

<b>COA #</b> <b>2012-COA-186</b> <b>(CAMA)</b>	<b>INDIANAPOLIS HISTORIC PRESERVATION</b> <b>COMMISSION</b> <b>STAFF REPORT</b>		Hearing Date <b>JULY 5, 2012</b>
	<b>555 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE</b> <b>CHATHAM-ARCH &amp; MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE</b>		NEW CASE  Center Twp. Council District 9 Joseph Simpson
<b>Applicant</b> <b>INSIGHT DEVELOPMENT CORP.</b> mailing address: 1919 N. Meridian Street Indianapolis, IN 46202			
<b>Owner:</b> <b>INDIANAPOLIS HOUSING AGENCY</b> 1919 N. Meridian Street Indianapolis, IN 46202			
<b>CASE</b>			
<b>IHPC COA: 2011-COA-556 (HMP)</b> Construct a 5-story mixed use building with 129 apartments and 13,960 s.f. of retail space			
<b>STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval of a 2-year Certificate of Appropriateness</b>			
<b>STAFF COMMENTS</b>			

**Background of the Property**

The 1887 Sanborn map shows that the area bounded by Massachusetts Avenue, N. East Street, and E. Michigan Street was comprised of mixed uses. There were many dwellings along East Street and Massachusetts, while Massachusetts also featured a variety of businesses. There were stores and offices, along with manufacturing facilities such as a cigar factory, a marble works and a stained glass manufacturer. By 1898, the manufacturing uses along Massachusetts Avenue had changed to all retail. Dwellings continued to exist along East Street, and the Millikan Flats were constructed on Michigan.

The 1941 Baist Atlas demonstrates that the vast majority of buildings were extant at that time, although a gas station had been constructed at the northern tip where Massachusetts and East meet. A paste over update in the 1956 Sanborn map shows the existing tower, although you can see through the paste over that the houses along East Street, Millikan Flats, and several stores fronting Massachusetts were extant in 1956 when the map was originally drawn up.

The John J. Barton Apartments for the Elderly were constructed in 1969, and designed by Woollen Associates. It is a high-rise concrete shear-wall structure built in the Brutalist style, and at one time featured a bridge over East Street, connecting the tower with a low-rise housing unit. Evans Woollen was also a co-designer of Clowes Memorial Hall and designed the Central Library addition and the Minton-Capehart Federal Building in Indianapolis. Barton Tower is a tall concrete monolith intentionally softened by the surrounding green space.

**Site Plan**

The new building wraps around the majority of the block, with a slender opening along Massachusetts Avenue that provides view of the Tower end and access to a slip garden that runs through the center of the development. The location is zoned CBD-2, which allows for full lot coverage. The existing parking along East Street will be retained, but not enlarged, and the upper floors of the building will cover the parking to the edge of the right-of-way. The eastern portion of the parking will extend beyond the building, so a screen wall is proposed to soften the visual effect of the parking area.

## **Project and Contextual Design**

The overall design uses the colors and lines of the existing Barton Tower, and extends those to the street edge. There is an attempt to create verticality to the 5 story structure, tying it to the bulk and height of the Tower. Materials consist of a metal panel cornice; two colors of brick; metal panels and hardi-panel siding with aluminum reveal system. Windows will be aluminum. The colors will be warm grays to reflect the Tower's weathered concrete.

The slip garden reintroduces a green space via an interior corridor. There is a significant amount of green space that will be lost during the redevelopment. However, as the Sanborn maps illustrate, historically this section of Massachusetts Avenue was filled with buildings, although that context was changed in the 1960s with development of the Tower. The architect offers a consistency in size and scale to the overall Massachusetts Avenue streetscape, but relates in form, texture and color the existing context of the actual site and Tower. The differing materials provide visual texture and the design provides visual interest through variation in the wall plane. The windows vary in size and shape. Some are boxy while others are vertical in nature. The sense of verticality is heightened in bays that have a four-story metal band, creating window differentiation and interest.

In order to help clarify the review, staff has broken down the discussion by each street's elevation and the most significant design elements:

### **Massachusetts Avenue Elevation**

This section of the building contains the complex's retail space along the first floor. Aluminum storefronts of varying widths encompass the majority of the pedestrian level. There is a break in the building that provides access to the Tower's entrance, as well as the slip garden. While not shown on the page 4 elevation, there is a mechanical equipment screen at the base of the tower, covering equipment that is currently existing but out in the open. The screen is decorative slatted wood and precast concrete panels with "Mass Ave" wrapping around the corner. This screen is illustrated on page 17 of the Design Development Booklet.

To the south of the slip garden entrance is an open air seating space. The façade opens up on the corner creating a flexible space to provide visual interest, semi-protected outdoor area, and a less congested entry to the interior garden and shared space. There is a raised brick cornice at either end, with an angled frontispiece at the south end, designed to signify the start of the block and define the building.

### **Michigan Street Elevation**

The Michigan Street façade transitions from commercial in nature at the corner with Massachusetts to the entirely residential block at the corner with East. As along Massachusetts, there is variation in the wall plane. As well, the building height alters from one section to another, breaking up the mass. There are one and two bedroom units on the ground floor along the eastern half. Slightly off-center is a secondary access to the slip garden, beneath a second floor that bridges that space. The East Street corner wraps around the parking area, but continues the essence of the building. A section of screen wall is also incorporated on this elevation.

### **East Street Elevation**

The East Street portion of the building has the most uniform appearance. There are repetitive bays of brick and metal, separated mid-way by a hardi-panel section and where the fifth floor windows change rhythm and introduce a continuous series of glass. Parking access is on this elevation, and is accessed through the mid-point, under the second floor. It has some commercial space and character where the building meets Massachusetts and the retail block wraps the corner. Due to the need to pull the building out of the right-of-way, some of the parking juts out from under the building. Staff had concerns about the appearance of this,

and a parking screen wall set off the parking by roughly 18 inches has been added to shield the lot from view.

### **Slip Garden**

The slip garden runs to the west of Barton Tower and behind the bulk of the Massachusetts Avenue new development. It serves multiples purposes, including providing access to the Tower's main entrance. It additionally serves to re-introduce some green and open space into the development. The space provides a walkway constructed with boardwalk pattern pavers. There is seating and greenery along the edges. While it doesn't provide true green space, it does provide for openness and some plants within the interior corridor. The slip garden will have visibility from Massachusetts and Michigan and provide pedestrian access from one street to another through the interior of the development.

### **Screen Wall**

The parking lot is located under the building along East Street, but extends beyond the boundaries of the building, due to the right-of-way. To provide a visual buffer to the parking, the applicant is proposing use of a screen wall. The screen wall being explored is called "Vertigreen", and is designed specifically for façade greening of indoor and outdoor areas. The concept is a combination wood screen and planting screen. Pages 15 and 16 of the Design Development Booklet show the concept along East Street.

The system has a series of modules through which plants grow to cover over the modules and irrigation mat. The product literature claims that after three or four months the plants will be established and cover the entire surface area, with the idea that a "living wall" is created. Staff has inquired about the upkeep of the walls, as well as their appearance in colder months, as the modules themselves are not attractive and are meant to be covered with plant life. As of the drafting of this report, the designers did not have specific answers for those questions.

### **Context**

This triangular project site takes up the entirety of a city block. The context is very different on all three sides and on the site itself.

**Michigan Street.** This is its most historic context, as the Athenaeum and two smaller historic buildings are located across the street.

**Massachusetts Avenue.** The Indianapolis Fire Department Headquarters, Fire Station and Credit Union is across the street. It is a large, non-descript stucco and concrete complex with a large amount of surface parking. This block, with the Fire Headquarters on one side and the Barton Tower open space on the other, has long been viewed as a pedestrian "no man's land," bisecting Massachusetts Avenue and inhibiting the linkage of development at the two ends of the Avenue. The City is presently considering proposals for residential or multi use development that would replace the Fire Headquarters complex. Many studies have proposed that by developing active street frontages along this block, Massachusetts Avenue can become a continuous pedestrian environment fostering further development.

**N. East Street.** East Street is lined with a non-historic multi-family housing complex. The Murat (Old National Centre) is located at the corner with New Jersey. Together with the Athenaeum and the Barton Tower, these are the historic focal points of this general area.

**The Site.** The existing site is comprised of a large swath of green space to the west of the Tower. This features a large lawn, and an allee of mature trees along Michigan. To the east of the Tower is a surface parking lot. To the north are smaller green islands. The character of this site is a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century modernist "tower set in a park" setting. It was conceived at a time when it was thought that much of this part of town would be replaced with residential towers like Riley Towers that were built in the early 1960s. Of course, that is not what happened and

preservation and reuse of historic buildings has served as the major basis for development. While the Barton Tower site as originally conceived has its individual merits, it is somewhat out of sync with its surroundings.

### **Chatham-Arch and Massachusetts Avenue Plan**

The Plan's Land Use and Development Recommendations and the New Construction Guidelines provide direction for reviewing this project:

- *“Encourage and support commercial and retail businesses, art and entertainment organizations, offices, residences, and mixed-uses that serve the Chatham-Arch and Lockerbie Square neighborhoods, the Regional Center/Downtown, and City of Indianapolis as a whole.”*
- *“Encourage and support a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly atmosphere in the commercial areas.”*
- *“Maintain and encourage the ‘big city’ feel along Massachusetts Ave. by promoting the location of businesses with a high level of pedestrian activity.”*
- *“Encourage retail and pedestrian-oriented businesses on the street level.”*
- *“If vacant lots should ever be developed, historic buildings lost, or if non-contributing buildings should ever be demolished or lost, new development should reinforce the existing mixed-use commercial areas.”*
- *“New construction should reflect the design trends and concepts of the period in which it is created. New structures should be in harmony with the old, yet at the same time be distinguishable from the old, so the evolution of the historic area can be interpreted properly. The architectural design of any period reflects the technology, construction methods, and materials available at the time.”*
- *“Newly designed buildings should not detract from the character of the historic area. Form, scale, mass, and texture are all elements that allow classification of a particular building into type and/or style categories. The concentration of a certain style of building, and/or the mixture of types and styles, are the ingredients that give the area its quality. New construction must relate the elements of the new building to the characteristics of the historic district and its individual components.”*
- *Large Site Context: “Since this type of site was usually created as a result of relatively extensive demolition, its surrounding context is still of primary concern. In such case, a somewhat larger area than the immediate environment must also be looked to for context, especially if other vacant land exists in the immediate area.”*

### **Justification for Approval**

While Barton Tower is not yet 50 years old, staff recognizes that the building and its site has architectural merit. It is also clear that while the architecture of the tower will not be affected by this new development, its park-like setting will be completely altered. However, staff believes the positive impact this proposed development will have on the further development of Massachusetts Avenue and its surrounding neighborhoods far outweigh the loss of the original setting for this one building.

Furthermore, the proposed mixed-use project has been developed with the Plan's context and design standards as the foundation for the design. The proposal uses the existing Tower as well as the surrounding area for context. It creates retail space along the Massachusetts Avenue corridor, and attempts to create a vibrant streetscape. Massachusetts Avenue's 45 degree angle is not ignored, with strong corners designed to define the building from a distance and create a distinctive image for the building. The design incorporates shades and colors of the direct context, the Tower, with a massing that is in keeping with the height and scale of the rest of the Massachusetts Avenue streetscape. It introduces modern forms and materials in a manner that fits into the historic district. It is visually interesting while not being overwhelming, and staff recommends approval of the project.

Due to the substantial size and scope of the project, staff additionally recommends a 2-year time frame for the COA rather than the customary 1-year period, as two years is considered to be more realistic for project completion.

**STAFF RECOMMENDED MOTION**

**2012-COA-186 (CAMA):**

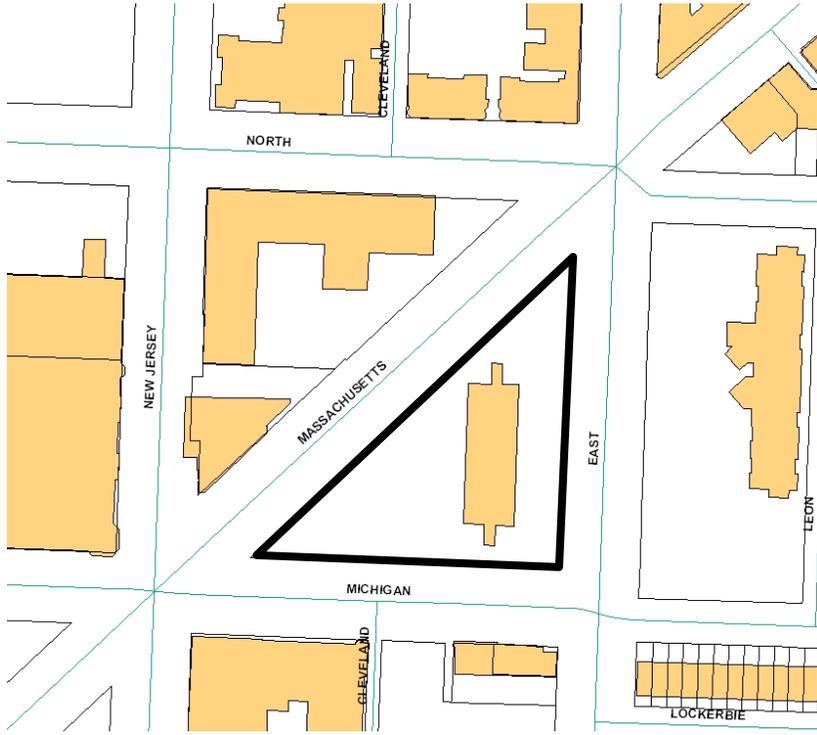
**To approve a 2-year Certificate of Appropriateness for construction of a five-story, 129-unit apartment and retail development per submitted documentation and subject to the following stipulations:**

1. **Construction must not commence prior to approval by the IHPC staff of final construction drawings.**  
*Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_*
2. **A pre-construction meeting with IHPC staff, the owner, and the contractor/construction manager must be held prior to the commencement of any construction.** *Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_*
3. **The site shall be field staked with no offsets and approved by IHPC staff prior to construction.**  
*Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_*
4. **Wood and fiber-cement materials shall have a smooth texture and be free of major imperfections. Rough-sawn finishes are not permitted. Siding exposure must match approved drawings.**
5. **A durable marker indicating the date of construction must be incorporated into the front elevation foundation area and approved by IHPC staff prior to installation.**
6. **All utility wires and cables must be located underground. No installation of utilities or meter and mechanical placement shall commence prior to IHPC staff approval.**
7. **Work on exterior finishes and details must not commence prior to the approval by IHPC staff of each. These may include, but are not limited to: the screen wall, doors, windows, masonry, exterior light fixtures, railings, etc.**
8. **Any changes to the proposed design must be approved by IHPC staff prior to commencement of work.**

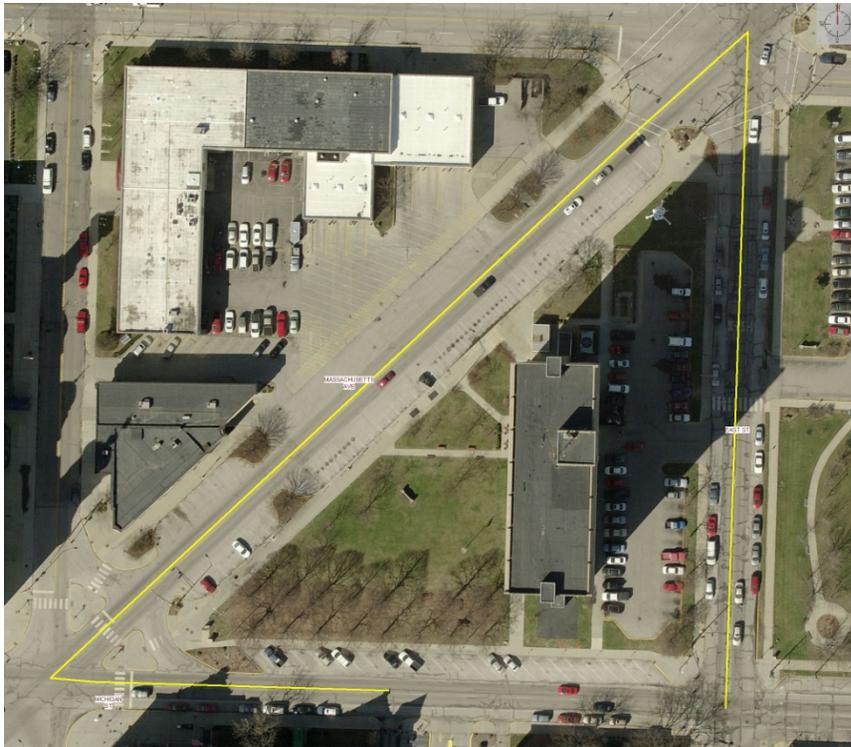
**Note: Stipulations number 1, 2, and 3 must be fulfilled prior to issuance of permits.**

**Staff Reviewer: Emily Jarzen**

**Commission Members will receive a full set of plans in their packets.**



**Map of subject property**



**Aerial View**



**Aerial view, looking east**



**Aerial view, looking south**



**Barton Tower, as seen from Massachusetts Avenue**



**Barton Tower and surrounding landscape as seen from Massachusetts & New Jersey**



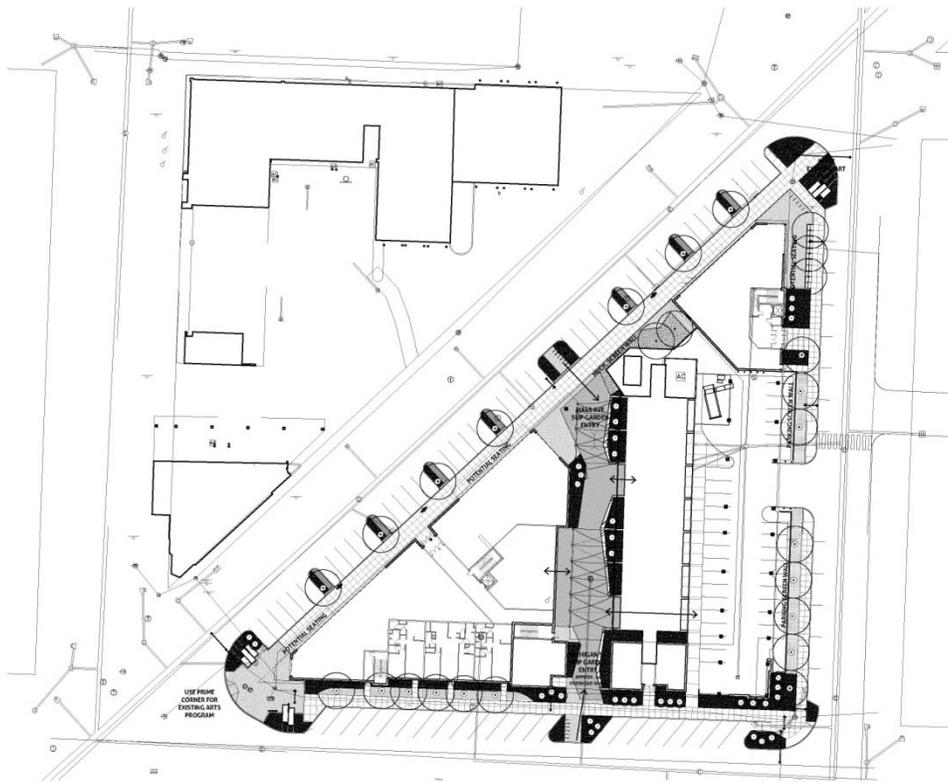
**Existing conditions looking east down Michigan Street**



**View of East Street parking lot**



**View of Barton Tower and block, looking SW down Massachusetts**



BARTON MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT D

## Proposed Site Plan

OVERALL ELE



MICHIGAN STREET ELEVATION



MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE ELEVATION



EAST STREET ELEVATION

BARTON MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT DESIGN DEVELOP