

Mill City Quarter

Project Updates

Since the Committee of the Whole meeting on November 15, 2012 the MCQ project team has integrated several comments from Commissioners and staff into a revised building design. The changes have also been circulated with stakeholders in the neighborhood and discussed with the SHPO. The revisions are noted below.

- 1) **Massing:** The historic buildings in the district are typically comprised of larger monolithic structures reflecting a singular purpose and look. We have maintained the massing we started with, that draws from the original long and linear maintenance shed (circa 1912) in essentially the same location and orientation. This orientation of this building ran east/west paralleling 2nd Street.

Along 3rd Avenue, the rhythm and size of buildings vary with narrower facades that are more rhythmic and collectively create an aggregate of buildings along 3rd Avenue. This establishes its own unique street edge, starting with the Mill Place paired warehouse buildings to the north, The Freight House (Dunn Bros) building immediately to the south and continued with the Milwaukee Road Depot primary façade on Third. Our building is segmented into two masses along 3rd Avenue to reflect this building rhythm and scale. We maintain the same materials and design, to reflect the singular purpose of housing, with subtle variations at the ground level to reflect the specific uses of bus shelter and retail.

The building exterior has also been revised to eliminate the rounded corners and windows to reflect the more traditional boxy, monolithic in appearance.

- 2) **Heaviness:** Two elements that contributed to the heaviness of the original design were the dark black color of the building enclosure, and dark color hovering above an all glass base, further contributing to this character.

In the redesigned façade we have created a masonry base (Kasota Stone type or cast stone reflective of the more historical materials in nearby mill buildings and the US Post Office) with punched openings, and capped it with a steel channel beam, along 2nd Street and at the north building segment along 3rd Avenue. This base projects out beyond the building façade above, thus carrying the floors above it.

We also have reduced the amount of metal in the building portion above to create a more regular and monolithic rhythm of openings. The metal color has been changed to a light tan vertical standing seam with black infill at the floor lines so that it becomes lighter than the base. At the ends of the long building, the metal enclosure wraps the end and reveals more glass at the base and steel at each floor line, similar to how the historic train sheds would have been open at the ends revealing a different aspect of their character.

It is important to note that the design of this building reflects the structural character of this building with today's technologies much in the same way the historic buildings reflected their structure of brick bearing walls or concrete frames. The new building is constructed of precast concrete up to the 2nd floor line and then switches to wood frame for 5 floors above, carried by the precast. The facades reflect this change. Masonry with punched windows at the 1st floor, and metal and cement board cladding over the wood frame construction above.

Details of projecting canopies and openings reflect a more 'industrial' character compatible to the district rather than the rounded sinuous shapes of the previous design. Balconies along the primary street facades will be recessed so that the railing is in line with the elevation while projected balconies will be incorporated on the non-primary building walls

- 3) **Facades on rear of building:** We have removed the super graphic lines from these facades. The elevations are more straightforward, creating a more regular and monolithic look.
- 4) **At building base:** We have created a break in the metal frame of the building box and added stone to clearly demarcate building entrances, consistent with historic building details.
- 5) **At the building separation/recesses:** The balcony edges have been changed from tan to black to accentuate the opening and to reduce the amount of tan metal. Also, the surface of the 5'-0" recessed wall has been changed to a buff color in order to better delineate the separation between the building sections.
- 6) **Landscape:** The landscape plantings have been altered to have a more volunteer or random pattern that is more compatible in an industrial area.

Project Overview

The project site for the Mill City Quarter development is bounded by 2nd Street to the south, 3rd Avenue to the west, 5th Avenue to the east and the River West high-rise complex and Mill Place building to the north. The site is currently occupied by a large surface parking lot. The proposed project is an infill, dense urban development that will include mostly residential units, plus a modest amount of commercial/retail space. This use is consistent with the C3A zoning of the site and with the adjacent residential and retail uses. It will be a transit-oriented mixed-use development that will occur in two phases and will greatly enhance the connectivity from the Mill District neighborhood to the Mississippi River.

Third-Party owner Mill Place, Inc. owns the rail spur "swoop" which divides the two city parcels along a SE to NW axis, leading from Second Street to the riverfront. Mill Place ownership has been actively engaged in the four year project planning and the Development Team has reached a Memorandum of Understanding with Mill Place that guides the development of the project to permit a unique pedestrian/bike/river connection through collaboration and easements. Cross easements between Mill Quarter and Mill Place's land permit creation of a Dutch 'Woonerf' where bikes/cars pedestrians and public spaces all co-exist, and speeds are reduced for cars. Shared parking is a consideration for Mill Place.

Phase 1 of the development will consist of a six-story building that will include up to 150 rental housing units (100%affordable at 50% and 60% MMI) and up to 15,000 sq ft of destination retail space. This will add a desirable mixture of housing choices that are currently needed and underrepresented in this neighborhood. Approximately 160 parking stalls will be provided below and above ground for the development of Phase 1. Access to the parking facility will be from 2nd Street across the Mill Place property. Bicycle parking will be provided to meet a ratio of 1 bike space per dwelling unit.

The design will include landscaped open spaces to facilitate pedestrian traffic and gathering of people and also to enhance the pedestrian experience around the building and therefore the connectivity of the West River Parkway with the neighborhood and other means of mass transit. This development will create a pedestrian-friendly, green streetscape connecting the West River Parkway with the bus transit network, the bikeway system and the cultural and recreational opportunities abundant in the Mill District area along Second Street.

A large landscaped plaza adjacent to the "swoop" provides safe and inviting outdoor spaces for relaxing and socializing. Trees and native perennials and grasses line the Woonerf in a volunteer fashion. This project team is committed to demonstrating a number of best management practices (BMP) for stormwater management and Low-Impact Development (LID). Some of the concepts and techniques being proposed include rainwater harvesting, vegetated walls, pervious paving, pixilated parking, green roofs and underground detention.

Using historical site photos as inspiration, the concept is to use rails, rail replicas, and/or paving materials to abstract the pattern of a rail yard. Within this framework we would hope to create plaza spaces that bridge the two parcels and surround the historic spur location. We envision this “woonerf” concept will be curbless, defining vehicular travel lanes via bollards and changes in paving surface type/color. A woonerf is designed for very slow speeds, (10 mph) similar to those typically found in parking lots. It allows the pedestrian to become the focus of the space and the vehicle is seen as the “visitor”.

Site connections for the Phase 2 project units will focus on protected and flexible outdoor space. We envision exploring a three-season space that connects directly to the woonerf/river connection path. This space will be paired with an atrium space and/or light wells within the building to bring natural light into the space and allow indoor plants to flourish. Both indoor and outdoor plants will be chosen to enhance the care of those residents in assisted living and memory care, as there are particular plants that can trigger memory and bring pleasure.