LEESBURG BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT

SPECIAL PUBLIC HEARING AND WORK SESSION FOR COURTHOUSE SQUARE PROJECT: 27 JUNE 2012

BAR Case No. THLP-2012-0040 Courthouse Square: Commercial Mixed-use Building on Loudoun Times Mirror property

Reviewer:	Kim K. Del Rance, LEED AP
Address:	**9 E Market Street and interior of block enclosed by Market, Church, Loudoun and King Street**
Zoning:	B-1, H-1 Overlay District
Applicant/Owner:	Leesburg Value Fund I, LLC

Description of Proposal:

Leesburg Value Fund I, LLC (Owner) requests construction of a new 113,650 square foot mixed office use, retail and restaurant building with associated parking structure. Part of the proposed square –foot area will include an addition on to the Loudoun Times Mirror building at 9 E Market St. The parking structure will contain 336 parking spaces on five levels in support of the 113,650 square feet of by-right commercial, office and retail uses in downtown Leesburg. The maximum height of the building will reach approximately 63 feet with the HVAC and mechanical equipment located on the roof approximately 12 feet tall.

Site Description:

The site is comprised of four separate lots (PIN 231-38-6044, 231-38-6661, 231-38-5350, and 231-38-5459) measuring a combined total of approximately 1.7 acres. A portion of the property (9 Market Street, PIN 231-38-5459) contains the Loudoun Times Mirror building; an approximate 5,500 square foot building with an 18,296 square foot cinder block addition on the rear built in 1975. This portion of the site faces north and contains frontage on E. Market Street. The remainder of the site is currently paved and utilized for surface parking. It has frontage on Church Street and Loudoun Street SE and is surrounded by commercial uses fronting on King, Loudoun and Market Streets, the Loudoun County Government Center, and the Loudoun County Courts Complex. The property is zoned B-1, Community (Downtown) Business with H-1, Old and Historic Overlay District.

Context:

The subject property is situated on an original block of the Nicolas Minor subdivision established in 1759. Throughout the history of Leesburg, this block has been one of the primary commercial blocks in Leesburg. The existing architecture on the King Street, Market Street and Loudoun Street frontages reflect the architectural history of Leesburg from the ca 1758 McCabe Tavern/Paterson House and ca 1800 Lynch-Tebbs House on Loudoun Street to the ca 1810, remodeled in 1909 and 1971 20 S. King Street to the 1901, remodeled in 1920 – 1925 Loudoun National Bank Building at the corner of King and Market to the 1923 US Post Office at 15 Market Street and the 1916 Loudoun Times Mirror Building at 9 Market Street.

The Loudoun Times Mirror building is a contributing resource in the Old & Historic District. Built in 1916 as an automobile showroom it has withstood various use changes without altering the architectural

integrity in its nearly 100 year history in its prominent location directly opposite from the courthouse complex on one of the most significant blocks in Leesburg's downtown.

Progress of Proposal:

as there being non-compliance issues with basic zoning requirements of the PEC District. The Applicant chose not to proceed with the project.

The Review Process

The Staff Report for this June 27 work session will address the demolition request and the general mass and scale with respect to the Loudoun Times Mirror (LTM) Building in one report since the demolition will be determined as part of this process.

The next step in the review process should be the applicant's proposal for the LTM building and a general assessment of the changes made since the June 4, 2012 session. Staff assessment of changes is made in this report, but no recommendation is provided with this report. Staff recommends the BAR proceed with the review of the application as detailed below and provide continued guidance to the applicant at each meeting. Based on the progressive review of the application, a final staff recommendation will be provided on August 6, 2012 which is the last scheduled BAR meeting before the 75 day deadline of August 17, 2012.

The review of this application will be approached as follows:

1. **General assessment of the changes made in response to the comments on the proposal presentation on June 4, 2012**

2. **General assessment of the site plan features:**
    - Accessibility – Pedestrian and Drive locations
    - Parking areas
    - Other concerns as needed

3. **General assessment of the massing at the new construction:**
    - Building height
    - Roof forms
    - Directional emphasis
    - Building components
    - Fenestration pattern
    - Materials

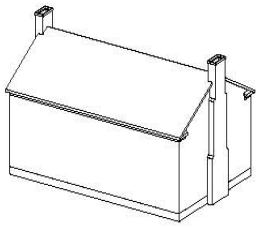
Future review and discussion:

4. **Detailed assessment of elements:**
    - Roof forms
    - Doors and Windows
    - Materials
    - Architectural details
    - Cornices and Trim

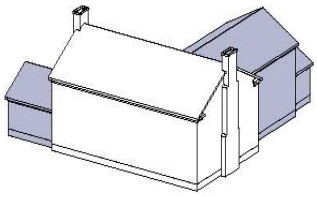
- Lighting
- Mechanical Equipment
- Landscaping
- Other concerns as needed

STAFF ASSESSMENT:

Additive Massing



Many of Leesburg's historic residential structures have a simple original mass.



Often, additions have been made to these original structures over time, in response to the needs of the inhabitants.

Loudoun Times Mirror Building (LTM): Regarding the proposed treatment of the Loudoun Times Mirror building the Additive Massing element of the Modifications to Existing Buildings guidelines stipulate that additions that are appropriate are subordinate to the historic original building. Overwhelming the original building in scale is not appropriate.

The roof, windows, doors, foundation and architectural details are to be repaired or restored where possible and only replaced when necessary with the same materials and details as the original. The guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for rehabilitation both state this. See chapters V and VII and Appendix A.

Specifically:
Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation - Appendix A
1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires **minimal change to the defining characteristics** of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The **removal of historic materials or alteration of features** and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use**. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.**

Regarding the changes since the June 4, 2012 meeting:

1. **The windows on the side of the LTM are appropriate to be restored to similar proportions as what can only be slightly seen in historic photos, but appear to have a center vertical muntin and a horizontal muntin possibly in line with the horizontal muntin on the front of the building. Using wood windows painted to match the existing trim is appropriate.**
2. **Restoration and repair on the front elevation including the original rectangular vents but removing the glass to allow for circulation and view is appropriate. Restoring the window configurations to those in historic photos, in wood, is appropriate. Removing the front entrance and replacing it with a window to match the two on either side may be appropriate, but some nod toward the fact this had been an entrance is encouraged. Filling in a door frame with fixed glass could be one solution and would allow for easy reversibility should the interior needs demand it be changed later.**

3. **The floors above the LTM are an improvement by withdrawing it further from the front facade, but using two different material treatments draw more attention to the addition and it should always remain subordinate to the historic building. Removing all fenestration makes the addition appear even heavier than before and some fenestration should be added to both lighten the addition and relate it to the historic building in proportion using more verticality to avoid the horizontal encroachment onto the LTM.**
4. **Suggestions to improve the addition above the LTM include material change that is more subordinate to the brick than the stone, using color to make the addition receded or fade into the background, using fenestration patterns to relate the addition to the same proportions as the fenestration on the LTM, but not copy it. Reducing the height, roof pitch and busy nature of the front of the addition will reduce its impact on the LTM. The use of double window dormers of modern proportions also draws attention up to the addition away from the LTM and should be reduced in proportion or combined somehow to have them recede more than they do currently. Trim on the addition should not match the existing trim in color, the contrast between trim and the main building material should be lessen to avoid drawing attention. Any railings should be more invisible than the current picket railing, solid glass or using planters to keep people away from the building edges and avoiding railings at all are more appropriate than what is shown currently.**

Staff Assessment of the scale and massing of the new construction. The following are broad comments about the changes to the mass and scale of the Courthouse Square proposal

Building Height

- The BAR has the ultimate authority in determining the building height in accordance with Zoning Ordinance Section 6.3.3.E. note [7]

Massing

The scale of the proposal is larger than anything historic in Leesburg. Some changes have been made that improve the appearance of the mass of the building by reducing the appearance of being a single unit. Only the Church Street elevations have been revised into two alternatives along with the corner of Church and Loudoun Streets, some changes have been made to the elevation seen behind the buildings on Market Street.

<u>Church Street elevation alternatives</u>

Design A:

- The upper floors have been broken into vertical segments, which align with the façade along Church Street making it more in keeping with Leesburg proportions even if the height is much greater than historic precedents. The window trim features add a heaviness that can be reduced or altered to allow for the taller parts to recede more into the sky.
- The lack of a cornice is an improvement over the large cornice shown previously.
- The floating facades on Church Street are still there and need to be mitigated.
- The addition of a covered pedestrian walkway from the garage entrance to the new retail spaces toward Loudoun Street is appropriate and brings the human scale back into the street level where it was absent before. The use of a contrasting brick separates it from the floors above and may or may not be appropriate as it relates more to urban horizontality not usually found in

Leesburg. If that whole section of building were brick all the way up, both the separation from the garage entrance and the verticality would be restored.

Design B:

- The upper floors have been broken up both vertically and still have some horizontality, but it is reduced. It is understood the façade is blank, but will have fenestration added, it is encouraged the fenestration be in keeping with what is directly below it as opposed to what is along side it to regain some verticality.
- The addition of height at the section where the garage entrance is works to draw the eye up the street instead of up the building. One suggestion may be to have that section alone be the lighter color and have a darker color on either side, buttressing it and making the garage entrance more noticeable at street level for patrons without calling attention to the fact it is a garage entrance and not a building entrance.
- The lack of a cornice is an improvement over the large cornice shown previously.
- The floating facades have been withdrawn to meet the vertical borders of each building segment, which is more in keeping with Leesburg proportions.
- The addition of a covered pedestrian walkway from the garage entrance to the new retail spaces toward Loudoun Street is appropriate and brings the human scale back into the street level where it was absent before.

The corner where Church Street meets Market Street is bordered by historic residential sized buildings, both historic. When turning down Church Street both alternatives have a steep sharp corner on the garage that rises up steeply three stories with another two stories set back slightly. While the zoning does not require the building to step back on Church Street, this corner of the building is pronounced and could be softened without sacrificing much floor space inside. Recessing the third floor slightly just at the corner, perhaps with a small outdoor space, could relieve the blocky massing of that corner which faces directly the small house next to the city parking garage.

In comparison and contrast, the two design alternatives each have improvements and issues to be mitigated. A combination of the best of each design may result in an appropriate Church Street elevation.

Loudoun Street:

- The movement of the lone column and adding a second column, in a darker color to recede is an improvement to the balance of that corner. The addition of the planters and blocks that read as brownstone, bridge the change from the foundation material on Church Street to the grand stair that is now the only stair instead of a split stair. The addition of a window increases the pedestrian friendliness, but there is still room for improvement in the balance and rhythm of this corner. Suggestions may include adding another window to the right of the door, balancing the proportions of those windows with the door and transom as well as the window band above to bring an open porch feel instead of an office door platform as it currently reads.

Market Street:

- The two story columns on the north elevation at roof height are less obtrusive than the previous iteration, but progress is still needed on the cornice treatment where that segment of the building meets the building at either side. The proposed window proportion changes that echo

the proportions of those on either side are more appropriate than the previous wall of glass which overwhelmed that segment and made it appear top heavy.

Techniques for mitigating the impact of larger massed buildings are provided in the H-1 Guidelines.

Directional Emphasis and Materials

- There can still be improvements made in the overall scale, by possibly using a change of materials and vary the roof height by more than one foot would immediately change the overall scale to something more appropriate that is less overwhelming to the block.

Fenestration Pattern

- The window pattern can be further simplified once an alternative has been chosen. Using verticality as is seen around Leesburg with both recessed vertical wall patterns as well as tall narrow openings can be used to further tie the upper stories to the lower ones, contributing to the rhythm of the openings being consistent.
- The top floor windows are still the largest (which is the reverse of the traditional architectural pattern in Leesburg whereby windows get smaller as they are higher on a building), but the removal of the large cornice helps lighten the top of the building. Further narrowing or heightening the windows may add to the lightness that will reduce the overall impact of the height.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Due to the size and nature of this project, it has been determined the review of the Courthouse Square project will be divided into various elements as provided in the Review Process section of this report. As a result, staff will not offer an overall recommendation at this time, but only start the review process by offering the points of concern and how the previous comments have been addressed with the application outlined above.

The BAR shall note that the 75 day review deadline is August 17, 2012. This deadline can be extended at the request of the Applicant if it is determined additional time is needed for the thorough review of the application.