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NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION MEETING NOTES

These notes capture questions, comments and ideas from the meeting but are not a verbatim transcript.

PROJECT: Mason Street Sustainable Development

DATE: March 31, 2014

PLANNER: Clark Mapes

**APPLICANT/
OWNER:** Vaught Frye Larson Architects (VFLA)
Justin Larson, Principal

The meeting began with the Project Planner, Clark Mapes, giving an overview of the agenda and development review process for this project. The project is a Type 2 or Planning & Zoning Board project, and the Planning & Zoning Board will be the decision-maker.

Due to a glitch with the mailing notice labels for this neighborhood meeting, a second meeting will be held on April 14th at the site of the proposal, 401 Mason Street.

Applicant Presentation

Justin Larsen with VFLA Architects presented the proposed project. VFLA would participate in the development and occupy some of the proposed office space.

This property was purchased in 2007, and we began looking at what the zoning on the site would allow at this location. Our architecture firm is interested in moving to the site as the home of our future offices.

We view Mason Street as a dynamic place in Fort Collins. The site is located in the Transit Oriented Development Overlay Zone. There are increasing transportation activities, and MAX will begin operations soon. In looking at policies and goals from City Plan, they are also supportive of infill and redevelopment along the TOD/Mason Street Corridor.

Several other taller structures are nearby, including the Park Lane Towers, Key Bank Tower, First National Tower, Post Office, Cortina, Max Flats, etc. Key Bank is 12 stories and has a footprint of 4,000 square feet. This project has a 3,000 square foot footprint and is 7 stories.

Other projects nearby are 4 and 5 stories, mainly from an economic standpoint to utilize wood construction.

This project has an opportunity to introduce downtown-design language and aesthetic to Mason Street. Looking to bring historic character, articulation, and massing to the building -- also looking at enlivening the street face. We will incorporate landscaping and paving patterns that reflect Mason Street's high pedestrian walkway use and a transition along Magnolia to the west where it is more residential in character.

All four sides of the building are articulated, and all four sides include the same materials. We are also investigating incorporating a green wall.

The building will have a two-story base element with a cornice, and a canopy to reflect elements from the 415 Mason Street building to the south.

The building is 7 stories and is expected to have a retail tenant on the first floor, 5 floors of offices, and top-floor restaurant space or additional office space. We are providing 11 additional parking spaces nearby. The uses planned within the building suit the nearby area when investigating parking/user flows and max demand.

We conducted a parking survey of the area and examined open spaces and parking limits. On a weekday at 10:30 in the morning, 50% of the 1hr parking spots were open, 50% of the 2hr spaces were open and 14% of the no limit parking was open.

At 1:00 pm, 16% of the 1hr, 33% of the 2hr and 9% of the no limit parkings spaces were open. At 3:30 pm, 66% of the 1hr and 71% of the 2hr spaces were open. Finally at 6:30 pm, 51% of the spaces were open (1hr and 2hr limits no longer apply at this time of day).

Comments, Questions & Responses:

Question (Citizen): What time of year was the parking study conducted?

Response (Applicant): It was conducted last Thursday (March 27th).

Question (Citizen): Was Spring Break over?

Response (Applicant): Spring Break was over; students were back in classes.

Question (Citizen): What impact do you think the new development will have on parking in the area?

Response (Applicant): We have a staff of 20 and we're ClimateWise members. Most of our office bikes and walks to work. That isn't always a guarantee. We have secured 11 spaces, and our current office has 0 dedicated spaces. We anticipate using our 2 office cars in that 11 we have secured. We also have space available in the City of Fort Collins Parking Garage and spaces in 2 adjacent properties.

Question (Citizen): Will those spaces cover the parking space for the restaurant and other office users?

Response (Applicant): Trip generation will be covered in the traffic study. That is available if you're interested to see it. Long-term, the on-street 2-hour parking was 50% open throughout the day, but did narrow down to 9% at certain points of the day.

Comment (Citizen): We need the hard numbers and data from the traffic study.

Response (Applicant team): One struggle we see from our clients downtown, is that when you're in an urban environment, a lot of the parking is up to the City as to what is provided along the streets and in parking garages. There is collaboration with the City to figure out the best place to park.

Response (Applicant): Without having a tenant for the restaurant at the top, we don't know exact figures yet. That space could end up as office use as well. We're not sure yet about a user for the restaurant space.

Question (Citizen): There is going to be a lot of traffic, and right now the intersection is not controlled. What kind of upgrades will happen at that intersection? Will the developer help offset City costs at the intersection?

Response (City): Traffic Study impact shows it does not create enough of a change in the intersection to warrant improvements.

Response (Applicant): The traffic study looks at the area as a whole, certain projects are just a part of the whole picture.

Question (Citizen): Did you do the parking study on one day only?

Response (Applicant): Our own analysis we did on one day, for discussion tonight. We are happy to continue that analysis.

Comment (Citizen): We are right next door and face the street, and our observation is that parking on that block is full a lot.

Response (Applicant): What would be helpful is a 3rd-party to look at parking in the area. It is a very valid review for any project that is occurring downtown. We will continue to have this parking discussion.

Comment (Citizen): I live across the street, and if you take a bird's eye view of the area, most of the square footage in the area is asphalt or parking, but most of these lots are proprietary. There is an opportunity for a public-private partnership, and allow a more diverse use mix in the area. There is a lot of underutilized private asphalt in the area.

Response (Applicant): We are in discussion with some nearby property owners that have these parking lots, but they want to know when the project is moving forward so we can work on agreements like that and make them viable.

Question (Citizen): Will the parking spots along Mason Street stay there?

Response (City): I don't know if they will remain forever, but our understanding is that the parking changes made for MAX have been completed, so no further changes are planned at this time.

Comment (Citizen): I like the building, but I'm not really happy when our building was built we were required to have a whole bunch of parking, and now this development isn't providing much parking, so people could be utilizing our parking and we're responsible for the maintenance. Our clients and

visitors are also having trouble accessing our own parking. We're going to have to incur the expense of enforcement of our parking area. It seems unfair to be forced to build parking and other people come in and start to take it and externalize this issue onto nearby property owners. If you go into any restaurant, they have employees who need to be there all day that will have to park. 11 parking spaces will not be enough. If you take all the street parking spaces for this project, nobody else will have any.

Question (Applicant): Which is your property?

Response (Citizen): 215 West Magnolia.

Response (Applicant): As we bring tenants into the building there is the opportunity with MAX and Mason Street -- the existing parking garage is only full 3 times a year and has available spaces. That's a 5-minute ride or a short walk away.

Comment/Question (Citizen): Since this won't have enough parking, you're going to tell tenants they have to park in this spot or take transit? Or can you tell us these other agreements you're negotiating?

Response (Applicant): Are you asking if we can require in our leases that tenants utilize off-street parking? The answer is yes. There are many businesses downtown that lease parking spaces from private parking areas or the parking structures and require tenants and employees to park there.. It makes these negotiations much easier if we have traction to have these discussions.

Comment (Citizen): I would not like to see this project and its parking needs impacting nearby owners in a negative fashion.

Comment (Citizen): When you build a big building, you're going to cast a large shadow on the street, covering the drain. When we can't have the sun shining where the drain is, we're going to have ice flows and ice dams all the way up the street.

Response (Applicant): We have a shadow analysis we can show you that demonstrates due to the smaller footprint of the building, the shadow and shading isn't very prominent.

Comment (Citizen): The building is so tall and it's going to shade where the drain is. When the City plows the snow piles up in front and dams it and people can't get into my building due to the standing/blocked water.

Question (Citizen): Do you have a 100% commitment for all 7 stories?

Response (Applicant): We do not have 100% commitment for tenants of all the floors. Many tenants want to see project approval from Planning & Zoning first. We have talked with several retail and restaurant owners, and have several that are interested, but no leases will be made until we know the building will be moved forward.

Comment (Citizen): I am an owner in Parklane Towers, facing your building, and I bought specifically on the east side to see the prairie. Did I make a mistake and buy on the east with this going up? You should consider reducing the number of stories in the building as you don't seem to have commitment for all of your space. I saw a City Council meeting there was a house larger than its area and it was appealed and City council backed the planning department as it was too large.

Comment (Citizen): The 7 stories sticks out like a sore thumb. Right now the corridor has an open feel, and with the new improvements and landscaping it is giving it more of a park-like feel. 7

stories right on the sidewalk seems unnecessary for this building and location -- maybe 4 or 5 stories maximum.

Response (Applicant): We're at a similar height of a 5-story building. Our ceiling heights are lower than other typical buildings. We are getting more floors in that same height.

Response (Applicant): This development is at the forefront of some of the changes along Mason Street. The zoning of the area (block) allows up to 115 feet in height. If buildings go higher than 80', the buildings are meant for the interior area of the block, but this area is downtown, an urban area. Other buildings could come in and be having these same discussions. From Mulberry up to Magnolia up and Olive along Mason Street is seen as a core that does not detract from the 2-3 story area of Old Town but gives an opportunity for 5-6-7 stories along the Mason Corridor. If you're going to put these heights along Mason Street, you need to be thoughtful about where these structures go, with prominent corner buildings. An urban design principle is to have the taller buildings to anchor corners.

Comment (Citizen): I believe parking is going to be a very big problem – it is already a problem now. I live at Parklane Tower, and even though this is going to obstruct my view. I bought with the intent of looking over Old Town and the prairie. When we have visitors or repairmen they always complain they cannot get a parking spot. We need on-street parking for our visitors; they have to go around and around looking. If we have these commercial units, you know people are not going to want to pay for parking; they're going to get held up at Mulberry Street creating backups and congestion. If emergency personnel want to get through they won't be able.

There is already congestion there now, and with this being constructed there will be even more. We're going to be backed up trying to get out of our underground parking. When I am trying to get into the parking garage, I have to wait because people are always backed up at Mulberry. There is not enough parking, and I talk to people in the south of Fort Collins and they don't come to Old Town anymore to shop, because they can never get parking.

I understand in the 80s you were only allowed to have 4 stories, and the law keeps changing, and we are getting the rough end of the deal. I don't want to be looking out at a tall building.

When trying to cross Mason Street now, your view is very obstructed. All of these vehicles coming down will be a major intersection problem; there will be many accidents there, especially if the new building goes in at the property line and with the proposed landscaping.

Response (City): The City is currently studying parking in the Transit Oriented Development area right now; parking is a very complicated issue, and everyone understands that it's a very large issue for the City as a whole. There's as whole separate project looking at that.

Question (Citizen): Can you talk about the height of that zone, and the transition? What was it prior to 2008?

Response (City): Prior to 2004, this whole area west of downtown was in zoning that had a height limit of 12 stories or 168 feet. This included the Parklane Towers. There are many blocks and locations in this area where you could never have gotten the full 12 stories. What the City did in

2004-2006 was we ended up with a block-by-block map that lays out maximum heights on each block. This block has a maximum height of 115' or 7-9 stories, but it comes with caveats.

The caveats are descriptive, they aren't specific numbers for height and setbacks. They are things to take There is a general agreement of up 4-6 stories up to 80', but there's more to it - there are certain parameters such as a 1-2 story base that defines the feel of the building along the sidewalk, and then above the base the building mass has to be reduced and set back further. If there are portions of a building that reach the maximum height, they would be more towards the interior of the block. Determining the height of this building is what the City staff is working on with the applicant team in the review process. Then the Planning and Zoning Board will make the decision.

Comment (Citizen): I think we have a spreading problem, of buildings shooting up in height without any parking space. The City needs to have definite guidelines for buildings to have parking spaces within the corridor. Buildings need to have a way to take care of their users and needs. The building just being finished on Mason and Mulberry does not have parking space either.

Response (Audience): That project does have some of its own parking.

Response (City): Parking is a very complicated issue, how much do we devote downtown to parking lots?

Response (Applicant): There is a chicken-and-egg problem. With these new, denser developments coming online, we want to encourage alternative transportation modes. We are happy to provide parking off-site for those we can control within the building. Because of the corridor and continued parking analysis, that there are still some 1 and 2 hr spots available.

Question (Citizen): Are those 11 spaces purchased or lease, and if leased, how long is the lease?

Response (Applicant): They are purchased; we bought the property. We can say we have 30 leased because we have could go out tomorrow and do that.

Response (Applicant): There's a clarification: the land is under contract to be purchased, scheduled to be close in about 6 weeks.

Question (Citizen): How do your setbacks conform to the Downtown Plan?

Response (Applicant): We're a zero lot line development, meaning you can build to your property line. In the Downtown district, if you're on a zero lot line, you either need to provide retail space or provide a landscape buffer. As the building steps up there should be a defined 1 to 2 story base. Then above this, the building has to recess back. No definition of what that is. On this specific project, the Magnolia face is 1.5 stepped back from Magnolia Street. As you move up, the upper floor steps back 3 feet (from the property line) and then the top floor steps back 8 feet from the property line.

Question (Citizen): The parking lot at Magnolia, across the street, is that something that could still be developed? Next to Magnolia Lofts? They are at a lower height - will this ever fit into this corner at the proposed height?

Response (City): This is the issue being reviewed, whether the height is going to work, whether it fits in, whether the setbacks are adequate.

Response (Audience): The parking lot on the other side of Magnolia is owned by First National, used by their employees for parking.

Response (City): It could be built or developed.

Comment (Citizen): I live down the street, and I watch people regularly using bikes or walking, and the intensity is off the scale right now. The overflow of cars is almost immeasurable and the stress on the flows. When I have to stop for pedestrians, people are honking, and it is very difficult to get across the street. That new development (Max Flats), if you go by numbers, he is way short for what is needed in the neighborhood. There are other projects that are minus spaces. This is impacting people out on the street and we're the ones already living here. The shortcutting on parking is a disaster. It gets piled up.

We have a major inflow of cars and they're stressed out and distracted and all these backups at the major crossings. It is even throughout the day, not just at rush hour.

Response (Applicant): We will be providing bike parking, both in the building and on-grade for tenants and any customers and clients as well. We hope to help influence our staff and clients to bike to our offices and meetings.

Question (Citizen): If the project is built as proposed, I've only seen renderings of the north and east facades, what do the other two sides look like? Will there be any glazing, or is it just brick and stone on these other sides?

Response (Applicant): There are no windows on those sides as it sits on the property line – this is a building code requirement, but the articulation on the building will be the same on all sides. You can build a 2-hour wall and the adjacent owner can build another 2 hour wall on his side and there is a 4-hour fire separation if you have two buildings touching each other. The mass and the windows and even the color change will be similar. We are also looking to do photovoltaic on the south side. Same window patterns but can't see in or out of them. Same stone and materials used on all four sides.

Comment (Citizen): It would be unfortunate to look at a plain, unarticulated building wall until some other nearby adjacent development connected with the wall. It could be 10 years, or a long time.

Response (Applicant): Same building materials that are on the face, the same detailing. It will look like a historic building where the windows were filled in. It won't be just a blank stucco wall.

Comment (Citizen): I have looked at the Land Use Code, the underlying issue is that in most cities, there are minimum parking requirements and in Fort Collins there are in certain places no minimum required. This is what happened at the Summit project on College. It is cumulatively happening to our area in Old Town West. They are producing more use in this area than there is land to put parking on, so the parking customers are going into the residential neighborhood. The City in my view has a problem with no parking minimums.

If you look at this location, this building is too tall and too massive for the small lot it is on, and in the context in which it sits. To the south you have 1-story buildings, to the west you have 1 and 2 story building, across the street you have 4 stories, and we also have some very historic

landmarks to the west of here. You have the Montezuma Fuller house nearby. It is a local, state and national landmark. I don't believe this fits into the context of the neighborhood. I think it should come down to 4 stories to be comparable.

The fact that Parklane Towers is a couple blocks over, doesn't really speak to this neighborhood. You're surrounded by much lower buildings. It is too tall and should be lowered.

Question (Citizen): When will it go to P&Z?

Response (City): Likely May 8, or June. It depends on the review that is going on and when we can get everything ready for the hearing. You will get a notice of the hearing when it's confirmed.

Comment (Citizen): I heard from some neighbors that we're supposed to get a notice, but didn't. I've heard those glitches have happened in the past, and it makes me think, is the City trying to pull something over us? My biggest issue isn't with the developer or plan, but knowing can we really trust the City government.

Comment (Citizen): Also notes not going out for people who sign-up at meetings.

Response (City): There was an administrative problem with the list and mail labels. Bottom line is that everyone in the notification area will get a 2 week notice for a neighborhood meeting. Some people will just get a notice and a meeting 2 weeks later than others.

Response (City): There was a neighbor who let us know there may have been a problem with the mailing as he saw the notice in the paper but didn't receive a neighborhood meeting notice. That is why we did the second notice another neighborhood meeting in two weeks.

Comment (Citizen): In Pura Vida, the notes never went out at the project.

Response (City): We will send notes.

Comment (Citizen): I don't think you're making the project tall enough. As I age, I want more services in a smaller area where I don't have to take my car everywhere, so taller is better to fit more in an area.

Response (Applicant): [Referring back to building drawings] The south elevation faces 415 Mason. They are dark-insets that will read like a window. There are physical setbacks and the same articulation picked up from the street-facing facades.

Question (Citizen): Can you point out the 3 and 8 foot setbacks?

Response (Applicant): (Pointing at visuals on the projector). It steps in 18 inches and then 36 inches and then another 8 feet at the top. The only thing that protrudes is the stair tower. The stair towers have to exit out to the public right-of-way.

Comment (Citizen): I'm excited about the project. I live on Magnolia Street, and I would be thrilled to have a rooftop restaurant. I lived on Magnolia Street in 1967, and when Parklane Towers went in it was an outrage, and I feel like Parklane Towers right now is an eye-sore.

Comment (Citizen): I live next door to Magnolia Lofts, and it wasn't there when I moved into the neighborhood, and I think the neighborhood and community feels it has added value. Justin Larson was the architect on that. I would say the previous building on the site was blighted, and I welcome this project and I welcome it because it is the first in what is a series of infill developments in what is an underutilized area with wasted asphalt. I think the future of the urban corridor of Mason depends on projects like this.

Comment (Applicant Team): This will be the architect's home and that is why there is a lot of thought and design going into the building; it's an advertisement for what we do and we have great pride in it. We want to be a good neighbor and instill pride in the community.

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Additional comments/questions written on notecards at the meeting, with some City responses to questions:

Comment/Questions (Citizen):

- 1) Do you anticipate City parking relocation to change/evolve in a way that would further limit your parking?) *[City response: No further changes to street parking are planned or anticipated.]*
- 2) Will there be equal amounts of glazing on the south and west sides of the building? Renderings I have seen make it look like solid brick or stone walls...that is not so nice to look at. Please consider glazing (fill it in when an adjacent building develops) *[City response: This was addressed at the meeting - the proposal shows similar patterns and materials but no windows.]*
- 3) Try again to buy the house to the west... expand your footprint... or build over the top of 415 parking? *[City response: There is risk in speaking for the applicants but past conversations about this indicate that the owner of the house and 415 is not interested in selling, but is interested in coordinating possible future changes on those properties.]*
- 4) In spite of the traffic study, I do hope for a traffic light/signal on Mason & Magnolia... it would help. *[City response: Traffic signals are based on certain conditions that must exist in order to consider a signal, and those conditions do not currently exist. Also, characteristics of the whole system and pattern in the area, with closely spaced intersections, makes an additional signal particularly problematic even if conditions are met in the future to warrant consideration of changes.]*

Question (Citizen): How far away is the city parking garage? Where are VFLA's 11 parking spaces? *[City response. The Civic Center Garage is 3 ½ blocks north. The 11 proposed spaces are at 320 South Howes, across Magnolia St. from the site.]*

Question/Comment (Citizen): In your presentation you show architecture that has arches included (Union Station, Old Town Buildings, etc.) Lately, there are a lot of flat, rectangular-shaped buildings being built that are ugly. Your building is not ugly but it is flat and rectangular. Please consider

being an addition to architecture in Old Town and include roundness, arches a bit of curves instead of only rectangles (windows, cement blocks, etc.).

Comment (Citizen): The parking situation is totally inadequate. I thought the 11 spaces was a misprint – why can't the builder be responsible for providing adequate parking.

[City response: Parking impact is an issue being considered in the development review process for this project as an aspect of general compatibility with the context of the surrounding area. The City does not have specific parking requirements commercial uses in this area. The larger question of whether the City SHOULD have specific requirements, is being studied currently in a separate effort.]

Comment (Citizen): I love it! I have a master's degree (under Brian Dunbar). I live on Magnolia St in the 800 block and am excited to have a rooftop restaurant at the end of the street! Exciting to see a green wall.

We need the density to provide the vitality we love about living in Old Town. It will also provide more riders for MAX. I would hate to see MAX fail because we didn't allow the density to support it.

Comment (Citizen): My suggestion is to talk to Otterbox because they have provided parking on all their properties plus they're leasing hundreds of other spots on the corner of Meldrum/Mountain. Also to put another restaurant in this town might be a gamble! Thank you – and we want to be willing to work with you to be accommodating neighbors.