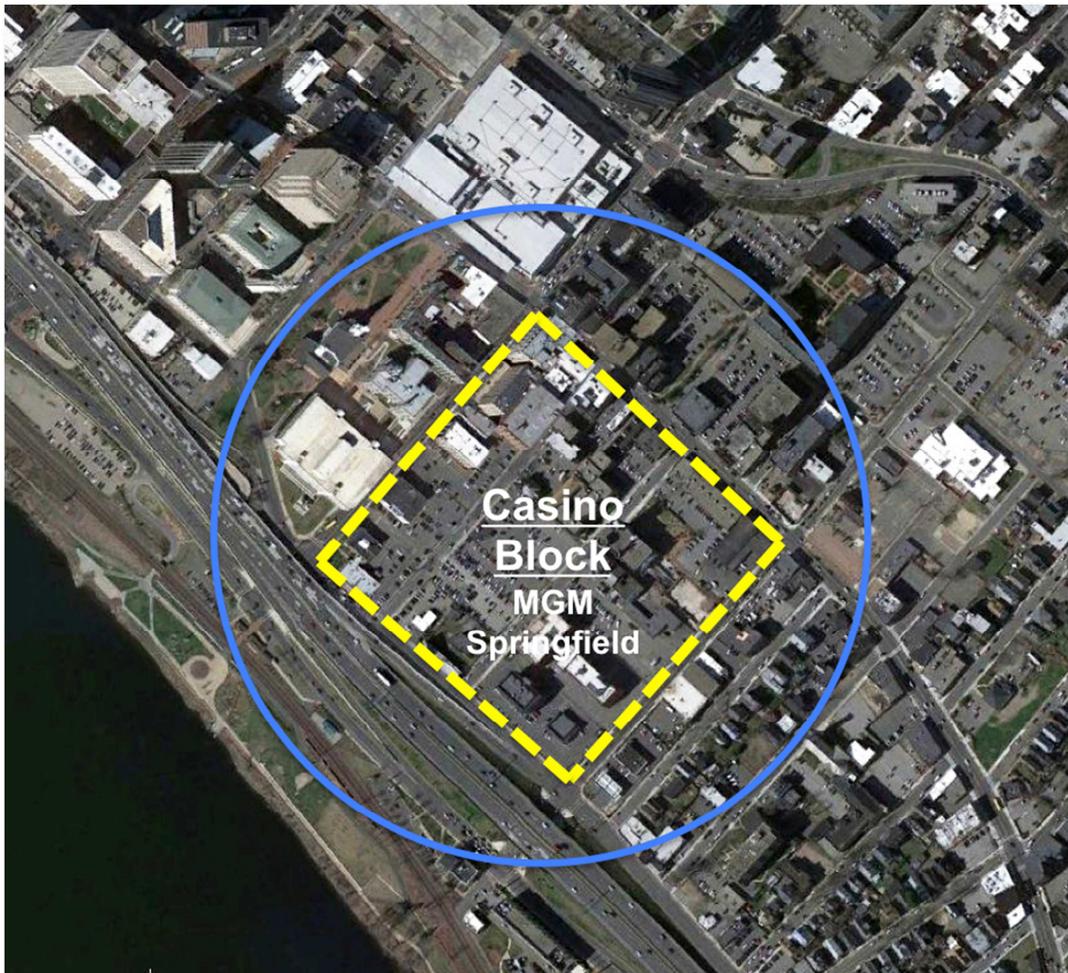


MGM SPRINGFIELD SITE PLAN REVIEW



Summary Report: ***Plan/Design/Development Aspects***

January 13, 2016

Prepared by: The Chicago Consultants Studio, Inc.

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OVERVIEW

MGM Springfield's plan for a downtown redevelopment, located adjacent to Springfield's South End neighborhood represents a major economic development initiative for the City, the State and the Region. Their focus on creating an integrated casino "urban destination" complex within the heart of the City provides a unique opportunity to reshape a significant portion of the downtown devastated by the 2011 tornado, and foster economic development for the city and region. Properly leveraged, the development will bring great benefits beyond just pure gaming revenues including across many other sectors such as tourism, convention, commercial, retail, food/entertainment and even residential. MGM's proposal in 2013 outlined a significant reinvestment in the area which was memorialized in the Host Community Agreement (HCA) and has served as the basis for ongoing review.

On behalf of the City of Springfield and in direct consultation with the Office of Planning & Economic Development, the Chicago Consultants Studio, Inc, (CCS) have engaged in an independent review, assessment and advancement of the key urban design, programmatic and strategic development aspects of the project to ensure that it meets or exceeds the minimum requirements as outlined in both City code with respect to Site Plan Review and development commitments as articulated in the HCA. These reviews for Site Plan Approval and HCA compliance have been undertaken concurrently as the two rely on the similar advancement of the project and plans, though are separate in their focus for approval. The findings will be detailed in two separate reports, including herein this report for Site Plan Approval.

While there have been significant modifications to the site plan compared to the concept plans submitted with the original HCA, overall when understood as a complete "project" the proposed changes generally reflect positive improvements and are part of the normal and customary design evolution of an urban development of this scale. As long as MGM continues to work collaboratively with the City as the project advances, CCS believes the development is on track to deliver what excited us and excited the City when it originally selected MGM's proposal. Properly executed, such modifications are in fact an important and essential part of a successful development process and should be evaluated in light of making certain the plan and design continues to "evolve" as it enters the design development and construction documents phases.

Subject to the specific comments and conditions recommended herein, it is our opinion that the site plan submittal is consistent with the design, program and character as reflected in the original MGM proposal and memorialized in this next generation of design drawings submitted by MGM for Site Plan Review and Approval.

SUMMARY OF SITE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS AND COMMENTS

Pre-Submittal Advancements and Dialogue

Prior to formal submittals for Site Plan review, MGM continued the advancement of the plan and program and engaged with the City and its consultants in a number of informal review and dialogue sessions. Preliminary discussions revolved around plan changes by MGM required in their estimation to create a more functional plan for patrons and employees, as well as to better respond to constructability / feasibility and cost issues. Key discussion revolved around the elimination of the basement and resulting relocation of warehouse, the back of house functions to the second floor and significant reduction to the roof top garden amenity, and miscellaneous other site plan modifications. This dialogue afforded the City with the opportunity to influence the final site plan characteristics rather than merely evaluate changes in a vacuum.

Site Plan Submittal #1

As part of the requirements for any construction project to commence in Springfield, the City requires a formal submittal for “site plan approval” as outlined in Article 12 of the City Zoning Ordinance. MGM submitted a package for formal Site Plan Approval to the City on October 22, 2015 consisting of a variety of site and building plans and elevations. After initial review by the City, the Site Plan package was deemed “incomplete” due to lacking the required drawings for site lighting, signage, and site landscaping as required in the City’s Site Plan Review process, as well as certain inconsistencies with the original MGM proposal deemed material. CCS concurred with the assessment. MGM was requested to supplement the submittal with drawings to satisfy the City requirements.

Though the Site Plan package was deemed incomplete, the plans submitted did provide substantial information for review and assessment. While the Site Plan review is primarily a cursory checklist and not a subjective “design” review, the following concerns were discussed with MGM in conjunction with the net effect of the modifications on the HCA commitments as well as the overall pursuit of a better project:

- Relocation of the Hotel tower as a midrise along Main Street
- Relocation of the residential component offsite
- Primary entry and access points to the Casino, Hotel, Retail
- Roof garden allocation and access
- Retail storefront allocation and location
- Garage/Traffic/Parking access
- Bus drop-off and pick-up configuration

Given the pending changes in the Site Plan and their related impact on the commitments of the HCA, the City, its Consultants and MGM agreed to continue further dialogue to advance the plan and program to a mutually agreeable solution.

November 18, 2015 Public Presentation

To facilitate an open, transparent process and clarify MGM's revisions to the overall project, the City asked MGM to make a formal public presentation of the revised project and participate in a question and answer session. The City, CCS and other consultants participated in open dialogue as well as a PowerPoint presentation that focused on clarifying the current plans in relation to the requirements of the HCA.

MGM's presentation revealed the primary changes in the plan (as noted above), the net minimal effect to the quality of the development, and the general consistency with the site plan and design characteristics of its original proposal and the site plan/design obligations in the HCA. Through comparative analysis, MGM displayed that the overall plan and program remained virtually the same with respect to key program elements (included gaming area, retail, food and beverage, hotel rooms) and that the net decreases in square footage were primarily due to reduction of the back of house and further efficiencies resulting from design advancement. Separate from the MGM presentation and in advance of the November 18th meeting, CCS independently assessed and analyzed the changes to the overall project and concurred with MGM's assessment that the site plan and design aspects were consistent with the original proposal and consistent with the HCA obligations related to plan/design aspects. Notwithstanding, CCS did identify and raise a number of areas that required further articulation, explanation or clarification in this regard.

Also, at the public meeting the City outlined the pertinent information related to the Site Plan Review process, and the procedures for moving forward with the project including:

- 30 day review period
- public hearing within 45 days (running concurrently with 30 day period)
- City Council is the approving body for the Site Plan Review, whose approval cannot be denied if found to be in conformance with the underlying zoning regulations, though reasonable conditions can be imposed on the approval; a decision must be rendered within 10 days after the public hearing is closed

Site Plan Submittal #2

Subsequent to the initial submittal for Site Plan Approval, MGM delivered to the City the missing documents including: Storm Water Management plans on October 28, 2015; Street Lighting and Landscape Plans, a Signage Plan Waiver Request, and a Materials Matrix on November 18, 2015. With this additional information, the submittal fulfilled the City requirements and the application was deemed complete on November 23, 2015 beginning the 30-day review process for approval.

Interactive Work Sessions and Revisions

With a complete application, the City and CCS set out to engage MGM in follow-up work sessions targeting the key concerns of the original October 22nd site plan package and the questions/comments raised at the November 18th meeting. These in-depth work sessions included discussions on retail programming and location, façade articulation and materials, vehicular access and parking, spatial adjacencies, landscaping, and signage design and integration into the façade.

On December 22, 2015, MGM supplemented their submittal with revised drawings and materials that reflect the advances and mutually agreeable enhancements to the plan, design and program achieved through the interactive process.

Further documentation from MGM generated out of the interactive design work sessions with the City and its team will be included in the presentations to the City Council in January and is considered part of this report.

The materials submitted by MGM on October 22nd, supplemented on October 28th and November 18th, and further refined on December 22nd, together with the materials to be submitted at the January 19th & 20th hearings, will collectively reflect the current submittal of the site plan and the design. Should there be any discrepancies within these submittals, then the latest iterations shall govern.

Implementation Blueprint

Section 4.10 of the Host Community Agreement (HCA) cites a commitment by the City to engage in a process to generate an Implementation Blueprint which seeks to leverage the energy and positive impact of the casino development on a broader scale to stimulate collateral community and economic development. While the Implementation Blueprint relates more specifically to the HCA than the Site Plan Review, it is referenced here since approval of the Site Plan will help lay the foundation for initiating work in earnest on the Implementation Blueprint.

It is relevant to the Site Plan review process as the Implementation Blueprint effort will afford further opportunity to abutters, nearby property owners, adjacent neighborhoods, civic entities and interested parties to engage the City in an ongoing collaborative dialogue on how to maximize the benefit of this most unique and precedent setting urban redevelopment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SITE PLAN APPROVAL

Summary of Key Plan/Design Aspects Resolved

The review and assessment process involved both major and minor site plan and design aspects to resolve. A summary of the primary and most substantive items and their resolution includes:

- Removal of the Highrise Hotel tower and Replacement as a Midrise Component along Main Street

While the original highrise hotel tower provided the project with a tall image, its design resolution, character and scale were not fully resolved in the original plans. Moving the hotel function to the Main Street frontage is actually a very positive enhancement in that it more fully engages the project with Main Street and energizes the urban fabric and pedestrian environment. We firmly believe that the overall massing and scale of the casino development, developed as a whole and integrated into the Springfield urban fabric, is a better resolution than the original design and in no way reduces the visual excitement of the project nor the level of quality or attractiveness of the hotel.

- Relocation of the Market Rate Housing Component Off-Site

Market rate residential as a stimulus to other similar neighborhood investment in downtown has always been a significant positive element of the project. Like the hotel tower, however, the on-site residential was not fully resolved in the preliminary concept plans. Relocation of the residential commitment off-site to several unique and different venues within the downtown community presents an exciting opportunity to truly leverage the new housing for its intended purpose. Although yet to be finally determined where and how, the potential to “cloud seed” with precedent-setting, market rate residential product off-site and nearby the casino block is a positive enhancement to the project, and in no way reduces the character or quality of the project. Further, this move actually energizes the “Implementation Blueprint” effort which the HCA commits to in order to ensure that the positive collateral impacts of the casino development are realized through a larger community-building and economic development footprint in the broader downtown area.

- Distribution and Location of Retail and Food/Beverage Storefronts

The commitment to retail and food & beverage venues has actually increased in square footage, as well as maintained its minimum number of separate and unique vendors. The introduction of the Armory Marketplace is a new and exciting enhancement to the site plan. Also, the commitment to energize the retail presence at the two main project corners (State/Main and Main/Union) is a positive enhancement. To that end, MGM has indicated that the existing Dave’s Furniture building will be replaced by a new retail structure and the City should encourage MGM to develop that corner in a high quality manner consistent with Main Street and with MGM’s commitments to destination and new-to-market retail, entertainment of food/beverage venues.

Due to the critical nature of the overall retail and food/beverage programming on the success of the redevelopment as a unique destination, as tenanting

advances it is important that MGM and the City continue a dialogue to achieve the dynamic environment reflected in MGM's original proposal.

- Garage Facades (primarily façade facing the Interstate)

The elevations of the garage were the subject of much dialogue during the review process. Several advancements in the latest plans and drawings include a change in façade coloration between the two garage massings in order to differentiate and modulate the overall scale of the structure, redesign of the garage corner elements to create more pleasing architectural definition, introduction of a rooftop parapet design element to serve as both an architectural feature and to embody project signage and graphics in a manner which is integrated into the Springfield skyline and captures attention from the higher speed highway traffic. Although not concluded, it remains our recommendation that some form of urban landscaping be integrated into the new rooftop parapet design to provide a unique, year round image and soften the overall mass and scale of the garage complex.

- Bus Drop-Off and Pick-Up

As a casino in the heart of an urban downtown, the preliminary bus drop-off area was conceived as a more suburban configuration which detracted from the pedestrian access from downtown and did not fit the cityscape character both MGM and the City desired. Work sessions with the City and MGM's design team resulted in a much more urban and welcoming configuration for bus operations and with the addition of an elegant porte cochere fixed awning, creates a more inviting urban image and character for this important edge of the development.

- Landscaping Plan

Landscaping is an extremely critical part of the overall design character of a project despite its location in the heart of downtown. Major concerns over the reduction and reallocation of the second level roof garden were resolved after numerous work sessions to better understand the intent, the value and the commitment which MGM made to this as a most appealing amenity. The resolution allows for use of the roof garden by hotel guests, conference attendees, casino patrons and the general public, and visually links it with the entertainment plaza components below. While the overall detailed project site landscaping plans remain very preliminary, a review of the landscape design specifics provided very detailed concept comments which MGM concurred would be addressed as the landscaping plans advance. This includes the enhanced design for DaVinci Park as well as making certain paving patterns, materials, street furnishings and streetscape elements all reinforce the unique opportunity presented in the pedestrian areas and street edges.

- General Massing and Building Materials Matrix

The site plan review process also addressed advancements to the overall massing and articulation of facades, entries and design character/quality. Areas such as the character of the entertainment plaza facades were discussed in detail and embellished to ensure proper articulation, fenestration and integration as an extension of the downtown urban fabric.

The City requested a means to ensure that as the development details advanced, the design character and quality of the buildings continue to meet the urban standards of Springfield, the rigors of a northern climate and the depth of a true urban cityscape. In response MGM developed a preliminary matrix of allowable building materials and a menu of where and how they will be deployed across the project. While the materials matrix will evolve and advance further as the design advances in consultation with the City, it provides a valuable development tool for the City to assure that the design intent will be met while allowing the flexibility necessary for design development to evolve.

- Day Care

The latest plans have located the Day Care facility at the corner of Main and Union nearby but off-site, and have significantly enlarged its program to 6,000sf to meet the anticipated needs and amenities. As an important social/community benefit aspect of the plans, it will be important for the City to continue to review the detailed plans for the Day Care facility as they are advanced.

- Signage and Graphics

While some of the advanced plans and drawings prepared by MGM may show signage, it should be noted this is for illustrative purposes to assist in modulating the massing and architectural design. The Applicant should return to the City Council to provide further supplementation of this Site Plan approval to comply with the intent of the signage regulations.

Contingent Approval

Based on CCS' independent review and the significant in-depth dialogue with MGM during that review process (which will continue as the site plan and project design advance to the next level of design/construction detail), CCS believes the project meets the City's requirements for Site Plan approval. This recommendation is contingent on MGM's continued advancement of the design in a manner consistent with the latest materials and design directions provided by MGM, and compliance with the provisions of the HCA related to design and development aspects.

Specific contingent items include those elements noted above in the Summary which MGM has demonstrated an understanding and concurrence with the desired intent but for which further design advancement is necessary before finalization.

The site plan, building designs, elevations, signage, programming, tenanting and other aspects will continue to evolve and advance as is typical to large scale redevelopment projects. CCS' review of the City's Site Plan submittals has been based on conformance to meet or exceed the requirements and the overall intent of the project as detailed throughout the process. It is our recommendation that the Site Plan Review be conditionally approved contingent on review of MGM's future submissions for conformance to the overall plan and design directions in the approved site plan submittal and as outlined herein.