p> <p>4.1.5 Height of rooftop structures and appurtenances Requirement: No roof structure or appurtenance (e.g. elevator, mechanical penthouse, telecommunications equipment, stair towers, or mechanical equipment) shall exceed 15 feet in height.</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>	<p>The proposed infill will be measured in accordance with the Denver Zoning Code. The proposed building will have a total height of 83'-9" to the roof structure.</p> <p>The proposed building will be an 8-story building. From Blake Street, a portion of the building will read as 6 stories and a portion as 5 stories. Floors above 5 and 6 will be setback 15 feet from the front façade.</p> <p>The applicant is request an exception to the 55-foot height by right to allow up to 85 feet in height. The ordinance requires a 300-foot radius from the site. There are 7 buildings over 55 feet within 300 feet. Of these buildings, 2 are 55+ feet to 60 feet, 2 are 60 to 70 feet, and 3 are 70 to 85+, with the tallest building only partially within the 300-foot radius.</p> <p>The proposed infill will have a hotel use and meets the chapter 30 definition of residential which states: "residential use shall mean any building or part of a building in which a person or group of persons are provided with sleeping accommodations."</p> <p><u>The 48-foot-long module along the street is intended to hold the 55-foot height datum line of the district, however, it reads as 5-stories. The 77-foot-long module along the street reads as 6-stories in height. There are an additional 2-stories setback 11 feet from the Blake Street façade. Staff feel that the building should read as no more than 6-stories in height and the 48-foot module should read as 4-storeis to be more in context with the district.</u></p>

<p>Requirement: No roof structure or appurtenance (e.g. elevator, mechanical penthouse, telecommunications equipment, stair towers, or mechanical equipment) shall be closer than 15 feet to the street façade of the buildings...</p>		<p><u>Of the 7 buildings within the 300-foot radius of the site taller than 55 feet, most of the buildings read no more than 4 to 5 stories in height.</u></p> <p><u>The Sugar building, partially within the 300-foot radius reads as 6 stories in height.</u></p> <p><u>Staff would strongly encourage the applicant identify all historic buildings within Lower Downtown that read a more than 4 to 5 stories in height and demonstrate compatibility with these structures.</u></p> <p>The rooftop will have mechanical equipment, an elevator overrun and a green roof. The mechanical screen and elevator overrun will be 8'-10 inches in height. All rooftop equipment will be oriented toward the alley with a green roof towards Blake Street.</p>
<p>Policy 4.2 Building Mass Strong features of Lower Downtown’s physical character are the rectilinear and blocky nature of its existing buildings and the area’s block-alley-block pattern. New buildings shall be designed such that their massing is consistent and compatible with the historical context. Building height and building widths, and variations in them, are important aspects of massing.</p> <p>4.2.1 Variations in height Preference: For a single building whose site is more than 100 feet in width along the street facade, height should be varied. Preference: The variation of height should take place in 18- to 30-foot horizontal increments.</p> <p>4.2.2 Appearance of widths Requirement: Buildings shall not block alleys. Requirement: The design of a facade shall not extend across alleys. Preference: The maximum width of a building or building segment along a named street should be 100 feet.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The proposed building will be rectilinear and blocky in nature.</p> <p>The façade along Blake Street features modulation to break up the mass of the building and to create a width of building design that is typical of the district. The façade will have the appearance of one 77-foot-long module and one 48 foot long module, and a 2 foot “zipper” dividing the modules.</p> <p>No building segment will exceed 100 feet.</p> <p>Variation in height is also used to break up the massing along the street. A setback above floors 5 and 6 allows for the appearance of a lower scale building as viewed from the street. Additionally, the two modules feature different heights to further break up the large massing. The facades will also be articulated differently, but within the same vocabulary to provide further scale elements along the street.</p>

<p>Policy 5.1. Street Walls Building placement on the site and the continuity of facades along the street must reinforce the tradition of Lower Downtown’s historic building fabric.</p> <p>5.1.1 Continuity of street wall façade Requirement: A continuous street wall shall be constructed along property lines facing public streets. Preference: There should not be a step back in the façade below 55 feet. Preference: Elements of a storefront’s wall may be recessed up to 2 feet from the property line. Preference: A storefront entry may be recessed 5 feet from the property line, or 3 feet from the face of the storefront if the storefront has been recessed up to 2 feet. Preference: Decorative elements that extend beyond the façade should be permitted. Preference: Decorative elements that extend beyond the façade should not become a dominant feature of the façade. Preference: Decorative elements that extend beyond the façade should not extend to the ground level.</p> <p>5.1.3 Floor-to-floor heights Floor-to-floor heights as stated here serve façade-expression purposes... Preference: Street level minimum: 14 feet Upper level minimum 11 feet Preference: Street level maximum: 20 feet Upper level maximum 14 feet</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>	<p>A continuous street wall is created by the new proposal that will replace a void within the Lower Downtown Historic District created by the demolition of 3 historic buildings in the 1960-1970s.</p> <p>The building façade will not feature a set back below 55-feet.</p> <p>The entrance to the hotel and restaurant, will be recessed from the street wall. The hotel entrance is recessed 4 feet and the restaurant is recessed 5 feet into the façade.</p> <p>Decorative elements will be used on the building façade, however, detail on these elements have not been provided at this time and will be further explored in the Phase II submittal.</p> <p><u>The floor-to-floor heights are not within the recommended expression for the district. The ground floor is 14 feet 4 inches in height, meeting the minimum recommendation. However, the upper floors are 9 feet 8 inches in height, below the minimum recommendation. The reduced floor-to-floor height allows for additional floors. These floors can be read from the exterior and the guidelines recommend an 85-foot building to have the appearance of 6-stories. Staff would recommend a restudy of the floor-to-floor heights to be more in context with the appearance of stories from the exterior.</u></p>
<p>Policy 5.2 Non-Street Wall Elevations Buildings often have more than one or two sides visible to the street; walls may also be visible from nearby buildings or rooftops. All visible elevations are crucial to Lower Downtown’s character, and walls must be designed accordingly. Historically, alley facades were the backs of buildings: where deliveries were made and trash disposed of. Their designs were a lesser priority than those of street facades, and they often looked more cluttered with smaller windows and a variety of materials, textures, setbacks, doors, docks and colors. In addition, alleys provided light and air.</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>	<p>Additional details for the articulation of secondary facades have been provided.</p> <p>The alley façade will have fenestration patterns and be used as service areas.</p> <p>The west elevation, with additional visibility due to the adjacent contributing building being 2-stories in height, will have false openings</p>

<p>Today, alleys are well-used for many of the same purposes, but design treatment along them must also respect and respond to new uses, such as greater pedestrian activity, and to views from shops, restaurants, residences, and offices</p> <p>5.2.1 Design of visible sidewall elevations Requirement: Sidewall facades, whether seen from the street or nearby buildings, shall continue to reflect the context in which they exist and shall be compatible with the architecture of the street facades.</p> <p>5.2.2 Alley elevations Preference: Alley elevations should not be treated as primary facades and should be permitted greater freedom of expression than primary street wall facades. Preference: Considerations should be made for providing trash enclosures and delivery areas, as well as fire escapes and electrical, telephone, and CATV pedestals, all of which take up considerable space that should not occupy alley rights-of-way.</p>		<p>and contemporary window patterning to match the upper story setback towards the alley.</p> <p>The east elevation will have window openings on the 6th, 7th, and 8th floor. Portions of this elevation are recessed from the Barth Hotel and will be visible from the interior of the Barth but will have limited visibility from the public right-of-way.</p> <p><u>Additional details on the size and proportions of all openings on all elevations should be provided.</u></p> <p><u>Finally, the articulation of the interior courtyard is unknown to staff. These elevations will not be visible from the public right-of-way but are on the exterior of the building.</u></p>
<p>Policy 5.3 Façade Compositions A building's scale, articulation and definition are critical factors in determining how well it fits its context.</p> <p>5.3.1 Building articulation and definition Requirement: A building's expression shall be composed of a base, a middle, and a top. Requirement: The base shall include the street-level story or the first and second stories together. Requirement: Building entries shall be articulated. Requirement: The building shall have a consistent, articulated bay rhythm. Preference: Vertical elements, such as columns, arches, vertical windows, and others are strongly encouraged. Preference: Architectural features, such as windows and doors, doorways, and courses, should be delineated. Preference: The building should have a well-articulated top.</p> <p>5.3.2 Windows Requirement: Windows shall be recessed at least one brick width. Requirement: Windows shall have sills. Requirement: Windows openings shall have vertical proportions. Requirement: Window openings shall not create horizontal bands across façade. Requirement: A minim of two-thirds of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of street-level facades shall be transparent.</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>	<p>The building will have the expression of a base and middle. The applicant has revised the design to include an 8" metal channel and a "thickened" top.</p> <p><u>The addition of the 8' channel does provide a modern cap. Staff are unclear how the thickened top differs from the wall plane below and would request further details on the change in plane.</u></p> <p><u>The applicant is also proposing to incorporate rooftop deck elements, including planters and a metal awning trellis to reinforce the top of the building base for both modules. The 77-foot-module will employ Juliette balconies and different articulation to define a top for the larger module. Staff don't feel these elements sufficiently define a building top. The Board discussed that "decoration" was not an appropriate method to achieve a top. The Board indicated that the massing would need to have detail to achieve a top.</u></p> <p>The façade design will include vertical elements and other architectural features, that have</p>

<p>Preference: Street-level windows should be of the storefront or divided light industrial type...</p> <p>Preference: Operable windows should be used above the first floor.</p> <p>5.3.3 Balconies</p> <p>Requirement: Balconies shall not be dominant feature of facades.</p> <p>Requirement: Balcones shall be located above the building's base.</p> <p>Requirement: Balcones shall contribute to the horizontal and vertical expression of the building.</p> <p>Requirement: Balconies shall not be continuous across the entire façade or elevation of the building.</p> <p>Requirement: Railings on balconies shall be transparent.</p> <p>Preference: Balconies should not exceed 10 feet in length</p> <p>Preference: Balcones should not be set back into the façade of the of the building.</p> <p>Preference: Balcones should not project more than 5 feet from the façade.</p> <p>5.3.4 Scale</p> <p>Requirement: Building facades shall be designed with appropriate human scale and scaling elements.</p> <p>Preference: Scaling elements may include, but are not limited to, expressions of materials by means of texture, color, and size; articulation of floor lines and structure grids; attention to details, including articulation of doors, windows, and balconies; articulation of cornices and banding; use of color changes; and street front or storefront articulation, including the use of awnings, canopies, signs, transoms, and kick plates.</p>	<p>been inspired by the district context, for example bays of windows grouped together vertically with a change in wall plane and decorative brick work around openings. The windows and doors are clearly delineated in a modern way that relates to the district context.</p> <p><u>Staff are concerned about the window proportions on the larger module along the street. These windows do not have the tall vertical proportions common the district. However, on 1623-1625 Blake and the demolished Nevin building the window proportions are wider and more horizontal in appearance. The design of this façade may be inspired by these atypical historical buildings; however, staff would recommend further study of both buildings as design inspiration in the Phase II submittal.</u></p> <p>The window proportions on the smaller module will replicated the proportions of the Barth Hotel.</p> <p><u>The revised proposal includes Juliette balconies on the larger module. The balconies are intended to help define the top of the larger module and differentiate it from the base and middle. Staff are concerned that the balconies will be a dominant feature of the façade as they are employed to define massing.</u></p> <p>The resubmittal has improved the rhythm of bays for each module.</p> <p><u>The small module will have two distinct bays, similar to the Barth Hotel. The Board did briefly discuss regularity of the small module's façade vs the irregularity of the Barth Hotel. The Board did not determine conclusively if the small module should remain related to the façade articulation of the larger module or should be inspired by the variety of design on the Barth Hotel.</u></p>
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		<p><u>The larger module will have 3 bays at the ground floor with pairs of recessed windows above. The design inspiration is from the Carter Rice Building; however the Carter Rice building has 3 bays at the ground floor with 3 recessed bays above. Staff feel the inspiration from the Carter Rice Building can be furthered, creating a unique middle that would help differentiate the 6th floor of the 77-module and strengthen the base, middle, top configuration.</u></p>
<p>Policy 8.1 General Design Considerations Rooftop elements pose special problems: historically, most were not screened, but neither were they generally visible from the street due to high cornices.</p> <p>8.1.1 Rooftop Elements Requirement: Rooftop and mechanical elements shall not be placed on penthouses. Preference: Rooftop elements should be neutral, unless another approach can be demonstrated as superior. Preference: Rooftop elements should be neutral unless they are a significant part of the façade or elevation design.</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>	<p>The rooftop elements will be screened with a mechanical screen.</p> <p><u>Planter boxes and an awning/trellis are proposed to reinforce the top of the 6 and 5 story street module. During Board discussions, the Board indicated that “decoration” was not an appropriate method to achieve a top to the building. Staff are concerned that these elements, particularly the planter boxes do not contribute to creating a sense of a top.</u></p>

Recommendation: Denial

Basis: The proposed 85-foot-tall infill building reads as more than 6-stories and has atypical floor-to-floor heights. Staff do not feel the revised submittal sufficiently addresses the Board’s concerns regarding the base, middle, top and a contextual study of Lower Downtown.

Suggested Motion: I move to DENY application #2019-COA-194 for the Phase I: Mass, Form, and Context at 1637 Blake Street, per design guidelines 4.1-5.3 related to New Buildings, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report.