

2022 Windermere Design Review - TFH Staff Report
Wednesday, December 14, 2022

Applicant	Greg King
Proposed Project	3-story, mixed-use new construction, replacing an 1880 historic building lost to fire in 2022.
Tax Parcel	351350407
Project Location	50 Spring Street
Guidelines Applied	Downtown Commercial New Construction (p.53-57)
Incentives Requested	Parking and Height
Intended Use	Commercial, Office, Residential
Review Date	12.14.2022

Background

50 Spring Street.

The building once located at 50 Spring Street was known historically by various names over its 142-years: the Bay View Hotel, The Douglas Hotel, and the San Juan Inn. It continued as lodging until 2006, when it was rehabilitated for use as the office of Windermere Real Estate.

Lower Spring Street. In April 2022, Friday Harbor experienced a devastating fire that destroyed three significant historic structures located in the first block of Spring Street, the heart of the town's historic district. The same block experienced two other significant fires in 1943 and 2002, these fires occurred across the street and contributed to an evolving streetscape that began with territorial-era wood construction and over time moved toward masonry materials considered more "fire resistant".

Until the 2022 fire, the north side of the first block of Spring Street consisted of three wood-framed historic buildings, and another wood building built in the 1990s. Across the street stands the oldest building in Friday Harbor, also wood framed. Moving up the hill on the south side of Spring Street, are two more wood-framed buildings built in the 1930s and 1970s. Capping that side is Friday Harbor Center, a cluster of attached buildings constructed in 2003 to replace the half-block-sized building (Whitey's Grocery) that burned in 2002. flat-topped masonry design dominates this development.

Despite many changes that altered the wood-framed buildings of lower Spring Street over time, the territorial character of the streetscape prevailed, preserving the Friday Harbor's unique sense of place.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to construct a three-story wood and masonry mixed-use building on the site of the former wood-framed San Juan Inn/Windermere building. The new building will house retail, office, and residential units. The façade will be masonry on the ground floor, and wood-clad on floors two and three.

Staff Comments

Rebuilding in this former historically significant and very public place is challenging. Some in the community are hoping for new construction that is a literal interpretation of the buildings lost to the fire. However, the objective of the historic preservation program is not to mimic buildings that are no longer standing, rather, the intent is to preserve Friday Harbor's sense of place. To do so, new construction should incorporate the architectural character that is site-specific to the immediate location, since character, design and materials changed from block to block as the town grew over time.

Traditional architectural elements proposed for this project and typical of lower Spring Street include recessed entrances, wood lap siding, transom windows, vertically oriented one-over-one paired windows, and the private path between this and the adjoining downhill building (40 Spring Street).

The flat roof, blade awnings, masonry and wood cladding combination, and aluminum and vinyl window materials are not typical of early "first-block" Friday Harbor commercial architecture.

The proposed design currently presents more as a contemporary building using contemporary elements, than it does as new building with familiar (Friday Harbor vernacular) architectural elements. It's not that it is a bad design, but rather, that it could be found anywhere.

The following are suggestions for mitigating the contemporary urban feel, by introducing familiar architectural details. Suggested mitigations include:

1. **Scale and Mass.** The flat "blockiness" of the building is taking precedence over the intended familiarity of the individual architectural elements. Thus, the overall affect is more imposing than familiar. Bumping back the uphill half of the building by just 1-2 feet would help ease the imposing feel of the building.

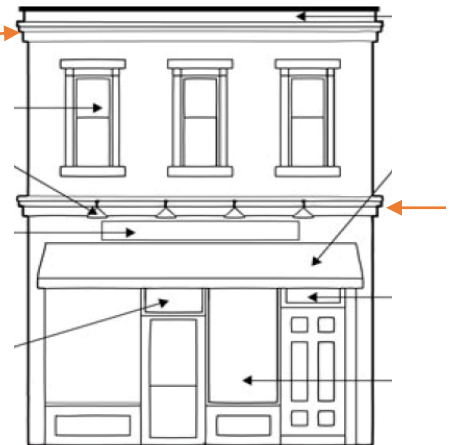
2. **Cladding.** A wood cladding product with at least a ½" thickness is recommended. This would give the exterior facades depth and shadow lines.



3. **Windows.** Adding a small amount of detail to the top and/or bottom of the windows on the upper two floors will lend familiarity without looking overly traditional. It will also provide visual depth to the building façade.

Use a window product with a thinner muntin and mullion design than shown in the design review application illustration. Vinyl window products tend to use non-traditional widths for these features. The mullion and muntin details should also have some prominence, even if simple, by projecting out from the glazing. Doing so will also give depth to the window and building façade. The more simple and flatter ground floor storefront windows are appropriate as proposed.

4. **Cornice detail.** The drawing to the right illustrates two cornice locations that would benefit the proposed 50 Spring Street building by defining visually the commercial from the office/residential floors.



5. **Awning.** Blade awnings have become ubiquitous with Friday Harbor's newer commercial buildings. They are utilitarian, but no longer contribute to a unique building design. A potential alternative would be to bring the recessed entrances farther into the building, allowing the upper transom area to provide protection from the weather. A good example of this is found across the street where Windermere Real Estate as temporarily relocated.

6. **Door and window product cutsheets** have not been provided by the applicant. This information is required before the final design is approved.

Commercial New Construction Guidelines & Checklist (pages 53-57)

Making space...is a social art; and although architecture consists of individual works, these are always part of a larger context—of a landscape, of other buildings, of a street, and finally, of our everyday lives.

Witold Rybezynski
Canadian American architect, professor, and writer

Windermere Checklist

Staff Comment: The applicant's design review documents are thorough and well-illustrated. With few exceptions, the proposal is understandable and complete. However, the example photographs provided indicate that the architectural "cues" used for the proposed building include new construction, some structures built prior to the adoption of the historic preservation guidelines and review process, and buildings not within the first block of Spring Street.

In striving to preserve the authentic architectural feel of lower Spring Street post-fire, it is imperative that cues come from archival photos and the limited number of extant historic buildings that characterized Friday Harbor's early days.

General Guidelines

A. Compatibility in Site Design. New construction should follow in scale and proportion the traditional block development pattern.

B. Compatibility Defined

Scale. Proportions of primary facades, including windows, entries, and inset porches—on both upper- and ground-floor levels—should be in the same proportions and follow similar patterns and orientation as found on the facades of nearby historic buildings. **Complies** **Does Not Comply** **Not Applicable**

Staff Comment: The width and height of the proposed building results in a monolithic block, and as such looks modern without sufficient familiarity or the character of the original streetscape of lower Spring Street. The fenestration orientation is appropriately vertical, however, the number of windows spanning the front façade has no relevant comparison on lower Spring Street.

Massing. Long, unbroken horizontal or vertical facades should be avoided. Break up expanses into smaller pieces that relate to the forms and rhythms of nearby historic structures. **Complies** **Does Not Comply** **Not Applicable**

Staff Comment: The front façade would better comply if the breadth of the façade was broken into two parts visually.

Roof. Roof forms and pitches should follow traditional patters, such as gable, hipped, or the use of false fronts and cornices to modify low-pitched or flat roofs. **Complies**
 Does Not Comply **Not Applicable**

Staff Comment: While there is a cornice on the concept image, it does not sufficiently stand out. This may be because of the computer-generated image and/or the continuation of black as the façade paint color.

Setback. New buildings should follow the prevailing setback from the street. **Complies**
 Does Not Comply **Not Applicable**

Entry. Announcing the main entrance to the building with covered porches, recessed entries, or other architectural details provides a welcoming sense of entry. **Complies**
 Does Not Comply **Not Applicable**

Staff Comment: The design complies with the guidelines in terms of functionality. The traditional use of plate glass for storefronts and the recessed entries is an important traditional element. The awnings, too, announce the openings. However, the total number and scale of windows, transoms, glass doors, and the modern blade awning crowds the openings and fails to achieve the architectural familiarity so important to the historic commercial district.

Openings. Door and window openings should follow the predominant patterns and orientation of the historic streetscape. **Complies** **Does Not Comply** **Not Applicable**

Staff Comment: The vertical orientation of the windows and the use of transom lights is a traditional design element, as is grouping windows. However, the uniformity of the trim used for the front, recessed and door glass fails to sufficiently differentiate the windows from the doors visually. A (modern take on a traditional door style of the same materials would better announce the actual entry and feel familiar.

Detailed Guidelines for New Construction—Downtown

A. Building Exterior.

1. Horizontal wood siding in four-to-eight-inch shiplap or clapboard siding is preferred. Avoid vertical or wide horizontal siding, as well as panelized siding, batten siding, and artificial stone. **Complies** **Does Not Comply** **Not Applicable**

Staff Comment: A wood lap siding material with sufficient depth should be selected to ensure pleasing shadow lines.

2. Large areas of solid walls should be avoided. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable

3. Windows should be rectangular and in proportions that are compatible with nearby historic buildings and placed in a vertical orientation, with trim that accents nearby historic buildings and placed in a vertical orientation, with trip that accents the opening. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable

Staff Comment: More attention to the trim and muntin/mullion profile is needed. A thinner mullion profile matching the muntin material separating the lower to the upper windows would better represent traditional fenestration patterns but with the modernity of non-wood material. The window design would also benefit from the addition of a pronounced but still subtle sill/apron and slightly more detail on the top trim.

4. Avoid or minimize roof elements that detract from the predominant historical roofline patters, view corridors, and the skyline. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable

5. The addition of a false front or parapet will disguise low-pitched roofs on primary facades, thereby maintaining the vertical emphasis that is common to Friday Harbor's historic structures. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable

Staff Comment: The parapet/cornice does not sufficiently "cap" the top of the building. The cornice profile would be better served by projecting more from the façade.

- B. Materials.** Although wood is preferred, synthetic or composite materials are acceptable, so long as they replicate traditional or historical materials and are compatible with the existing architectural style and period of nearby historic buildings. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable

Staff Comment: The mixed use of wood and masonry on an individual building is not traditional use in Friday Harbor. However, in recent years the HPRB has recommended approval of the mix of masonry and wood for large developments such as Friday Harbor Center and Churchill Corner. In these cases, the mix was not used on the same edifice, but rather on adjoining sections or individual units. As this is a new, contemporary building being proposed, the mix might be appropriate so long as more traditional elements are incorporated.

C. Landscape. - not applicable

D. Fences. - not applicable

E. Secondary Structures. - not applicable

- F. Signage.** Please refer to the ordinance Town of Friday Harbor Sign Ordinance for a detailed explanation of sign requirements. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable

Staff Comment: The proposed blade signs are appropriate. Color, graphic design, hanging hardware, number of individual signs, and location need to be called out prior to final approval.

1. Signs are an important design element that affects not only the visual character of the Historic District but also the viability of downtown businesses. Therefore, graphic design is encouraged that both enhances commerce and contributes to the historic commercial character of the downtown. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable
2. Signs should be designed and positioned to complement the architecture of the building or site on which they are located; they should not interrupt or overlap architectural features such as cornices, columns, and trim. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable
3. Signs should be oriented to pedestrians in size and shape, with simple and clear graphics. Simple modern lettering is encouraged. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable
4. (This guideline refers to historic buildings, not new construction. - not applicable)
5. When lighting is necessary, it should be subdued. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable

Staff Comment: Based on the proposal to use under-awning lighting, this guideline is acceptable.

G. Utilities.

Staff Comment: Please provide information about the location and product of any venting or other façade penetrations that will occur on the front façade of the building, if any.

1. Minimize the visual impact of antennas and other aerial devices from the street or pedestrian walkways. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable
2. Locate satellite dishes, propane tanks, generators, heating and air-conditioning units, electrical boxes, and other devices unobtrusively so they will not be visible from the public thoroughfare, and screen them where feasible. Complies Does Not Comply Not Applicable

DESIGN REVIEW SUMMARY

___ This project fully complies with the TFH historic preservation guidelines.

___ This project does not comply with the TFH historic preservation guidelines.

___ This project would comply with the guidelines if the following mitigations were implemented. See below: