

Draft Comments from the Historic Preservation Commission
To the Neptune Township Planning Board
Regarding the proposed modifications to the
Ocean Grove North End Development Plan

To be reviewed at the 8 October 2024 Meeting of the HPC

We are writing to the Planning Board on behalf of the nine members of the Ocean Grove Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) in regard to the most recent proposed modifications to the proposed Ocean Grove North End Development (OGNED).

At the request of the Land Use Administrator, the so-called HPC Technical Committee met with the applicant(s) during three dedicated reviews. The HPC Technical Committee is comprised of the Chairperson and the two Co-Chairs. The intention of these meetings was to work with the applicant to identify elements of their proposal that were non-conforming to the requirements of the HPC Architectural Design Guidelines.

Our goal was to help the applicant bring the project into conformity prior to it coming before the full commission for a vote, in hopes of it being issued the necessary Certificate of Appropriateness as required by the original terms of the development deal.

The non-conforming elements of the applicant's proposal were, and remain, substantial. They include many non-historical design components across all of the proposed buildings (i.e., the hotel, the commercial strip, Condo Building 1 and Condo Building 2). Such elements included non-historical roof forms and non-historic massing, historically inaccurate voids and projections (including modern inset balconies, peek-a-boo gable openings, etc.), parapet faux roofs, excessive fenestration using non-historic triple and double window sets, vast areas covered in faux cedar shakes, and an exaggerated use of exterior lighting, among many other aspects.

Despite many hours of meetings, and repeated documentation by the HPC of the non-conforming elements, the applicant opted to bring the project before the full Commission without first resolving these issues. During the review by the full Commission, which took place across multiple meetings over the span of a few weeks, the applicant was questioned about the remaining non-conformities. They showed little interest in abiding by the Architectural Guidelines that are routinely applied to, and govern the exterior configuration, of every other structure within the historic district.

Public comment was also received during these Commission meetings and the sentiments expressed by homeowners were fierce and, for the most part, in opposition to this project moving forward without it being first brought into conformity with the self-same Architectural Guidelines.

In the end, the full Commission voted to deny the applicant a Certificate of Appropriateness due to the vast number of non-conforming issues the applicant had failed to resolve. A detailed report outlining these non-conformities was prepared by HPC and was included in our denial.

Subsequent to this denial the applicant did not avail themselves of the usual appeals process by bringing the matter before the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Instead, they convinced to Township to negotiate with them directly. HPC was neither consulted nor was involved in these negotiations in any way. The Commission was advised by the township that of the “102 non-conformities that had been identified, 98 of them had been resolved during the negotiates with the applicant.” Where these numbers came from and what, precisely is meant by the term, “resolved” was never made clear to HPC.

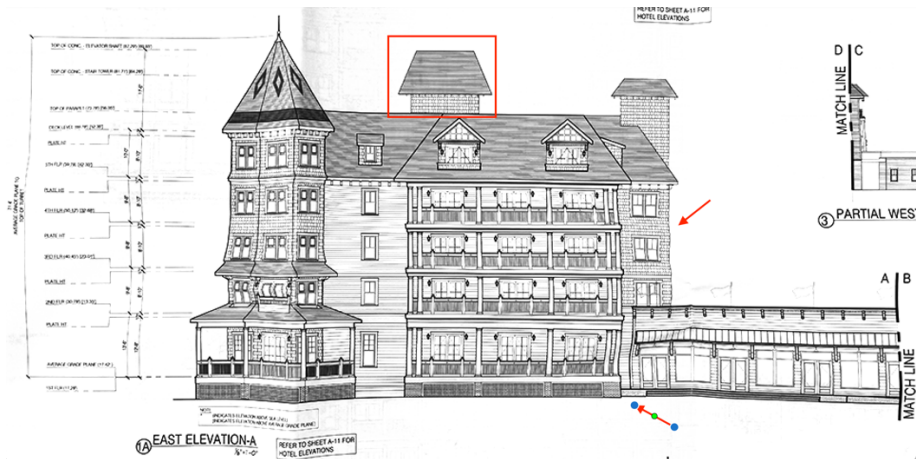
The applicant is now before the Planning Board in an attempt to have the original terms of the redevelopment plan changed (namely, the elimination of their need to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HPC) and to obtain permission to move forward with a plan that remains largely unchanged from the plan that was unanimously denied by the very Commission empaneled to review and advise on such matters.

An itemized review of the myriad outstanding non-conformities already exists in multiple forms. However, HPC would submit the following six images for review and consideration. These images compare drawing submitted to (and subsequently denied by) the HPC, contrasted with the most recent elevation drawings submitted to the Planning Board for their consideration at this time.

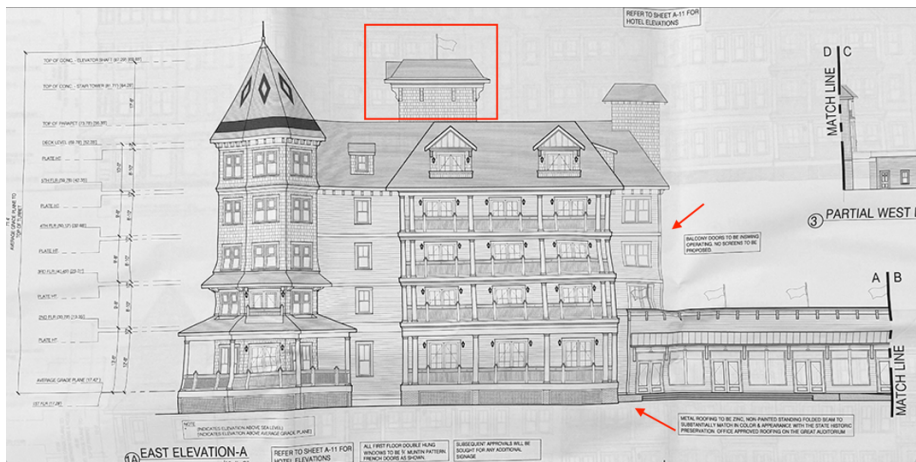
The changes are, at best, minor, and do not in any serious or substantial way, address the areas of concern that have, from the beginning, put this project at odds with the requirements of Architectural Guidelines.

Ocean Grove is a nationally recognized cultural treasure, a one-of-a-kind example of 19th century urban planning, and a veritable catalog of important American architectural examples. The development, as currently proposed, represents a disfiguring intrusion on this historic cultural landmark and represents a destructive and disfiguring intrusion into a community that has, for more than 150 years, been revered and appreciated for its scale, design, architectural importance, and cultural value.

We urge the Planning Board to deny this proposal, to require the applicant to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from HPC as originally specified, and to vote in support of a community that has clearly voiced their concerns that the proposed North End Development is both unwanted and unworthy in its current iteration.



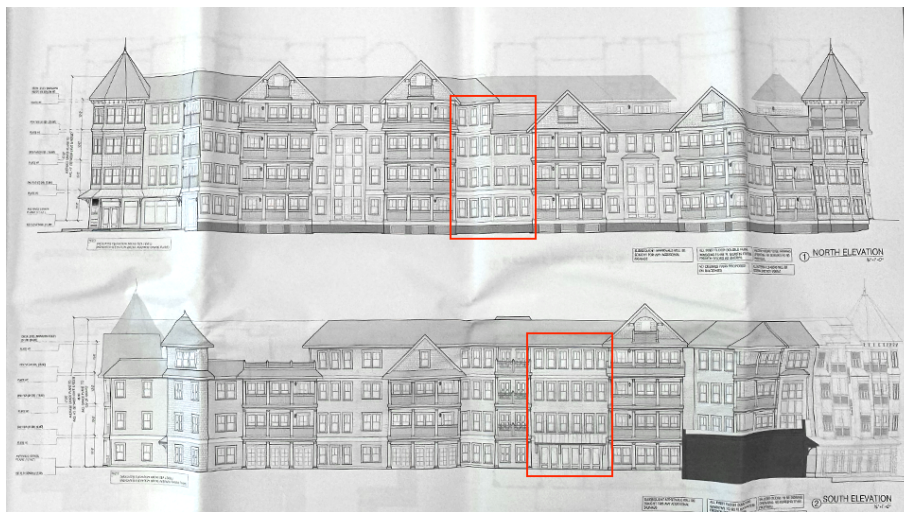
As denied by HPC: The East Elevation of the proposed hotel, showing a non-historic roof form at the elevator column on the roof, a five-story column of shingles at the right, and the commercial extension at the same plane as the wall of the hotel.



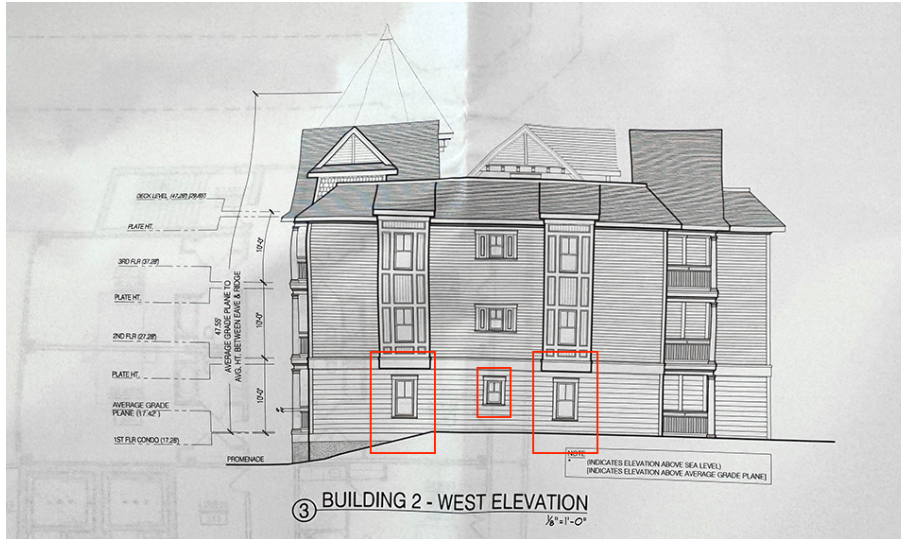
As presented to the Planning Board: The plans submitted to the Planning Board showing minor (and visually negligible changes) to the elevator roof form (still non-historic in design), replacement of some shingles with clapboard, and a minor 2'x2' change in plane between the commercial extension and the hotel.



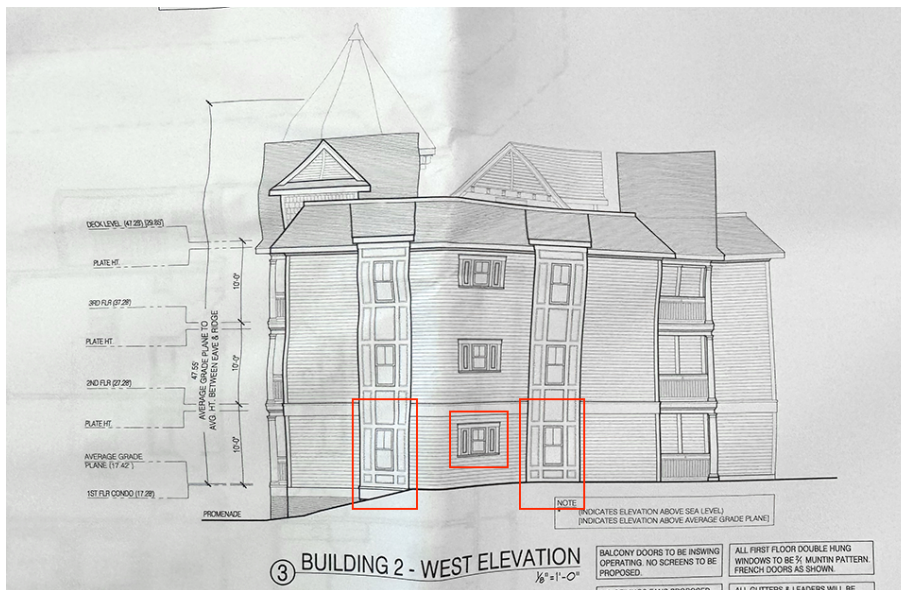
As denied by HPC: Condo Building 1, over-fenestrated in a manner that is non-historic and utilizing sets of triple windows—also non-historic within the district—at both the north and south elevations.



As presented to the Planning Board: The plans submitted to the Planning Board illustrating Condo Building 1: the over fenestration remains but has been made many times worse and less conforming to the Historic Guidelines by creating long running courses of irregularly spaced single windows. The proposed changes are more egregiously non-conforming than the original design unanimously denied by the Commission.



As denied by HPC: West-facing protrusions (bay windows), terminate above the 1st floor.



As presented to the Planning Board: West-facing protrusions (bay windows), terminate at grade.

Summary of HPC review of OGNED proposal.

4 March 2019

HPC offered a curtesy review of the proposed design prior to the applicant submitting an official application. Result: “The Review Team has identified significant deficiencies in how the OGNED Preliminary Architectural Plans (Site and Elevation) fulfill HPC-related aspects of the Redevelopment Plan Ocean Grove North End.”

15 September 2021

HPC met with the OGNED team (including Stephen Carlidge and Justin Calvert, architects, William Gannon III, and Joel Brudner, principles, Janet Foster, historian, and Bernard Haney, Land Use Administrator. The applicant was informed of an itemized list of non-conformities for the Hotel, Commercial Area, Condo Building I and Condo Building II.

8 December 2021

HPC met with OGNED team again to continue discussions. A two-foot notch was proposed between the hotel and the commercial section. (Note: this was agreed to in 2021, and not, as suggested, one of the negotiated modifications worked out with the Township.)

13 April 2022

A detailed review of all outstanding non-conformities was prepared by HPC and shared with both the applicant and the Commission members.

19 April 2022

Applicant came before the full Commission to review their proposed project.

8 June 2022

Applicant again came before the full Commission to continue review of their proposed project. The HPC members voted unanimously to deny the applicant a Certificate of Appropriateness for failing to bring the project into conformity with the Architectural Design Guidelines.