

## **NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION MEETING**

**PROJECT:** Max Flats at 203 W. Mulberry Street

**DATE:** April 10, 2013

**APPLICANT:** Dave Derbes, Brinkman Partners

**PROJECT PLANNER:** Seth Lorson

**NEIGHBORHOOD RESOURCES:** Sarah Burnett

### **City Process Overview:**

Type 1 projects do not require a neighborhood meeting and a public administrative hearing is heard before a hearing officer. Type 2 projects require neighborhood meetings and are subject to a public hearing before the Planning & Zoning Board. This project is considered mixed-use, typically a Type 1 hearing, however, there is also a new provision in the Land Use Code requiring multifamily projects with more than 50 units or 75 bedrooms to be classified as a Type 2.

The new Land Use Code language now requires a Type 2 review for this project. Neighborhood meetings for Type 2 projects are usually performed before project submittal. The neighborhood meeting for this project is being held tonight, but it is also scheduled for the next Planning & Zoning Board Hearing next week. All are encouraged to go to the Planning & Zoning Board or email comments to Seth to have comments included as part of the official record.

Q: When are these comments sent to the P&Z Board?

A: Comments can be received up to the meeting. If you want a thorough reading of your comments, try to get them in immediately before the meeting.

This project began in September with a Preliminary Design Review.

The project is located in the Community Commercial Zone District, near the Downtown District, along the MAX Bus Rapid Transit Line at a prominent intersection.

### **Applicant Presentation:**

This neighborhood meeting is out of sequence but we are still looking for your input and willing to work together to address concerns. This project has been in the works since September of last year, and we have been involved with the site since 2011. We do a lot of multifamily and student-housing projects and feel the location between campus and downtown, along MAX will make it a successful project.

The project is on a prominent corner, a block away from College Avenue. It is an area seeing redevelopment and improvements. Being located along Mason, it is very near campus and downtown; bridging the connection between campus and downtown. The site allows us to be on the urban corridor, along the transit system.

The building comes up to the property line to address the pedestrian needs in the urban core and those navigating the city. At the corner (Mason & Mulberry) there will be a MAX Transit Stop. There will be sidewalk improvements along Mason, and the building is creating a square a few steps from the transit stop for community space, serving the bus stop but also those traversing the site. We are planning to have a retail base at the corner. The main entry to the building itself is located along Mason Street; in the middle of the block for sun access in the morning and near the bus stop.

There are bookends to each side of the building and the shape and mass of the building has been articulated and modified as comments were received from the city. The base of the building has potential for future retail development. Behind the front building wall there is parking, although it is not required because of the TOD overlay, but we feel it is needed. The wall hides the parking, but it is porous, but also allows for the potential of more retail space in the future. The wall allows for vines to grow and to become a green wall. The building has a very distinct base.

The building has a defined base, midsection and an articulated top. It is articulated horizontally and layered vertically, seen through the different cuts through the building. There are a series of balconies that project in and out with different finishes -- the facade of the building coming out and then back in.

The building at the ends is different, such that on the south side the building is hovering over the parking. On the north side it is creating an iconic element and defining the plaza space.

There are several materials from masonry, to stucco, to solid panels creating different looks.

We discussed with the neighbors the relationship to the new building, from a 5 story building to a 2 story building. The retail base is projected out away from the building. When you look at the building from the west, there is a layer of parking and the building sits away from the existing buildings in the neighborhood. We have removed balconies on the westside to minimize activity on this side of the building affecting neighbors. The facade defines the building as having no back.

The building provides enclosed bicycle parking, some incorporated at the ins-and-outs of the building; the little alcoves. Similar to street furniture. We have asked the City to see if we can move some parking away from the property line, based on the fact there is no parking on Mason.

Along the north side of the building, the building is set back slightly to deal with setbacks and the potential increase in width to Mulberry Street as we dedicated right-of-way to the city. This currently allows a lot of green space between the building and the street. Between the parking and the building above there is a concrete fire separation, projecting outside the building to allow for the layering.

We received some comments about the mass and materials of the building and reacted to the comments from the city. We also received some neighbor comments from a previous meeting. Realizing there are some decisions regarding the feasibility of the project.

Q: There were 4 requests for variances?

A: (City) 4 Modifications of Standards requested.

A: The modifications requested are site related. Each on its own falls into the category of nominal and inconsequential.

1. One for bike parking (requirement of 1 per bedroom, thus a requirement of 100 or 104 bike stalls total with the retail space). We're providing excess but request a modification to allow spaces in the right of way to count towards the aggregate number.

2. There is a request to exceed the standard ratio of normal parking stalls to compact parking stalls; there is no parking requirement in the TOD Overlay Zone. There are a higher proportion of compact spaces than currently allowed in the plan.

3. On the west property line there is a 5' landscape buffer requirement, we have a buffer a little over 4'.

4. The last relates to a landscaping requirement of minimum square footage landscaped in a parking area / landscape island requirement. We have 16 continuous stalls versus the requirement of 15. Thought was to keep as much parking on site as possible.

Looking at the site constraints; the site falls in the City floodplain. The site elevation and why the residential is above, the floodplain doesn't allow residential in the floodplain.

The transit stop and parking going away along Mason Street factored into the need to maximize parking on site. There is right-of-way- on Mulberry being dedicated to the City (approx. 7.5') for future expansion of Mulberry. The width of the site is approximately 100' and it is difficult to accommodate drive isles.

Q: My property is adjacent to the back end of your parking area. The King's Auto lot is approximately a foot higher - is anything going to be done about drainage?

A: All of the drainage will be directed to the northeast; there will be no runoff to the adjacent properties.

Q: Will that difference in grade still be there? Will the water be moving away from my property?

A: Yes (water moving away).

A: The general flow right now is coming towards the northeast. The roof all drains near the backside of the building and runs to a main inlet and then is hard piped.

A: There is very limited parking area exposed to runoff from above due to the roof overhang.

A: (City) By City standards they are not allowed to drain on to another site.

Q: I was wondering if the grade would be equalized. When they paved over the area they raised the grade to drain towards Mason.

A: Will follow-up with you after meeting.

Q: I have a 6' privacy fence and a garage along the alley. I noticed in your proposals you are putting in a fence - how does that relate to the existing fence?

A: We would try and get together with the neighbors to see what makes the most sense. A back-to-back fence would not be ideal. Work with you guys for the best solution, whether it is replacing it or sections.

Q: What are the materials on the exterior?

A: The base of the building is masonry, with a ground floor face. Some of the same base materials are brought up to the top of the building on the book-ends. Other portions of the building are stucco.

Q: Block or brick on the base?

A: Both

A: Creating a base to the building and on top there is brick as the two main elements on the ground floor. Also the infill of the green wall. On top of the building is stucco in 3 different colors and metal panels defining the corner of Mason & Mulberry. The balconies have metal railings. There are awning projections within the property line, defining the articulation of the base. It also articulates the MAX station.

A: The plaza uses the same materials.

Q: I have some concerns over the massing; it feels somewhat forced in the neighborhood. I think there should be some stepping down on the ends, like the Palace Lofts in LoDo -- they did a good job stepping the heights, being sensitive to the area. It seems you could do some stepping on the top of the building, and I think that would go a long way towards bringing the project into scale with the neighborhood.

The grey area seems to intensify the scale of the building rather than mitigating it. It seems a less intensive treatment could help. They (stairwells) are a dominating architectural feature. I own property in the area, across the street and the neighborhood has an eclectic, high-quality feeling about it that needs to be respected. Be careful with the metallic elements, they can become intense and offensive to a smaller scale neighborhood.

A: We have heard the massing comment a few times and something we are trying to work through and see what opportunities we do have. The stair elements are a functional element of the building. We have really focused on the base of the building. Regarding the metal comments, there seems to be a love it or hate it element. There is masonry on there that can feel pretty heavy and some structural concerns when you get above 30' when it integrates with a wood structure.

C: When you look at the project, you look at the stairways. You don't want it to be known as the building with the stairways.

Q: We met with the developer and you Seth, and our concerns. How this massive building relates to the neighborhood. What are the relating factors, visually? We talked about stepping down, or adding more masonry. If you look along the Mason Street corridor, the concept has been the use of masonry and stone. Here we see materials that seem to be of a lesser quality. At what point do we attempt to step down the areas we discussed? Is that on or off the table? We talked about the repetition of the west elevation; it's a mirror image, it's monotonous. Something to give it a relationship to the neighborhood - this is a major concern. I've known about Oz for years - they do fabulous work. I was looking at mixed-use projects that Oz has advertised, and residential/multifamily that are fabulous work. Then I looked at the affordable housing images, and that's the relationship I saw here. The quality of the building relates to those affordable housing images rather than what Brinkman has been doing near here. We'd like to see something that relates to the Mason Street Corridor and neighborhood better.

Q: What has changed since when we started meeting and having discussions?

A: The items we talked about were not just brushed aside. Stepping the building down has financial implications to the project and something we're still discussing if we can do. There are a number of things talking about materials. There was some discussion that Mason was an eclectic mix; a lot of variety along there as anywhere can be found in the city. They have gone to lengths to incorporate and establishing a high quality product. This isn't typical multifamily with lap siding. We have spent 6-8 months to come up with a great project that does incorporate some of these things.

Looking beyond this block into the CC district, Downtown district, the Mason Corridor: The D District is directly to the north and the potential for redevelopment to the north is pretty strong and will likely develop and have the potential to go 7-9 stories. In the immediately area there are numerous structures larger than this and integrated through this area of town. All are valid concerns and something we are still looking at and looking for the balance.

Q: What types of mitigation do you have regarding noise, security, partying? Who is in charge besides the police?

A: We have internally within Brinkman Partners our own property management division; we do that in-house. We have strict policies when it comes to these properties with how we handle towing, etc. We have found the more stringent you are handling these policies, the fewer issues there will be. Units will be on corridor access and have limited access into the building. It is an open parking area; site lighting, etc. are dictated by code. Problems are typically addressed through management policies.

Q: If there is a big party in the parking lot who do we call?

A: The property management company (us).

A: The alley is going to be closed off and fenced and may help the area.

C: If I look at that project, it's something I envision as a medical office in the urban markets of Denver. It really doesn't look like it has any relationship to any of the newer buildings and fabric created for Mason Street in Downtown. This completely differentiates from it. I think you have a responsibility to look at this through your material selection.

Q: What is the overall height? Is it constant?

A: 56' to the top of the parapets and it is fairly constant. There are condensing units on the top of the building, will not be seen at the street level.

Q: What are the sizes of the units?

A: There is a mix of 1, 2, and 3 bedroom units. On average, about 600 square feet for 1 bedrooms, 2 bedrooms are around 900 square feet and 3 bedrooms around 1,150 square feet. The mix is predominately 1 and 2 bedrooms. There are four 3 bedroom units.

Q: I'm not sure where the station is and how traffic flows along with the station and the sidewalk areas? The physical station built there now is in the middle of the sidewalk?

A: The closest point is between the station roof canopy gets within 2' of the building.

Q: Will pedestrians go behind the station, or up around the front of the station?

A: They can do both. The majority of the traffic will flow through the front of the station.

Q: Your insets in your building on the first floor for bicycle parking, what is the depth?

A: It is approximately 4 to 5 feet.

Q: How are the bikes parking?

A: The bikes park with the wheel projecting beyond the face of the building. There is an 8' walk along the building, but necks down to 6' near the green walls. The bikes would be tucked in behind that 6' zone.

C: I guess I just don't see a space where the bicycle isn't hanging out in the sidewalk area.

A: Scaling off the drawing, it seems the recess area is closer to 6'

Q: Is that something you would like to see go away? (bicycles)

A: I just see it as tight and not very flowing for pedestrians to walk across the face of the building with bicycle tires and the station and this-and-that. I know how students park bikes in bike racks. It seems a little cluttered.

A: While I don't necessarily disagree. Part of that was the visual interest. I know saying looking at bike racks isn't visually interesting, but it's part of that urban feel, similar to Old Town. The spacing and location of bike racks was looking to give it that dynamic interaction and not just a plane-jane walkway along the front of the building.

Q: Do you have someone interested in the retail?

A: It is designed to be limited service, like a coffee shop is something we're intending. Not a full service kitchen. Something that will spill out and utilize the plaza. The transit stations also have bike racks in the right-of-way. Hope it becomes a destination spot and utilizing the racks and plaza.

Q: I was looking at staff comments from the first of March. How were comments addressed about design regarding the concrete? Was this addressed at some point? Also, the base element should be more prominent (City comments). Some elements such as stairwells can provide a strong vertical element but should be used sparingly.

A: The design is evolving as you go through the process. As far as the starkness of the concrete sidewalk to building (concrete to concrete) -- we had numerous discussions with Staff about the build-to scenario. The nature is to have a build-to (to the property line) and no opportunity for providing landscaping between the building and the sidewalk. This is consistent throughout downtown. We have green walls, added elements such as benches and bike parking.

C: Can you point out where you are talking about that.

A: Benches have been added (3 along Mason) to break up the transition from the building to the sidewalk. Additionally, a base element running along the building introduced consisting of ground face block. Bringing out some of the detail to the plans.

A: The elevations have changed over time. What you are seeing is the definition of materials as you go from the ground up. We have the brick all the way to floor. Using wainscoting that almost looks like limestone base, seen around town. Articulating more how the materials are used, this is partly due to the technology of the rendering. I believe the base is elegant that it is articulating with many materials and many ins and outs, it is not a solid wall. As you turn the corner onto Mulberry there is a lot more landscaping. There are also trees you're not seeing on the rendering.

A: The comments about stepping the building -- we are showing today what was presented to staff.

Q: Do you anticipate these comments might be considered/addressed before the Planning & Zoning meeting?

A: It is an economic decision, and one the ownership group has to address.

A: It would be a goal to address the comments before the planning meeting.

C: It would be respectful if you can address some of these stepping issues. I think it would make your success more probable.

C: I hear that you're concerned about it and want comments, and like the neighbors to feel this is a good project, but I haven't seen any changes yet based on conversations and that leads me to wonder where we are.

Q: How many units would you lose if you stepped down 1 level on the ends?

A: Don't know.

A: At least 4 units total.

A: We have discussed dropping the north end as you go along Mulberry, but not anything on the south side of the building. There is a different element on the south side of the building, more flowing.

A: In regards to Mulberry it sits way back and when you look at the building from the west it steps back twice, and talking about stepping the building back. On the south end of the building best to stay at its current level over the parking.

A: This is something we're looking at. Going from 2 stories with pitched roof to 5 adjacent, I don't necessarily see that as incompatible. There are examples from around town where that has been done successfully. We're trying to see what we can do to accommodate it, but no decision has been made.

C: I think it would help with the shading also.

A: In terms of shading of neighboring property -- December 21st is the worst condition. Within an hour the shadow changes so much from being on the building to being pretty much gone.

A: It also shows the shading produced by the adjacent properties as well.

Q: Has there been any commitment made to the fence system along the alleyway and the south side of the parking lot? I think if it's just asphalt to cedar fence -- if you really commit to do something there like a masonry fence it could change how it relates to the neighborhood and give it a sense of place. Architecturally on the south end, since it's away from the building it will give you another opportunity for layering and stepping.

A: (City) The fence is committed but we haven't seen it yet

Q: Is there a height stipulation?

A: (City) 6'

A: Envisioned as a wood privacy fence. There may be other alternatives. Masonry fencing with foundations and cost can become significant. There may be a balance rather than a wood fence.

A: May be something like masonry columns or caps. We can all get together and brainstorm this.

C: I have two dogs that will be going nuts as people are walking to the parking spaces, a masonry fence would help as its more substantial than a wood privacy fence

A: What do the dogs do now?

A: It's an empty lot currently, they bark at some of the construction at the railroad tracks. I know where you have the parking people will be walking. I'm not as concerned about the dogs barking, but the kids getting upset at the dogs barking and throwing something at them.

Q: Where is the garbage located? You're putting 3 dumpsters 10' out my back window and kitchen door? I also have an overhanging oak tree -- what will happen to that? I also have overhanging lilac bushes?

A: I wouldn't see an impact with those two necessarily. They will hand deliver the dumpsters out to the truck so they don't need the overhead clearance

Q: How often will they dump?

A: Typically do it in a way that is less impactful, for both site residents and neighborhood. Set up on a more frequent basis so you utilize more frequently and not utilizing as much space. Some sites they are dumped several times a week.

Q: They won't be able to drive in with the trucks?

A: They can drive in, but can't pick it up from the enclosure -- bring the dumpsters out of the enclosure by hand.