



December 19, 2022

Ms. Heather Richards, Planning Director
City of McMinnville
525 NE 4th Street
McMinnville, OR 97218

Re: Gwendolyn Hotel (HL 6-22, HL 7-22, HL 8-22. DDR 2-22)

Dear Heather:

I wanted to take this opportunity to respond to letters I have read that have been forwarded to the city in response to our Gwendolyn Hotel application. Though I may disagree with some of the statements or conclusions in these letters, I greatly respect their contributors.

From my reading, the concerns can be collected into basically two areas:

1. The buildings at 609, 611, and 619 NE 3rd Street are too important, and should not be removed.
2. The proposed building is too large.

Before proceeding, I think we should acknowledge that there are a lot of passionate arguments being put forth in these letters and I will point out where I think some points of view have been exaggerated. Now I will address the first concern, **demolition**:

I hope it will be helpful to know how, as a design team, we began to study these three parcels. The properties had recently come up for sale, and our developer client was interested in them as a potential location as a boutique hotel. We did a lot of research into all the land use procedures and requirements including the replacement of the buildings. At the same time, we were compiling all that we could find of reports which spoke to visions and strategies for McMinnville's future. Having reviewed the code language relative to demolition we were encouraged that the buildings could be removed if it met the qualitative criteria, and we were especially encouraged by the Mac Town 2032, economic development strategic plan.

And central to the strategy was the following: "Be a leader in hospitality and place-based tourism."
(Excerpts from that document):

- 6.1 Make Downtown the Best It Can Be.
"Evaluate current zoning, historical districts and designations, and existing land use patterns, including underutilized parcels, to ensure that key downtown parcels offer the highest and best use for their location."
- 6.2 Become the Preferred Destination for Wine Based Tourism.
"Connect hoteliers and other hospitality professionals in Oregon and elsewhere to local opportunities for high quality additions to McMinnville's current hospitality offerings."

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From the outset it seemed like we had found the perfect place to realize both the city's vision and our own.

Much has been written, studied, and said about both the historical and qualitative merits of the three existing buildings. I do think the several examinations and arguments for preservation have been essential and important. The three buildings got their historical designation because of when they were built, and not for any architectural significance. They were built in a utilitarian fashion, whose features have degraded over time. Some have said, with exaggeration, that these buildings represent the heart and soul of historical 3rd Street. I disagree. I think the heart and soul of 3rd Street resides in the blocks from Ford Street, west to include the truly grand buildings built before and a little after 1900. Great because of what they are, not when they were built. Here stands a great opportunity to bring uses to greatly activate the eastern stretch of 3rd street, a catalyst to equal the grandeur of the western part. Great street life, and interior spaces that will be beloved from near and far.

And now to the second concern of being **too large**:

Again, back to the beginning of our design process. We established a rule that we would stay fully in what is allowed under the zoning code for this site, and for the district. We are under the building height allowed of 80 ft., and though it has been said we will require a waiver for our building height, that is **incorrect**.

Our building design is marginally taller than the two other taller buildings in the district, the four-story Atticus Hotel and the four plus story McMennamins building (four floors + rooftop amenity). My point is that the Gwendolyn Hotel design is not substantially taller, and our streetscape experience is considerably more pedestrian friendly than those street fronts. We have gone to great effort with our sidewalk facades to convey a two-story feeling at the corner as well as east on 3rd Street and north on Ford Street. This perpetuates the continuity of the streetscape while furthering the City's economic development goals.

We are very happy with our latest design changes, which will be in harmony with the other blocks along west 3rd Street, with our use of familiar materials, separate building expressions, and historical detailing. What you won't see is hotel guest parking taking up the on-street stalls for blocks around. At great expense, we are putting said parking in a basement garage.

The last thing I would ask is to imagine our building design in the greater context of the 3rd Street historical district west of Ford Street on 3rd has always been different, with the blocks of large, Italianate, heavily detailed buildings.

The utilitarian buildings of necessity for the auto that were the predominate building type of the eastern stretch of 3rd, have for 100 years had a split personality for 3rd Street. A street out of balance. Would it not now be proper, in keeping with McMinnville's great potential for long term economic sustainability, to let the rest of 3rd Street have its due? A larger building can settle in there just fine, and the full length of 3rd street can become the economic engine to the benefit of all.

Let's be careful, saving a village as-is rarely improves it in the long run.

Respectfully,

Gary Reddick, AIA
Otak - Director of Design