



123 Madison Street, Oak Park, Illinois 60302

April 15, 2016

717 South Boulevard LLC
c/o John Schiess
400 Ashland Avenue
River Forest, Illinois 60305

Re: Certificate of Advisory Review – 717 South Boulevard Planned Development

Mr. Schiess:

Thank you for attending the March 23, 2016 meeting of the HPC Architectural Review Committee. At that meeting you presented the preliminary plans for the 5-story mixed-use building proposed for the vacant lot located within the *Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District*. Following that presentation, the Committee deferred commenting on the proposal until the April 14, 2016 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission. At the April 14 meeting the Commission's comments were based on the presentation dated March 23, 2016.

The Commission had the following comments:

- The Commission generally felt that the mix of materials was successful and helped to break down the scale of the façade.
- Some concern was expressed about the large blank façade at the front corner of the building looking down over the 1-and-2 story commercial properties adjacent along Oak Park Avenue. Possibly setting back the front corners or including the front balconies at the sides like the building at Marion and South might be more successful.
- The Commission felt that the rear façade was very important as it abuts and is viewed from the historic residential district to the south. While they thought that the south façade was generally successful in terms of interest and scale, they felt it could benefit from having the fifth floor set back in the same manner as the north façade. If the planning would only allow for one fifth-floor setback, the Commission felt having the setback at the rear façade would diminish the building's impact on the adjacent lower scale residential district to the south.
- If the side walls must remain at the property line and therefore without openings, the applicant might consider "green walls" to enliven the façade. The following website provides examples of their benefits:
<http://www.greenroofs.org/index.php/about/green-wall-benefits>.
- The Commission noted that a decorative precast band is missing from the east façade rendering. They felt the façade would be more successful if the band would be included.

- A four-story building makes sense from a contextual design standpoint. Most historic buildings adjacent to and behind the proposed structure are designed with parapets with cornices that are flush with the property line, with no penthouse stepbacks or other similar rooftop features.

Please contact me if you have any questions at (708) 358-5417 or at dkaarre@oak-park.us.

Sincerely,



Douglas Kaarre, AICP
Urban Planner/Historic Preservation