

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Paul Layer, Chairman, Town of Vienna Board of Architectural Review

DATE: March 9, 2018

RE: Request for recommendation to Town Council regarding compliance with requirements of Town Code Article 13.1 for the proposed Vienna Market mixed-use building located at 245 Maple Avenue, West, as part of Maple Avenue Commercial (MAC) Zone application (Docket No. BAR-12-18) in the C-1A Special Commercial zoning district, pending approval for rezoning to the Maple Avenue Commercial Zone; filed by Doug D'Alexander, developer.

Recommendation: Trees were originally placed along Maple Avenue in what is referred to as "Zone 1" under 18-95.11. A.3.a., in the "Maple Avenue Commercial Zone" requirements. The majority of the trees were removed at the direction of the Public Works Department due to concerns about sight lines. This conflicts with an essential facet of the MAC program which was purposely developed to yield a rich and vibrant pedestrian-oriented street scape, for which a strong tree line and planting are essential. On the night of the review, two trees were put back in at the north side of the project along Maple Avenue. This was initiated because the two trees did not appear to interfere with the sight lines. In addition, the length along Maple Avenue was further developed in "Zone 1". This drawing depicting the developed planting zone was introduced the night of the review.

The site plantings and the street scape plantings in particular, should be developed to the highest level possible. The conflict between sight lines and the street scape envisioned by the MAC program should be reconciled. The sight line requirements should be exhaustively and creatively studied to see if, in accordance with the sight line requirements, trees of some nature would be acceptable to yield the results envisioned in "Zone 1" and as identified in section 18-95.11. A.3.a. If the two competing requirements, as related to trees, cannot be reconciled, then additional information should be formulated and included in revised MAC program guidelines to provide a sufficient planting area of "Zone 1", compensating for the loss of trees when this conflict arises. The resulting clarification should be codified and included in the MAC program to strengthen the genuine intent of the program.

Recommendation: For the following recommendations, reference to the building will be as such: Front (north), Right side facing front (east), Left side facing front (west), Back (south).

Sec. 18-95.9. - Height Limit C. reads "the minimum height of the first story of a principal building shall be 15 feet". This requirement was stated as the reason that the proposed building was depressed below the grade of the street and sidewalk, essentially splitting the sidewalk in front of the building, Zone 3, from that of Zone 1 and introducing a barrier in the form of a fence/wall and retaining wall in Zone 2 (refer to 18-95.11. A.3.). However, minimum height is a general requirement that is intended to maintain continuity of the commercial

facade and the integrity of the interior commercial space. It was not intended to create a condition that compelled the design of the building to depress and split the pedestrian way to meet the requirement, as is evident under section 18-95.11. The direct connection between the street and sidewalk grade is fundamental to a successful pedestrian oriented street scape. Typically, buildings are stepped either at floor level, roof level or both, to compensate for a sloping site. In this instance, allowing the floor to step and thereby reducing the minimum height, which in this case was calculated to be approximately one foot at the northwest corner, would both provide a better connection to the street scape, and, depending on the execution, would provide a more interesting facade. Additionally, a barrier-free pedestrian environment and accessibility would be improved significantly by eliminating the need for many steps, fences/walls and would provide for direct on grade access to the commercial spaces. As above, the conflict between minimum height of the first story, and the street scape envisioned by the MAC program should be reconciled. Again, the resulting clarification should be codified and included in the MAC program to strengthen the genuine intent of the program.

Recommendation: There were large amounts of unarticulated bland brick walls at the northwest and northeast corners of the building. Some work session suggestions were implemented at the northwest side of the building. Further articulated brick design is recommended on the northeast corner of the building. Generally, visual breaks in large brick areas utilizing techniques related to brick work, such as, but not limited to pilasters, corbels, reliefs etc., would alleviate bland and scaleless brick surfaces. In addition, appropriately designed signage that harmonizes with the building, along with limited well-designed and integrated artwork at the northeast corner/entrance are recommended.

Recommendation: There is a long brick wall that runs down the east side of the proposed building that should incorporate minimal lighting that both subtly highlights the brick work and provides minimal general lighting for pedestrian traffic and safety. In addition, pertinent suggestions identified above should be incorporated in the brick work.

It is up to the applicant in terms of how to proceed or resolve these recommendations.

The motion was approved: 4-0 (Cheselka absent)