

**CITY OF LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN
CITY PLAN COMMISSION
REPORT
February 2, 2015**

➤ **AGENDA ITEM - 15-0049 (Tim Acklin)**

Request for Exception to Standards for Commercial Design by 434 Holdings, Inc. for the hotel project at 434 3rd St. S. allowing for a waiver of parking lot design and standards.

➤ **ROUTING:** J&A Committee

➤ **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The applicant is requesting an exception to the Commercial Design Standards on the property depicted on attached **MAP PC15-0049**. The applicant is proposing to construct a 92 room hotel on the property with 98 off-street parking spaces. The requirement being requested to be waived is that no parking shall be closer to the street than the building. In the proposed site plan, parking is closer to both King Street and 3rd Street S than the building. A site plan for the proposed development is attached as part of their application.

Planning staff has met several times with the developer and expressed this concern. Staff recommended that the ideal location would be up to the corner of King and 3rd Streets. The applicant stated that they are unable to purchase the property/business at that location (Chapter II) until December of 2015 which would delay construction until 2016. As proposed, construction can begin this year. As a second option, planning staff recommended bringing the building up to 3rd Street. The applicant stated that they would like to have their main entrance and canopy facing 3rd Street. If they move the building up to 3rd Street they would have to remove the canopy. This is a design aspect that the applicant states the hotel franchise would not accept. As a result the applicant is requesting this exception from the Common Council before moving forward with completing final plans.

This project did go through a preliminary review meeting with the Design Review Committee. This project has not gone through final commercial design review with the City.

➤ **GENERAL LOCATION:**

434 3rd Street S

➤ **RECOMMENDATION OF OTHER BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:**

N/A

➤ **CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:**

A major objective in the Urban Design and Heritage Preservation Elements of the Comprehensive Plan is to adopt design standards to enhance the historic character and marketability of La Crosse's historic downtown. While this area is a block away from the historic core and the area where design standards were recently adopted, this block is close enough to have a great visual impact.

The recently adopted design standards for new construction regarding building placement in the historic core are:

(1) *Building Placement*

- a. Most buildings within the district are built to the edge of the sidewalk, maintaining a continuous wall at the building line. New buildings and additions to existing buildings shall maintain the street wall, except where setbacks are used to emphasize entries or create outdoor seating areas.
- b. Buildings shall meet the established building facade line on the block where they are located for at least 75 percent of the length of their front façade.
- c. The remaining 25 percent of the façade may be set back up to 10 feet to emphasize entries or create outdoor seating and gathering areas.
- d. At intersections, buildings shall "hold the corner" – that is, their facades should be located at or near the sidewalk line on both streets.
- e. Side setbacks shall only be used to create walkways or semi-public spaces such as restaurant patios.
- f. Driveways may only be placed in side yards where no alternative (such as alley access) exists.

➤ **PLANNING RECOMMENDATION:**

In reviewing this item planning staff looked back at all of new construction projects that occurred within and around the Downtown within the last 20 years. The new LHI Buildings and parking ramp, the La Crosse Community Theatre, Market Square Ramp and Grand River Station have been built up to the sidewalk. Gateway Terrace on 6th and Main Streets and Subway on 3rd & Pearl Streets are built up to the sidewalk. The new Hampton Inn and Suites is being built up to 2nd Street. Even the Holiday Inn, which has parking on 2nd Street, is built up to Pearl Street. The one exception is the Social Security Building on 7th Street, which the Planning Department strongly recommended to be built up to the street, and would argue that it looks out place in its final location.

Planning staff also looked at the surrounding properties. The warehouse to the west is built up to King and 2nd Streets. Across King Street to the north between 2nd & 3rd Streets Glory Days is built up to 3rd Street and Grand River Station is built up to the sidewalk on all sides. To the northeast the Market Square Ramp is built up to the sidewalk on all sides. To the east, half the block is built to 3rd Street before there is a surface parking lot and the building on the corner of 3rd & Cass Streets which a portion

of is built up to 3rd Street.

Planning staff strongly supports the proposed use of this property as a hotel, however, not at the expense of the historic character of the downtown. All new commercial projects have been required to meet this requirement. Once an exception is made, it is much easier to set it as a precedent. This project is proposed in a highly visible area that serves as a corridor in and out of La Crosse, particularly into the Downtown. The problem staff is having with this development is that it is not designed to fit our downtown; the suburban aspects of the site plan should not be allowed to move forward as proposed.

Planning Staff recommends the following:
























The Request for an Exemption is denied and the building is required to front the northeast corner of King & 3rd Streets.

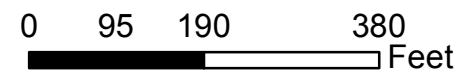
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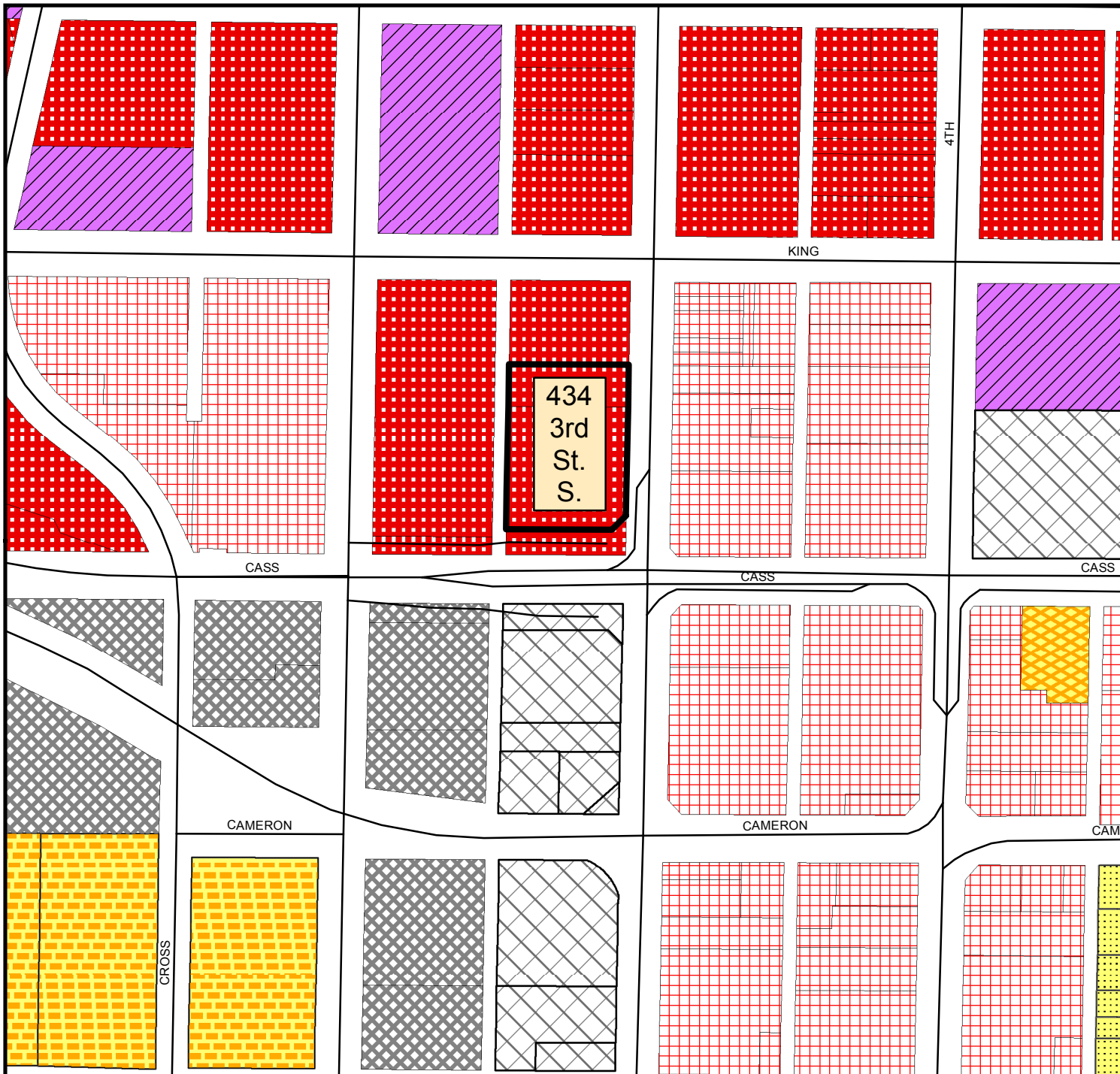
The Request for an Exemption is denied and the building is required to front 3rd Street. This option may take some work from the developer and the franchise, but staff would approve of the 75/25% façade split (referenced above) on 3rd street where the drop off could be set in under the building and the front façade on both sides set up to 3rd Street. The other option is to move the canopy and drop off to the north side of the building, allowing the building to be pulled up to 3rd Street.



BASIC ZONING DISTRICTS

-  R1 - SINGLE FAMILY
-  R2 - RESIDENCE
-  WR - WASHBURN RES
-  R3 - SPECIAL RESIDENCE
-  R4 - LOW DENSITY MULTI
-  R5 - MULTIPLE DWELLING
-  R6 - SPECIAL MULTIPLE
-  PD- PLANNED DEVELOP
-  TND - TRAD NEIGH DEV.
-  C1 - LOCAL BUSINESS
-  C2 - COMMERCIAL
-  C3 - COMMUNITY BUSINESS
-  M1 - LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
-  M2 - HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
-  PS - PUBLIC & SEMI-PUBLIC
-  PL - PARKING LOT
-  UT - PUBLIC UTILITY
-  CON - CONSERVANCY
-  FW - FLOODWAY
-  A1 - AGRICULTURAL
-  EA - EXCLUSIVE AG
-  City Limits
-  SUBJECT PROPERTY





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