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April 19, 2021

Mr. Garrick Landsberg  
Director of Historic Preservation  
Detroit Historic District Commission  
Planning & Development Department  
City of Detroit  
2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 808  
Detroit, MI 48226

RE: Corktown Site 1a – HDC Request for Certificate of Appropriateness for Townhouses  
at Church & 10<sup>th</sup> Streets  
Detroit, MI

Dear Mr. Landsberg:

In accordance with requirements from the Detroit Historic District Commission, we are submitting project information for the proposed construction of Townhouses located at 1610 Church Street (on north side of Church Street at 10<sup>th</sup> Street) in Corktown, and requesting that we be placed on the HDC May 12th agenda to request a Certificate of Appropriateness for this project.

The Townhouse project is proposed to be built on the vacant parcels located on the north side of Church Street at the northwest corner of 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Certificate of Appropriateness Review:** We request that the Historic District Commission review and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed Townhouses for use by the development team in their subsequent design development of the project.

We are presenting the design of the new Townhouses with accompanying materials as follows

- Blockfront elevations studies of surrounding neighborhood buildings illustrating solid/void rhythms of openings.
- Architectural site plan
- Schematic drawings including floor plans, elevations, and building sections
- Material sample boards
- Project narrative
- 3D renderings of the proposed new building

In addition to the attached documentation, we are also submitting the following narratives to describe the design of the new building and how it was contextually developed relative to the HDC "Elements of Design."

**Corktown Site 1a- Townhouses Design Narrative**

The Townhouses will be a three story masonry structure of seven attached townhouses. The primary material will be a medium gray brick with some gray metal accent details and entrance canopies. The siting of the building will step back to the northeast to follow the angled property lines on Church Street as it approaches 10<sup>th</sup> Street. This stepping of the building plan will also serve to break up the massing of the residences and give them individual identity. The medium gray brick masonry coupled with the

metal accent color is derived from the historical palette of materials in the neighborhood. The fourth floors of the individual townhouses are set back from Church Street to offer rooftop patios and the patio railings add filigree to the façade to again break down its scale.

Materials for the proposed new building utilize the brick masonry warehouse aesthetic of the larger historic commercial buildings in the surrounding area. The form, massing, and scale of these proposed townhouses also closely resemble those elements of other Corktown structures.

### **Townhouses Compatibility with Corktown Elements of Design**

**Adjacent Buildings Context:** To the east is a one story auto repair shop building dating from the early twentieth century. To the west is a blockfront of historic two and one half story residential structures continuing to the intersection of 11<sup>th</sup> Street. To the south is a vacant lot at 10<sup>th</sup> Street with the remainder of the block two and one half story residential structures. To the north is the rear elevation of the proposed new mixed-use apartment building.

**1. Height:** At 35' in height, the Townhouse building is compatible with the height of the front gable two and one half story residential structures of the neighborhood. A stairway enclosure provides access to roof patios on each unit and their railings provide a delicate crown to the building.

**2a. Mass/Scale:** The building's massing is derived from the examples of the larger commercial/industrial historic buildings in Corktown (Checker Cab, Grinnell's Lofts, 6<sup>th</sup> Street Lofts, Kaul Glove factory, etc.) The scale of the proposed apartment building relates to the scale of the front gable two and one half story residential structures of the neighborhood as well as the larger commercial and loft buildings.

**2b. Proportion of Front Façade (Vertical/Horizontal Expression):** The townhouse building front façade proportions on Church Street are essentially rectangular with horizontal form and vertical design elements such as the stepped vertical masses of the individual townhomes as well as glazing frames.

**3. Openings (% and Orientation):** The proportion of openings versus solid wall on the building is 36% on average, and again derives its proportion from neighboring historic loft structures.

**4. Opening Rhythm:** Window openings are in a regular grid pattern, both vertical and approaching a square form within the majority brick rectangular grid of the individual townhome facades with vertical window mullions emphasizing verticality. This shape/rhythm of wall openings is compatible with the wall patterns of historic loft buildings in the neighborhood.

**5. Blockfront Rhythm:** The building's façade rhythm is again derived from the opening cadence in nearby loft structures as well as the adjacent residential structures.

**6. Entrance/Porch Rhythm:** The individual townhomes each have a projecting low profile concrete porch with canopy in keeping with the projecting porches of the neighborhood residential structures.

**7. Compatible Materials:** The building's material palette is derived from common Corktown building elements: brick, glass, metal accent elements, and crown of rooftop railings.

8. Compatible Textures: The textures of brick surfaces juxtaposed with coated metal accent glazing elements (contemporary cousins of Victorian painted wood trim and panels) are used as accents within the building facades.

9. Compatible Colors: With the majority use of medium gray brick as the body color of the building with darker gray metal glazing elements, the townhouse building derives its coloration from both the painted clapboard houses as well as the historic loft, industrial structures in Corktown.

10. Architectural Detail: The townhouse building's use of architectural detail is found in the decorative metal rooftop railings, porches & canopies and brick patterns.

11. Roof Shape: The building has a flat roof (with open roof deck) similar to historic commercial buildings in Corktown.

12. Continuous Street Wall: With the townhouse building's streetfront façade stepping back to the northeast, the residential neighborhood's public realm character is preserved in a continuous street wall compatible with the blockfront of residential structures setbacks to the west.

13. Landscape/Surface Treatments: Front yard lawns with porch service walks continue the neighborhood aesthetic of the adjacent blockfront of historic homes to the west.

14. Open Space Relationship to Building: With front yard lawns and rear yard surface parking spaces, the townhouse building exhibits similar open space relationships as the adjacent historic homes do.

15. Façade & Elements Scale: The townhouse building utilizes the stepping back of the individual townhomes facades to the northeast as a means of breaking down the scale of the structure while also providing emphasis to the individual identity of each townhome.

16. Directional Expression of Front Elevations: The overall massing of the building is horizontal in nature with strong vertical elements in the façade setbacks and the vertical orientation of window glazing.

17. Rhythm of Building Setbacks: The setbacks of vertical façade planes on Church Street are defined by the width of the individual townhome units. The partial grouping of units in these façade planes add interest and a syncopation to the Church Street blockfront.

18. Relationship of Lot Coverages: The townhouse building occupies 35% of the overall site which is consistent with the lot area coverage of the adjacent historic homes.

19. Façade Complexity: The complexity of the townhouse façade derives the adjacent Queen Anne historic house geometries with stepped façade planes, projecting porches, both vertical windows and picture windows and the gentle outlines of the rooftop railings.

20. Orientation, Vistas, Overviews: The primary orientation of the building is to Church Street. General overview is the continuation of larger warehouse type structures interspersed throughout the low scale residential neighborhood.

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21. Symmetrical vs Asymmetrical: The townhouse building's primary building façade is an asymmetrical stepped series of vertical planes picking up the syncopation of the adjacent historic home facades within the overall blockfront. The facade utilizes offset porch entries which emphasize the asymmetrical character of the building.

22. General Environmental Character: This townhouse building will contribute to the Corktown neighborhood's unique combination of wood clapboard houses combined with larger masonry commercial and industrial structures creating a unique aesthetic in this near downtown neighborhood.

Please let me know if you require additional information or have any questions.

Sincerely,

NEUMANN/SMITH ARCHITECTURE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JS', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joel Smith, AIA  
President

Copies: Mike Kirk: Neumann Smith