

# MEMO

TO: Mayor Lott and City Council  
FROM: Bill Niquette and Doug Nedde  
DATE: May 12, 2022

RE: Winooski Falls East [Lot 7D]: Design Review Update

## BACKGROUND

In June 2020, the City Council reviewed and approved three renderings and a two-sheet landscape plan for the Winooski Falls East Development, our public-private partnership downtown development at Lot 7D. These plans formed the basis of more detailed municipal applications for statewide land use permitting that included Act 250 approval, a process that was completed in early 2021. The first phase of the project depicted in those detailed plans (public infrastructure and office building) was bid for construction in late 2020 for an early 2021 construction start. Unfortunately, owing to pandemic-related concerns, VEIC elected not to proceed with their office building and the project did not start as planned. In December 2021, Nedde and the City finalized terms under which they would move the project forward with revised infrastructure and parking with a revised hotel project anchoring the initial phase, and the former office site to be developed as mixed-income housing. This design review is part of the process contemplated under that agreement.

## SUMMARY OF CURRENT REQUEST

We are pleased to two updated renderings and a revised landscaping plan. These were developed by TruexCullins Architecture and WagnerHodgson Landscape Architects, who will be available Monday to answer questions. For ease of review, these revised plans are developed from the same perspective and in the same scale as those currently approved. The balance of the approved plans involving the office component remain as approved, to be revisited at a future date.

The original hotel was a nine-story concrete structure with a limited footprint on the ground floor. A significant part of the ground floor at the south end was reserved for loading & unloading, parking access, and parking. Most hotel amenities, including the restaurant, were located at the roof level. The revised proposal fits within the same overall footprint and does not require and change of use. The design differs from the approved plans in two important respects:

- 1) The footprint of the hotel on the upper floors (above the parking structure) has increased. This allows the overall height of the hotel to be reduced from 9 stories to 6 stories. The lower height allows us additional flexibility to address significant construction cost increases that have occurred since we originally conceived the project. The original design was classified as a high-rise building under building codes. However, it also means that the hotel is now more closely aligned with the height and scale of buildings adjoining it, a concept supported by the City's design guidelines.
- 2) The revised design brings all hotel amenities, a full-service restaurant, and a new outdoor patio space to the ground floor level. This creates a much more dynamic pedestrian experience along Winooski Falls Way, a concept that is strongly encouraged in the City's design guidelines.

## NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of this revised design approach, we will finalize the necessary specifications to support an administrative amendment to the City's Act 250 permit. Once that amendment is finalized, staff can review and approve a request for local zoning approval administratively.

During this time, the development team and City staff will collaborate to update drafts of various legal documents that were created last year to adjust the boundary lines of City parcels contemplated in our development agreement, and to establish the new street south of CCV and the extension of Winooski Falls Way. We plan to return to the Council in June with documentation of the necessary conditions to proceed with construction.