



Design Guidelines Task Force Meeting Notes

April 22, 2021

Executive Director Sharon McCormick called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. and welcomed attendees, being: Garth Armour, Lyn Logan, Jim Torrance, Steve Diamond, Melri Wright, Kim Harris, Tovah Socha, and Barry Tatchell. Regrets were sent by Anne-Marie Shaw, Stacy Manning, Steve Simon, and Shawn Everitt.

Sharon advised the Task Force that the Board's decision has been to continue with one building and a 4-storey step up. A two building, 4-storey step up has additional construction cost (approximately \$5,000,000 more) associated with mechanical, electrical and the exterior enclosure, and increased operating expenses. Further, attainable rental rates are fixed by CMHC, and there will be added costs for sustainability, play area and "gateway" features that are not known at this stage.

Sharon explained that the proportion of attainable units versus market units between one and two buildings is significant; 1 building could support 60% of units as attainable whereas 2 buildings could support 40% of units as attainable. A tighter overall footprint provides a greater tree buffer, landscaping and outdoor play and gathering space.

Sharon noted that a key aspect will be the design features used for the building. Steve Diamond identified that, should the plan be to proceed with one building, the priority is to identify key urban design guidelines to be added to the Town's Official Plan before any amendment be considered.

Steve provided design principle examples and noted that although the site is a Gateway site, it is also rural in nature, and is not surrounded by a lot of high buildings as you enter the Town. It was noted that an indent could be added in the middle of the building to provide some visual separation and make the single building appear more like two buildings. Steve further recommended that additional landscaping be added to the King Street (Highway 26) frontage to soften the appearance of the building. Steve provided examples of buildings with a setback of the 4th storey and a pitched roof. Steve also provided examples of 4 storey buildings with design features that should be avoided if possible. The Task Force discussed the difference in appearance between a flat roof versus pitched roof and there may be an opportunity to tie in adjacent design (i.e. the Thornbury Cidery) by considering dark red brick in the exterior enclosure. Kim Harris noted the importance of sustainable material use throughout the building's construction.

Sharon provided an overview of the six themes that were identified for urban design guidelines: general, private space, non-residential, accessibility, public space, and sustainability. Guiding principles to be adhered to include: building form (character, style, scale, orientation), façade elements (materials, roofline), and site planning (parking, landscaping).

Steve Diamond recommended that the Corporation should have its own architect to better set the stage for subsequent design considerations.

Garth Armour emphasized the importance of ensuring the site plan or the design guidelines factors design elements to emphasize the “Gateway” nature of the site (i.e. architectural treatment of the north east corner of the site).

Jim Torrance noted a key need is to have community support, and a design balance that is visually appealing with a number of attainable units. Landscaping is important at the front of the building as it will help present a visually appealing perspective from the street. This could entail setting the building back from the street more; one way to accommodate this is to recognize that the trees south of the lot line could play a role in creating the tree buffer, which is absolutely necessary. Garth agreed that it is imperative to maintain the tree buffer at the rear of the lot to maintain the character of the neighbourhood behind the Gateway Site. Garth noted a tree inventory should be conducted to understand what type of trees are currently growing at the rear of the property. Further, if there is an opportunity to plant additional trees, the Corporation should consider doing so. Garth commented that his understanding of the Arthur Street East area residents and their concerns is that they are not against attainable housing but are looking for some assurance that they will not be impacted negatively by the Gateway Site development.

Lyn Logan provided some advice on how Task Force members can continue to inform the residents or stakeholders they represent. The Attainable Housing Corporation website could be updated more regularly. Lyn advised that she shares the Task Force’s minutes with the Communications Advisory Committee which helps to inform those individuals on the work of the Task Force. Jim recommended a Frequently Asked Question document be developed for circulation and posting on the Corporation’s website. Steve Diamond noted the importance of stating publicly that the Corporation is reviewing the financial implications and is meeting with the Task Force to develop urban design guidelines prior to proceeding with the planning amendment. Sharon noted that interested individuals are able to sign up for a newsletter that is another option for engagement: <https://www.thebluemountainshousing.ca/newsletter>. A dedicated “blog” style section to the website might also be useful to clarify the community’s questions and concerns.

Tovah Socha noted her key considerations are: what type of amenities will be available (storage, number of 2 bedroom units, laundry amenities)? Tovah noted her understanding of the need to weigh the need for attainability while also keeping an attractive look and feel. Tovah will take these same viewpoints when considering the design guidelines.

Sharon will be developing a survey to circulate to the Task Force members to further support the development of design guidelines. Sharon will also be working with an architect to further inform the discussion by the Task Force.

Key Action Items

- Task Force members to review Draft Design Guidelines document and consider which elements should be considered mandatory
- Identify key and imperative principles for the urban design and architectural control guidelines
- Task Force members asked to keep their respective stakeholder groups informed of Task Force activities
- Complete survey being developed for Task Force members
- Consider subscribing for the Corporation Newsletter:
<https://www.thebluemountainshousing.ca/newsletter>