

3. **Project #282-05 1400 Wewatta Street** **Commercial**  
Continued from 01/05/06 **New construction**  
Property Owner/Applicant – H. McNeish, Opus

**The applicant provided additional information, (not included in the submittal,) to the Board. They said that the information was not different from the package and that they knew providing information the day of the meeting to be inappropriate.**

**Disclosures:**

The following Board Members disclosed the fact that they were contacted concerning this project by Margaret Jackson a reporter for the *Denver Post*: D. Chirafisi, L. Nelson, T. Cowperthwaite, and P. Haack. Ms Jackson disclosed that she had attempted to contact all of the Board members.

**Introduction by H. McNeish:**

I'd like to introduce the team we have here today; Chris Shears, J. Adkins, James Mansfield, and Marco Capitelli. If I may, it's been a quick month and we've driven down to two issues. We'd like to address these items one at a time, in two steps.

The first issue is the integration of the trestle bridge at the corner. We're enthusiastic, but we're not done. Think about the bridge's transparency. It's part of the "big room," as part of Speer all the way to the Pepsi Center.

**Presentation by Chris Shears:**

The first of the issues is the form of the building at the corner and creating something that makes a gesture toward the bridge. We created the corner and pushed out a portion of the building to the width of the bridge. There's a middle ground between a literal and an abstract gesture toward the bridge. We're still developing that. Another issue is the "landing zone." This site is a future pedestrian zone and this building needs to address that. This will become a major pedestrian connection. It may call for increasing the size of that space. We're looking at the dimensions and form of the corner.

L. Nelson: Questions from the Board? Public Comment?

**Public Comment:**

**Jim Reynolds**

**1401 Wewatta Street**

The Waterside is 3' below the new building. What's your plan?

C. Shears: Yes. The bridge lands higher than the sidewalk at the Waterside. We have to make the same transition. We'll make the space the same elevation as the bridge.

So the model isn't correct.

**Bob Allen**

**1401 Wewatta Street**

There are two dead end streets. There'll be lots of traffic on that 2-lane street. This will generate an enormous amount of traffic. With a 10-story building across the creek, you need to open that street up. There'll be lots of foot traffic from Delgany, what have you done there?

**Discussion:**

L. Nelson: What's the Board's feeling?

T. Cowperthwaite: There's no scale on the drawings, how large is the landing?

C. Shears: 40' x 60', that's 5' larger than our last presentation. It shouldn't be too big or too small but there should be something there.

J. Poli: We asked them for a lot. The landing zone feels deliberate now. I'd suggest that it successfully integrates the bridge and the building.

L. Nelson: Reducing the overhang makes it work better and leaning it out makes it feel more comfortable, good move.

J. Poli: Now the bridge is part of the composition.

W. Kohn: The new building defers to the bridge. The site lines are good as well. This will encourage the pedestrian experience.

P. Haack: I agree. This is one of the few areas where you have an event, a great urban experience. Also agree with Mr. Poli, we're ready for the next step, speaking to the trestle and to the gateway. This is better than last time, also the arcade columns line up with the bridge now.

J. Adkins: We got lucky

P. Haack: There's a grander gesture now, reinforcing the gateway.

L. Nelson: Motion?

**Motion by P. Haack to approve the development of the corner of the building as it relates to the trestle**

**Second by T. Cowperthwaite**

**Discussion of the Motion:**

W. Kohn: What about the footprint and massing? I'm still thinking about the ground plane

**Amended Motion:**

**Motion by P. Haack to approve footprint and massing of the building at the corner as it relates to the trestle bridge**

**Second by T. Cowperthwaite**

**Vote: Unanimous in favor, Motion carries.**

E. Shigeta: Traffic is another issue.

L. Nelson: You'll need a traffic study.

H. McNeish: We're aware of that. Also, the roadway will be changing. Wewatta will become a four lane street and there are planned improvements for the intersection at 15<sup>th</sup>. It won't be as it is today. There may be timing issues though, due to the tail tracks.

Jim Allen: The bridges?

H. McNeish: There'll be two 2-lane bridges.

**Introduction of Mechanical penthouse by H. McNeish:**

The second issue is the mechanical penthouse. Mr. Shears will give you the details. The penthouse is critical to this project. We can talk about the guidelines and precedents, but we should be talking about compatibility with the district and the gateway. We should take ideas and make it better. This element of the project keeps us from moving forward. We encourage dialog. We're talking about not letting 8,000 out of a total of 400,000 square feet keep this a parking lot.

**Presentation by Chris Shears:**

It's true. The mechanical is located on top rather than being embedded. We wrestled with this issue. It's important to respond to the Board. I know you're upset with our bringing in additional information at this late date but we felt it was important for you to have it. I'll try to simplify the proposal.

We had to work with a mechanical engineer going through all of our requirements to see just where things had to be. We looked at the office plate core on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, the mechanical core and office space, the equipment that needs to be on the roof, and what has to be enclosed. Someone suggested a "village" and that's consistent with LoDo. We were enthusiastic until reality discouraged us. We have some enclosures, the "village" idea, and some free standing elements. We looked at how to screen that. We use a foil that will reduce the scale and organize the components. We're not entirely happy with this but it is one solution. We looked at what it would look like if we just organized it. It's honest, if nothing else. Then we looked at what it would mean to embed it in the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. We'd lose square footage, but it's an operational, engineering issue. We can't solve this problem by embedding; the required clearances still require us to go over 130'. We know it's important to have the 10<sup>th</sup> floor and we've not adequately

addressed the enclosure of the mechanical. We're asking for patience to develop this. We want to work with you to solve this.

J. Poli: Do something exemplary. Maybe we can restate what works. We want to know how you make this creek front and the district special, so that the Board can embrace the additional height

**Questions:**

L. Nelson: Do the drawings include elevator overruns and the like?

C. Shears: Yes.

J. Poli: Is the foil not a direction they should follow?

All: No they shouldn't!

W. Kohn: I appreciate the specificity of the late submittal so that we can speak to reality. Given the constraints of the mechanical how do we feel about the roof?

L. Nelson: I'm unmoved. I realize the threat that this kills the project but in a project as big as this there should be some way to integrate this with the exception of stair towers and elevator overruns.

T. Cowperthwaite: Does the square footage you'll lose if you integrate include the area that would be lost either way? Wouldn't it be more like 6,500 feet?

C. Shears: That's correct.

T. Cowperthwaite: It doesn't seem too much in a 400,000 square foot project.

J. Adkins: The issue is the ability to rent the entire floor.

T. Cowperthwaite: In my experience you lose more with the loss of flexibility in a penthouse.

L. Nelson: Public Comment?

**Public Comment:**

**Jim Reynolds**

**1401 Wewatta Street**

At the October 6<sup>th</sup> meeting the applicant suggested that their plan recognized the issues of the site's relationship to LoDo and to the Platte Valley. On the contrary, I feel that the massing of their plan does not recognize this crucial issue at all. The massing isn't sensitive to the historic fabric of this small, quiet area of the district, nor does it reinforce the gateway. As it stands this building doesn't invite pedestrians from Speer Boulevard into an old warehouse district. From Speer you hardly perceive any stepping down from the Waterside Lofts to this building. I plead with the Board to maintain the 130' limit, according to the guidelines, which should force the developers to come down at least one floor to accommodate their mechanical requirements. I also request that the Board not allow the new Wynkoop building to be any higher than the Steel Bridge Lofts. Then, once it's obvious that this will go through why not offer the residents \$20,000.00 to \$30,000.00 for their parking?

**Joe Mellon**

**1401 Wewatta Street**

You talk about gateway, but it looks like a block, not a gateway. It blocks the views of LoDo from Speer Boulevard.

**Ricky Hill**

**904 Waterside**

What about lighting at night?

**Rick Harcutt**

**1401 Wewatta Street**

This looks like the twin towers. You're blocked on one side by the Waterside and on the other by this building. Mechanical on the other buildings is 70' lower. 130' is allowed, but higher? What's to stop the next guy going even higher, 175'? 220'? It shouldn't happen but it's the precedent, the Waterside, Gates,

the light will shine into residences. Keep what LoDo is all about in mind. LoDo is a place for people to live. This is a community. They're going to build 30 story buildings along Speer. This is a large building. From Speer this is a big box.

**Discussion:**

P. Haack: Going over 130' has to be an exceptional circumstance and this isn't one. It's not up to us to approve this in the hopes that you'll come back to us with something that's acceptable. This is a huge issue. In the end we have to see something that's exceptional and we're not. I can't support this. I don't think we could approve this.

W. Kohn: Look at the model. A flat roof would diminish its compatibility with the district. I'd be sympathetic to mechanical on the roof.

J. Morley: As to precedents, none of their examples are of buildings this big in the district so they're irrelevant. Also, the airiness of the design is diminished by the big box on top. I'd not support this either.

L. Nelson: More discussion?

P. Haack: This is a struggle but the height's not the issue. It's the design

L. Nelson: It's hard to make mechanical interesting and the way you affect a building is to integrate it. It seems to me that there are unexplored solutions out there. Asking them to redesign those boxes doesn't achieve our hopes.

H. McNeish: I think it's important to explain that if we need to maintain this building under 130' we lose the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, maybe two floors. If we could make the dollars work we'd be showing you the same look within the envelope. We can't drop the mechanical into usable floor space. It'd just be lower.

W. Kohn: Remember we're to interpret the guidelines. We need to consider the public comment we've heard. In guideline 4.1.3.4, The 130 Foot Exception it says "Residential or mechanical penthouses shall not penetrate the plane above 130 feet." That guideline applies.

J. Mellon: How can the Board...

L. Nelson: This is an allowable exception, motion?

**Motion by T. Cowperthwaite to deny the proposed mechanical penthouse as presented based on the design guidelines as stated in the Staff Review**

**Second by J. Morley**

**Vote: L. Nelson, J. Morley, W. Kohn, T. Cowperthwaite, and P. Haack in favor, J. Poli opposed, Motion carries.**

**B. Administrative Approvals The Board accepted the following:**

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| <p><b>1. Project #1-06      1745 Wazee Street 5C &amp; 5D</b><br/> Applicant – Mark Bowers, Architectural Workshop, LLC<br/> Property Owner – Kevin Vollmer &amp; Brigid O'Connor</p> | <p><b>Residential<br/> Partial Demolition &amp;<br/> Alteration</b><br/> (Windows, doors in Penthouse)</p> |
| <p><b>2. Project #16-06      1501 Wazee Street</b><br/> Applicant – Paula D. West, Young Electric Sign Company<br/> Property Owner – Jim Harder, Players Clothing</p>                 | <p><b>Commercial<br/> Signage</b><br/> "Players"</p>   |