

Construction, Design & Engineering

Hotel Jerome: Entitlement process behind recent addition

In 2013, when we were given the opportunity to enhance the historic 1889 Hotel Jerome with a three-story, eight-suites building addition, and restore-repurpose the adjacent, equally historic 1904 Aspen Times Building as a speakeasy and entertainment venue, we had a distinct advantage. At the time, our Aspen studio was in the process of a full architectural remodel of the Hotel Jerome itself and we already had a great working relationship with the owners and operators.

An ownership change while we were in the early stages of obtaining approval from Aspen's Historic Preservation Commission stalled the project until 2017. By then, we had developed a clear understanding of its complexity, as well as the goals of the multiple stakeholders.

Whenever we embark on a project of this caliber, which was actually three projects in one (the repositioning of a central courtyard and pool was the third), through empathetic listening, we develop a big flow chart of what every stakeholder is wanting and how we are addressing and balancing it.

Let's start with the fact that



Sarah Broughton
Principal,
Rowland+Broughton

the Hotel Jerome and the Aspen Times Building are located on a state highway, Colorado Highway 82. We wanted to do a turn-off in front of the hotel

because it was so dangerous with a regular stream of cars showing up with guests checking in or arriving for an event. Researching and understanding how to achieve that was super important.

And then there was the historic preservation aspect. Realizing that there was no need to take away as much of the Aspen Times Building as had been previously suggested, we actually went back to HPC, which had its own goals, to get approval to preserve more of that building. We also went to work with the building department to ensure that we had proper accessibility and to deal with fire codes, setbacks and density.

On the ownership side, we had to make sure the proj-

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The entitlement process allowed the addition and the historic building to tie into the existing hotel and courtyard.



Moving the Aspen Times building to another area on the site allowed for the addition of a basement.

Entitlement

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ect was economically viable, balancing what we thought would get approved while making sure the program fit the pro forma. Being respectful of the local community, which had strong views about the project, we attended public hearings at the HPC and Aspen City Council, and we engaged via smaller groups,

open houses and eventually one-on-one with influential community members and groups. We reminded the owners, “You own this building, but it’s a community building, too.” Sometimes that can be a challenging thing to hear (and say), but we were lucky that the ownership is civic-minded and understands the importance of building to last.

Perhaps the biggest challenge was the city of Aspen HPC. We were on the same page for plans for the Aspen Times Building, moving it to another area on the site in order to build and install a steel super-structure, add a basement and restore it so that it lasted another hundred years. We showed historical photos of how the street once went right up to the hotel’s

exterior columns, so we were able to historically prove that the turn off was appropriate. The HPC was supportive of the plans we had for reorganizing the central courtyard, which involved redirecting placement of the pool.

But the suites building addition was a different story. We felt strongly that the building should be subservient and responsive to the varied historic resources through its overall design and materiality. Over multiple hearings, it took convincing, along with sharing realistic renderings and various visualization techniques, to urge the HPC member away from their inclination toward designing something out of character. We attribute our success in getting the project approved to our passion for historic preservation and the massive amount of research we did to help bring the public and the city along on why the design response was relevant and historically appropriate.

While we were completing our entitlements, we were

gathering abundant information to plan for and complete this surgical project – working with surveyors, understanding where all the utilities and property lines were, addressing required setbacks in relocating the transformers – all within a very tight site. We engaged the city early with these findings so that, together, we created a phasing plan for the infrastructure work that led to the least disruption. This private-public partnership every step of the way allowed for a process solution project.

In the end, the thorough due diligence allowed us to create a plan and then work the plan within the prescribed time frame and budget. The entitlement process allowed us to positively contribute to the conversation of the city, to understand and honor and preserve the history of Aspen’s built environment. On top of that, tying the addition and the historic building into the existing hotel and courtyard, and encouraging that relationship, was an honor. ▲



The project included a three-story addition that provides eight suites for Hotel Jerome.