

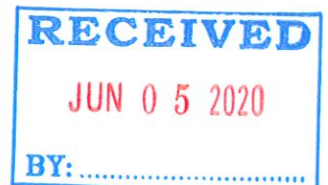
June 9 PC Hearing Testimony

PA-T2-2020-00019

Plaza North

Prepared by Architect Jerome White for
Owner/Applicant Randy Jones
for First Place Partners, LLC

June 5, 2020



EXCEPTION 1

EXEPTION 1

18.4.2.60 DOWNTOWN ASHLAND

C. 2. **Setback**

Except for arcades, alcoves and other recessed features, buildings shall maintain a zero setback from the sidewalk or property line. Areas having public utility easements or similar restricting conditions shall be exempt from this standard.

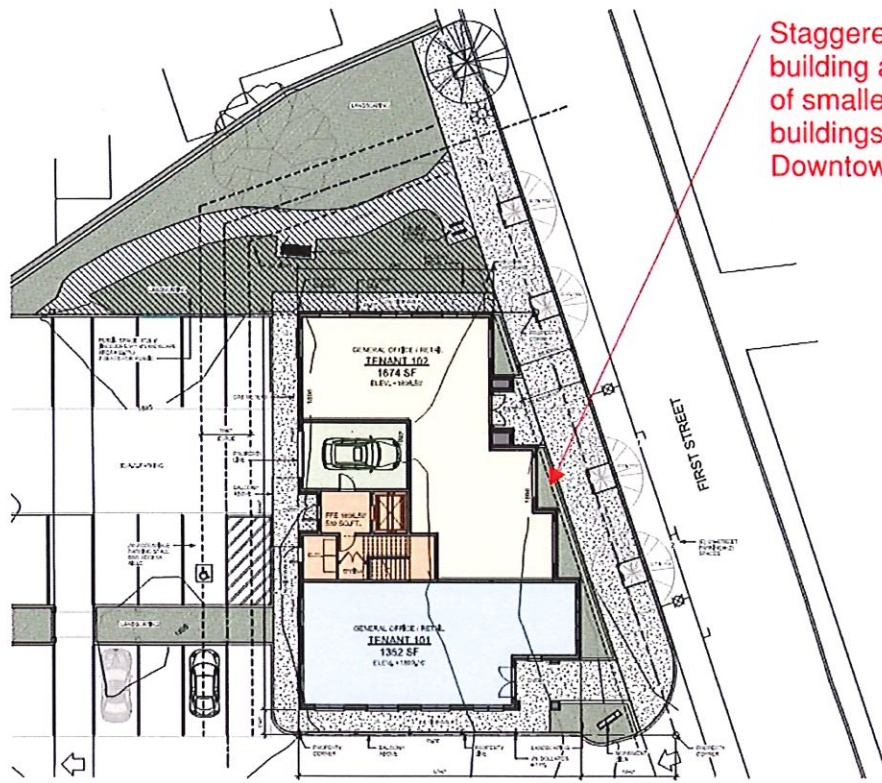
- 2. There is no demonstrable difficulty in meeting the specific requirements but granting the exception will result in a design that equally or better achieves the stated purpose of the Site Development and Design Standards.**

The unique shape of the lot with the First Street frontage running at an acute angle in respect to the otherwise rectangular parcel and Lithia Way, provided an opportunity to create a stepped façade that works better with the lot shape and creates a more interesting streetscape that creates the appearance of smaller buildings grouped together. This stepping and offsetting of the façade eases the transition between the commercial and residential zones. The design places the corners of each step at or near the First Street sidewalk (up to the Utility easement), steps back a short distance, and then steps again at the point the front wall intersects with the First Street sidewalk. The two main entrances are then recessed from their respective facades, in accordance with the design standards, to emphasize their sense of entry.

We contend that this alternative design better achieves the intent of the Downtown Design Standards as the alternative solution would be to design a building with an odd acute angle (hence another 'flat' façade) at the southeast corner of the building (entrance to subdivision) that is not typically reflected in the Downtown's character. In fact, many of the buildings found in the Downtown are based on their underlying 90-degree property lines where the subject property line is roughly 120 degrees based on the combination of the street and access corridor. As such, the proposed design is based more on the traditional building setting in the downtown and not the shape of the lot.

The purpose Downtown Design Standards was to be as compatible with the Downtown's historic building pattern. With this standard, the purpose was to ensure pedestrians and the users of the public space (i.e. sidewalks) have an opportunity to engage and that activities occurring within the interior spaces are visible through the storefront windows. The concept encourages walking as the opportunity is there to engage with the inside space and make the walk more enjoyable versus along a parking lot or field. In the end, the applicants contend the building still provides that opportunity, but also respects many of the other Downtown standards.





Staggered facade downscales building and creates appearance of smaller pedestrian scale buildings for transition from Downtown zone to Residential

- CONCRETE
- BRICK
- STONE
- GLASS
- INSULATION
- FLOORING
- LIGHTING
- SUNSHADE
- FURNITURE

kistler + small + white

SITE REVIEW

PLAZA NORTH - FIRST PLACE SUBDIVISION PHASE 3

ENLARGED SITE PLAN

A2



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EXCEPTION 2

C.4. Openings

a. Ground level elevations facing a street shall maintain a consistent proportion of transparency (i.e., windows) compatible with the pattern found in the downtown area. The front elevation includes storefront windows and glass doors similar in size to other storefront windows found in the Downtown.

b. Scale and proportion of altered or added building elements, such as the size and relationship of new windows, doors, entrances, columns, and other building features shall be visually compatible with the original architectural character of the building.

Not applicable as the building is new.

c. **Upper floor window orientation shall primarily be vertical (height greater than width).** Of the building's six front façade 'bays', four have windows on the second and third floors that, when their individual vertical windows are 'ganged' together, may appear more horizontal than they are vertical which requires an exception request according to City Planners. I humbly disagree that this requires an exception, but notwithstanding my disagreement with the need for the exception, the criteria and justification can be found in C. 11. Exception to Standards at the end of this section.

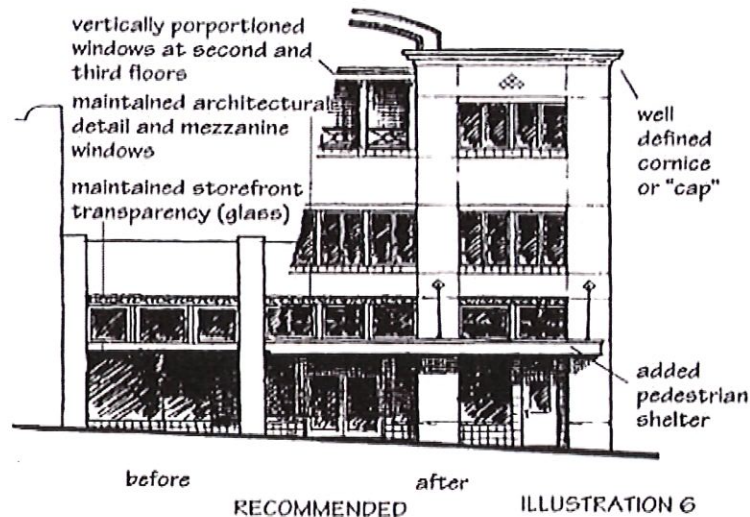


Figure 18.4.2.060.C.6.

The Downtown Ashland Standard for Vertical Rhythms above clearly states "*vertically proportioned windows at second and third floors*" while showing a series of 'ganged' vertical windows that have a horizontal appearance.

d. **Except for transom windows, windows shall not break the front plane of the building.** The second and third floor windows are double hung 'sliding' windows that only open up and down and thereby do not break the front plane of the building.

e. **Ground level entry doors shall be primarily transparent.**

The building's ground level entrance doors will be single lite entrance doors. The windows and doors will be transparent allowing visibility into the building.

EXEPTION 2

18.4.2.61 DOWNTOWN ASHLAND

C. 4. Openings

d. Upper floor window orientation shall primarily be vertical (height greater than width).

- 2. There is no demonstrable difficulty in meeting the specific requirements but granting the exception will result in a design that equally or better achieves the stated purpose of the Site Development and Design Standards.**

We are proposing in this design to create multiple stepped 'bays' along the First Street facade with varying widths, with 'ganged' windows that appear more horizontal than vertical as a group, but that's primarily to retain the rest of the building's window pattern. The design exception is mitigated by the fact the subject windows are divided into three or two 'vertical', historically compatible windows. There are also many examples of historic buildings in downtown Ashland that have two-ganged windows that are visually square and three-ganged windows that are visually horizontal.



Two-ganged visually square



Three-ganged visually horizontal

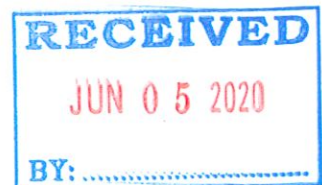
These windows all have 'vertical' windows ganged together to form a wider grouping that is square or horizontal in appearance. The intent of this code item was to ensure that individual

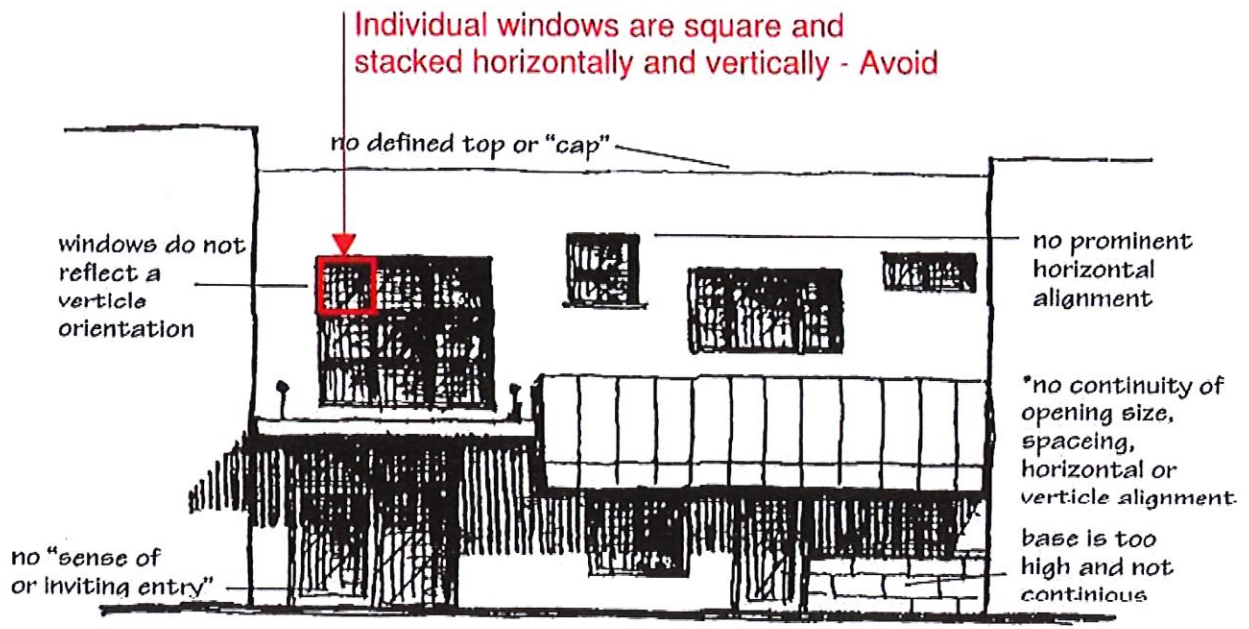


windows were more vertical as shown above.

We believe the proposed design better achieves the purpose and intent of the Downtown Design Standards and Downtown Plan as the slightly more horizontal windows, when ganged within the single bays do not overwhelm the building's architecture, but instead compliment it as described above. In this case, the design maintains the rhythm of openings as desired by the Standards, specifically Section VI-E Horizontal Rhythms. In the end, the Architects feel, bolstered by Historic Commissions input, the design approach taken is superior and accomplishes the Design Standards intent.

The exception requested is the minimum necessary and the applicants have attempted to mitigate the request by designing the subject windows within Plaza North building with vertical window elements to give a more vertical window pattern appearance. The windows chosen for the design are tall, rectangular units with transoms on the first floor, and double hung units on the top two floors. The window widths are primarily 36" and are combined in multiples of two or three. Since the building is a singular design, the window pattern is the same throughout. The glass utilized at the central brick elements are the same "ganged" double hung units with transoms added to provide a special feature for the building.

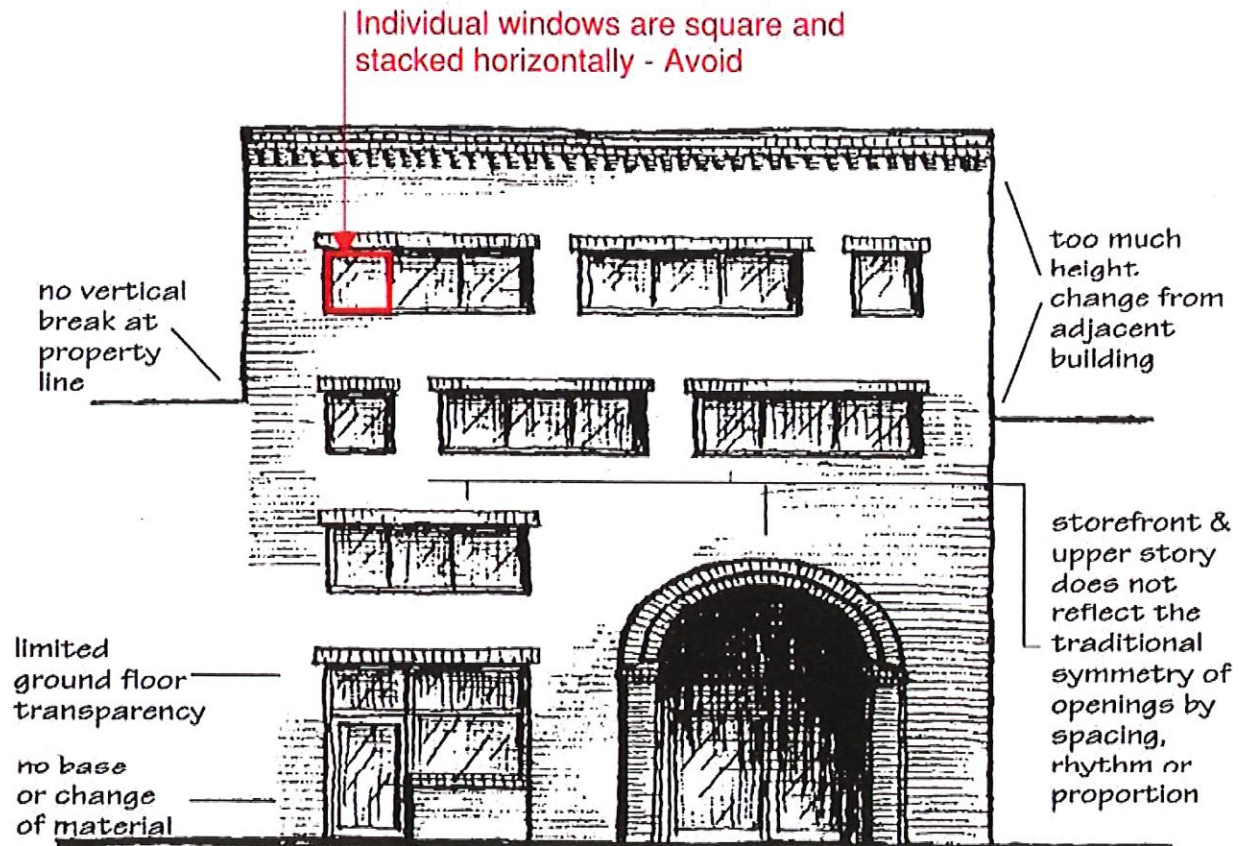




AVOID

ILLUSTRATION 8

Figure 18.4.2.060.C.8.



AVOID

ILLUSTRATION 3

Figure 18.4.2.060.C.3.

Examples in Standards of windows to avoid

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• *East Elevation (First Street):* Consistent with the Downtown Design Standards and the general context of the downtown building pattern, the approach is to orient the building towards First Street with its two ground floor commercial spaces entering directly from First Street and all vehicle access coming from the rear, via the subdivision's common parking lot area. The design respects the scale and proportions of a number of historic buildings in downtown Ashland while incorporating modern materials and details. The front elevation has a variety of recessed and projecting areas to create surface relief and visual interest. Upper floor windows are traditional style double hung style ganged in two and three groupings and the individual windows are proportioned vertically, either structurally or via a window grid system, and are kept to less than 50% of the total surface area. The ground floor windows have a slightly larger surface area to reinforce their commercial nature and the second and third floor windows are smaller with the intent to define a separate use from the first floor. The design acknowledges historic traditions while offering a contemporary interpretation that is compatible within the historic district. Other than three minor deviations, the design is consistent with the adopted Downtown Design Standards. The design is substantially similar to the previous design submitted on November 7, 2014 and that was unanimously approved by the Ashland Historic Commission on December 3, 2014 and then approved through the Type I review process at the December 9 regular meeting of the Planning Commission.

