

# Applying Color Theory to Choosing Architectural Colors for the Mill Plaza Redevelopment Project\*

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\*updated to respond to the CDA color palette presented on 9-23-20

# Goals of Color Selection

- Create an aesthetically pleasing project
- Reduce appearance of mass
- Choose colors that work together to create a harmonious whole
- Distinguish retail and non-retail uses



View from above looking north east. Building B in foreground Building C in background.

Community Meeting September 12, 2020

# Parameters

- Use James Hardieplank siding colors
- Limited to Standard Colors only
- Choose a minimum of 4 colors plus trim
- Select brick that goes with color palette
- Use black for window and door frames

# How Colors Work



While many people have their color preferences, choosing colors for a large architectural project has little to do with “favorite colors” and more to do with applying color theory to meet project objectives.



## Some Basic Color Principles

Strong bright colors make a building stand out.

Muted colors make a building appear less conspicuous.



Dark colors create a stronger sense of presence.  
(This is fine for a house, but not desirable for a large project.)





Light colors stand out from their surroundings.



The proverbial New England white town hall makes sense for this very reason.



Muted neutrals allow a building to harmonize with its surroundings.



Multiple colors can break up large mass but colors should work together to create a unified whole.



(These don't. Notice the striped appearance.)



Repainted, this building appears more unified and blends in better with surroundings, but is a bit dull.



Black window frames and bright awnings could add a little pzazz.



Beware of creating striped effect with too much contrast.



# Considerations for Mill Plaza Project

- Given the massive nature of this project, muted neutrals should be used (neither too warm or too cool) to diminish the mass.
- All color choices should harmonize with each other, including the brick and accent colors for doors and awnings.
- Colorful awnings and doors will brighten up muted tones.
- Black window frames and balconies will add contrast and a look of sophistication.



Black window frames add contrast.





Compare this...





to this...Notice how the black window frames create a stunning contrast.





Note the difference black windows and door frame can make.



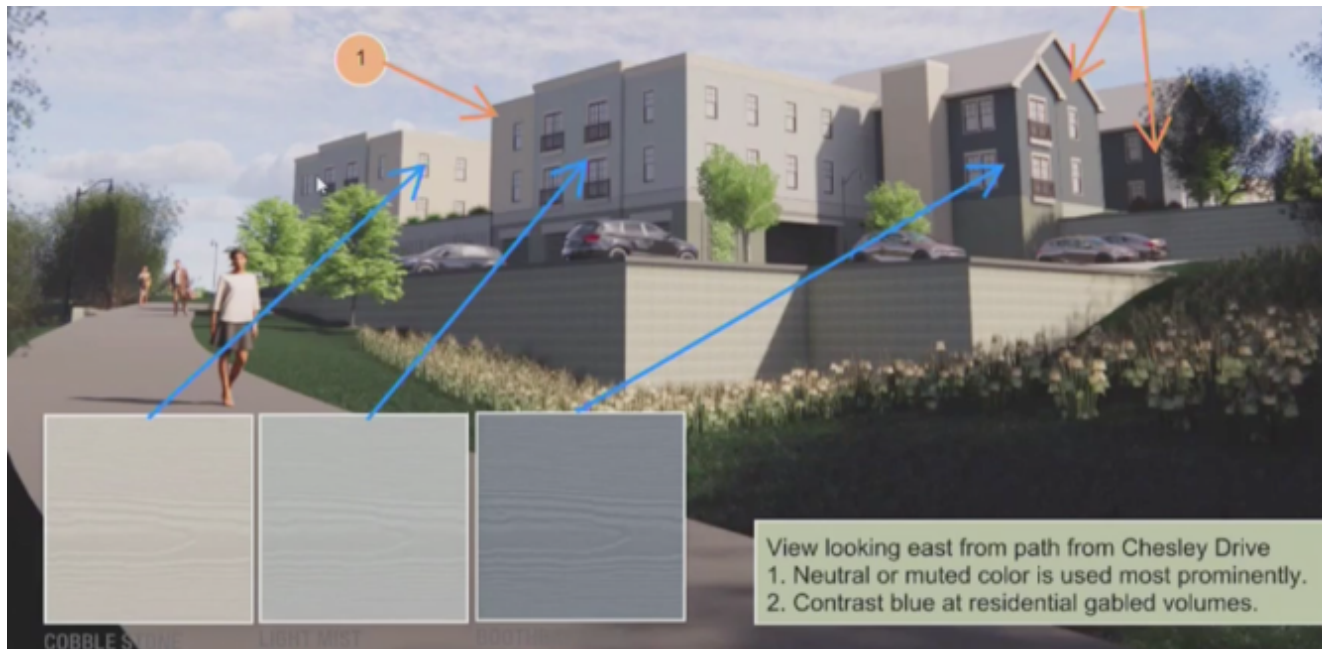
# Proposed CDA Color Palette #1

- ✓ Does break up mass
- x Does not reduce appearance of mass due to color selection.
- x Does not use colors that harmonize with each other
- x Does not create an aesthetically pleasing project
- x Does not use colors that work together to create a unified whole



## Proposed CDA Color Palette #2

- x Not enough colors to adequately break up massive buildings.
- x With so many light facings, color palette will not diminish mass but will make building stand out.\*
- x Does not create an aesthetically pleasing project
- x Colors do harmonize but create a cold, uninviting appearance.



\* Cobblestone is misrepresented in this slide and the next. It is actually an off-white. The Light Mist is also very light.



Cobblestone is inaccurately depicted in this representation. It is actually a very light off-white. Large areas of off-white will make the building stand out and appear larger. Keep in mind this building is 4-stories tall. Also notice the striped effect created by too much contrast of large facings.



After Community Color Forum, several citizens from the community who have some artistic expertise came together to look at the James Hardie Standard color selection.






# Challenge of James Hardie Standard Colors


- Only 20 Standard Colors to choose from  
(We were told Dream Collection Colors were too expensive.)
- Need a minimum of 4 colors plus trim that work together
- There are very few pleasing color combinations suitable for such a large project

***Within the limited color options, the group came to consensus on the best possible color palette...***

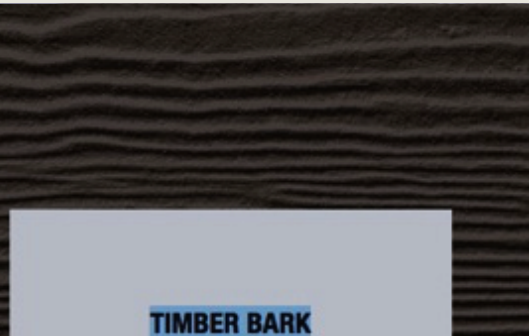
**There are five Hardieplank Standard Colors plus a trim color that harmonize with each other and could work with brick.**



**MONTEREY TAUPE**



**KHAKI BROWN**



**TIMBER BARK**



**WOODSTOCK BROWN**



**RICH ESPRESSO**




**Brick Choice #1: Woodland Brown Smooth Narrow Flash Range**

**Trim: Cobblestone or Sail Cloth**




MONTEREY TAUPE



KHAKI BROWN



TIMBER BARK



WOODSTOCK BROWN



RICH ESPRESSO



Brick Choice #2: Brownstone Blend Waterstruck

Trim: Cobblestone or Sail Cloth

## CDA Color Palette Choice #1



## CDA Color Palette Choice #2





*Which is more aesthetically pleasing?*

MONTEREY TAUPE

KHAKI BROWN

TIMBER BARK

WOODSTOCK BROWN

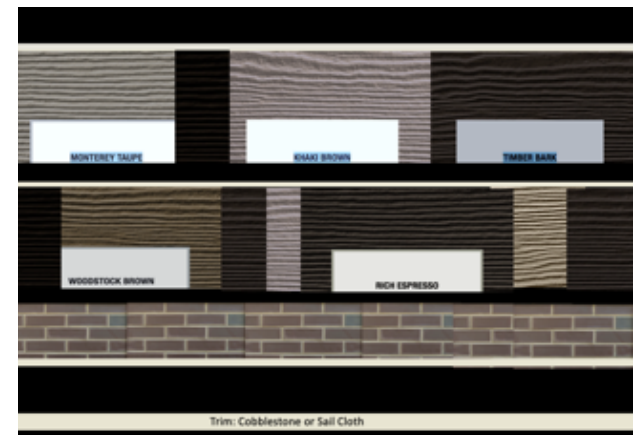
RICH ESPRESSO

Brick Choice #1: Woodland Brown Smooth Narrow Flash Range

Trim: Cobblestone or Sail Cloth

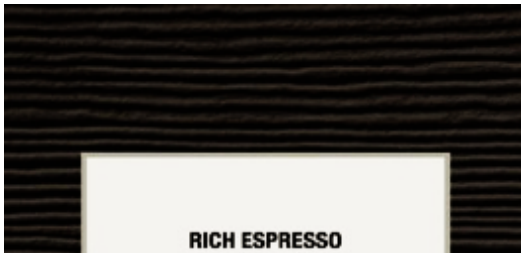
# Our Proposed Color Palette

- ✓ Breaks up mass (5 colors of varying values plus off-white trim)
- ✓ Reduces appearance of mass (through use of muted neutrals)
- ✓ Uses colors that harmonize with each other (varying shades of one hue)
- ✓ Creates an aesthetically pleasing project (colors all work together)
- ✓ Creates variety within a unified whole
- ✓ Uses a brick selection that harmonizes with siding; appropriate mortar should be selected
- ✓ Neutrals allow for many options for brightly colored awnings and doors.
- ✓ Black window frames will make colors pop.



## Madbury Commons

- Black window frames create contrast and make colors pop.
- Varying colors serve to break up mass while harmonizing to create a pleasing whole.
- One new harmonizing color now available: Rich Espresso



Main colors: Monteray Taupe, Cobblestone, and Timberbark







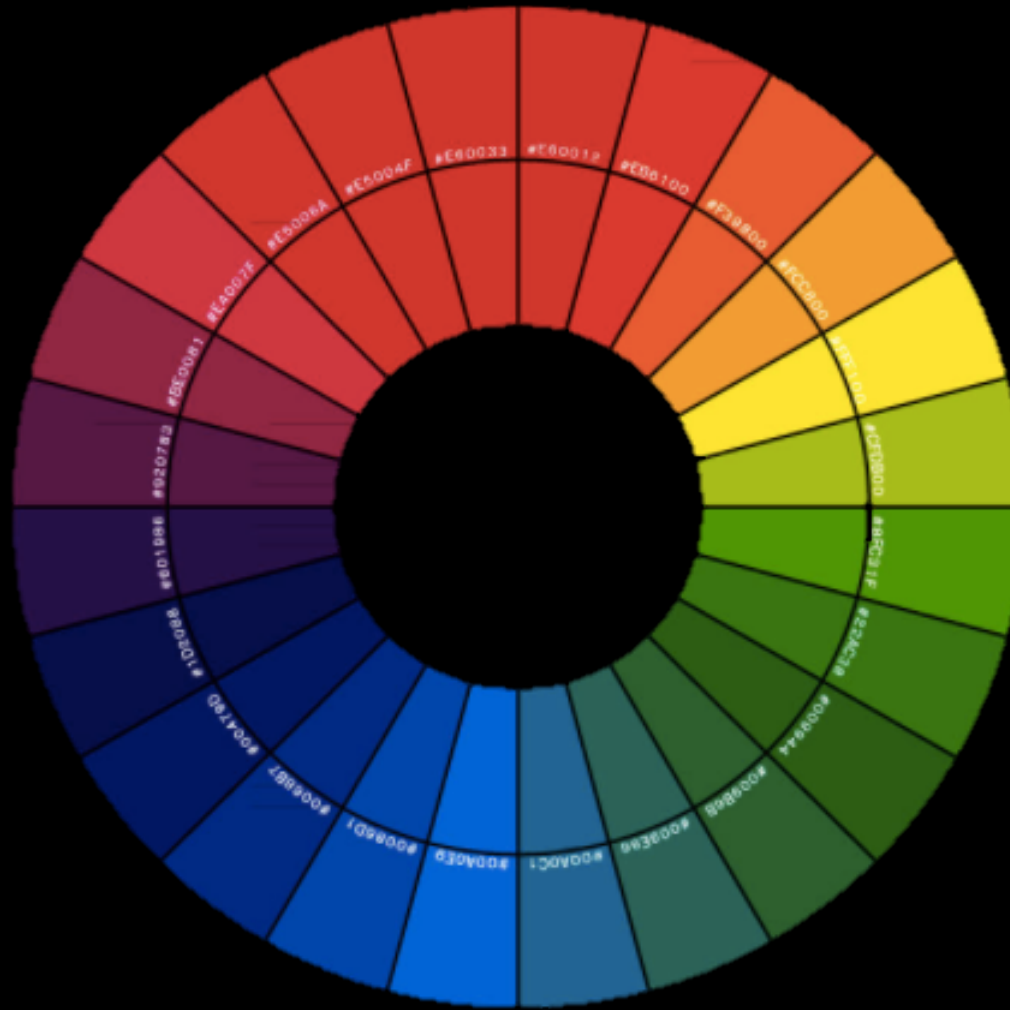
Notice how colors harmonize because they belong to one color family, but also break up the mass .



Use of black windows, bright colored awnings and doors add interest.

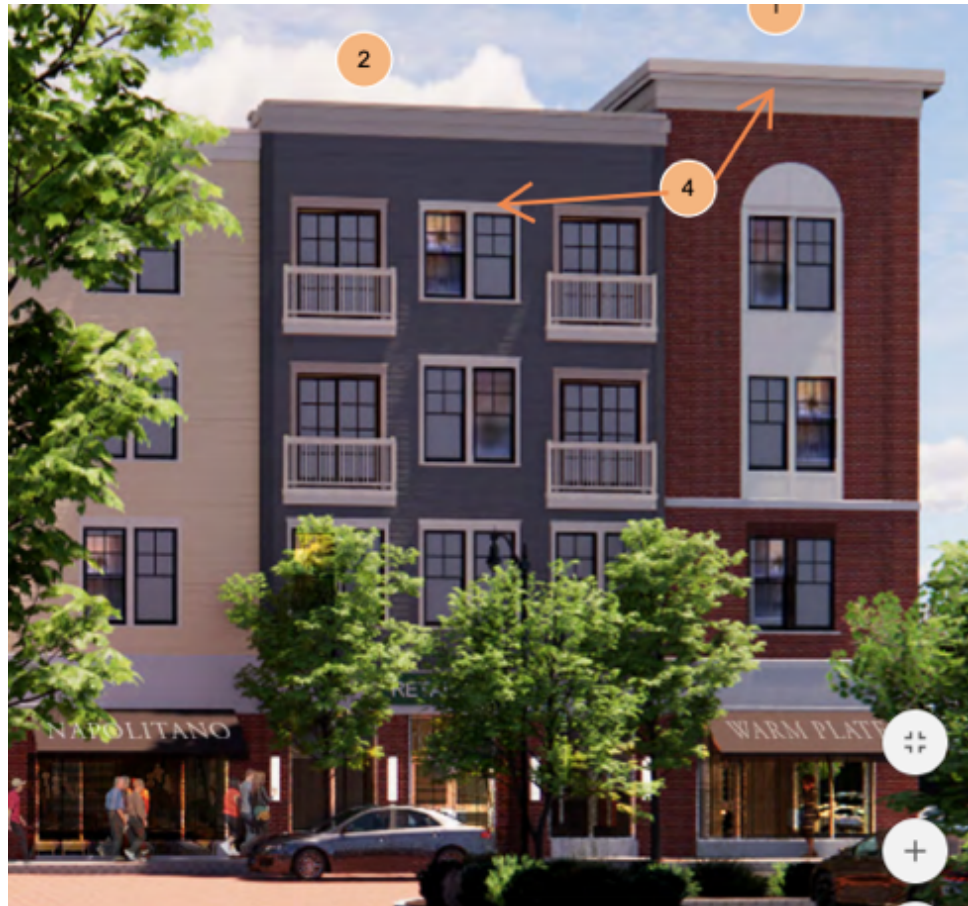


Many possible accent colors for awnings and doors when using a more neutral color palette



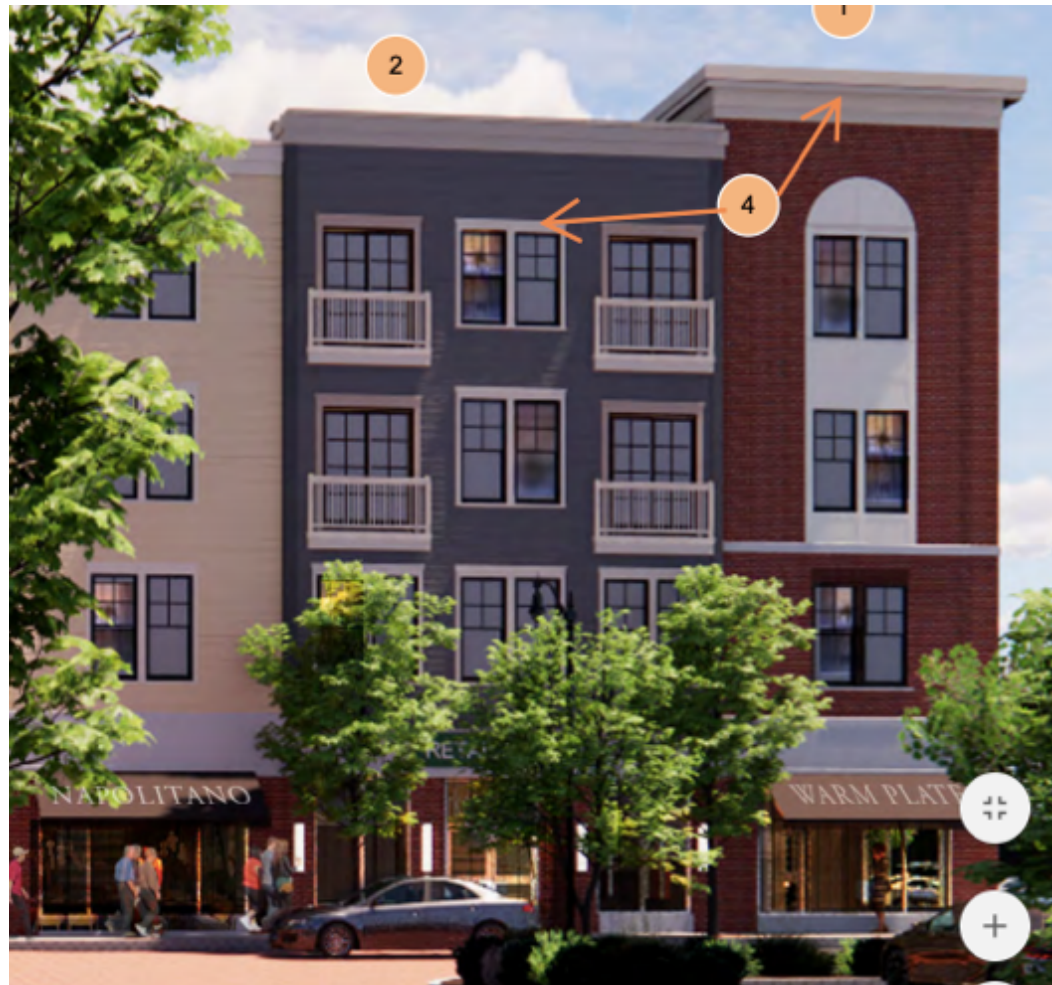
## Other Color Details

Balconies should be black to tie in with black window frames. The wide gray horizontal band above the awnings should be narrower and black or the trim color to tie in with black accents.





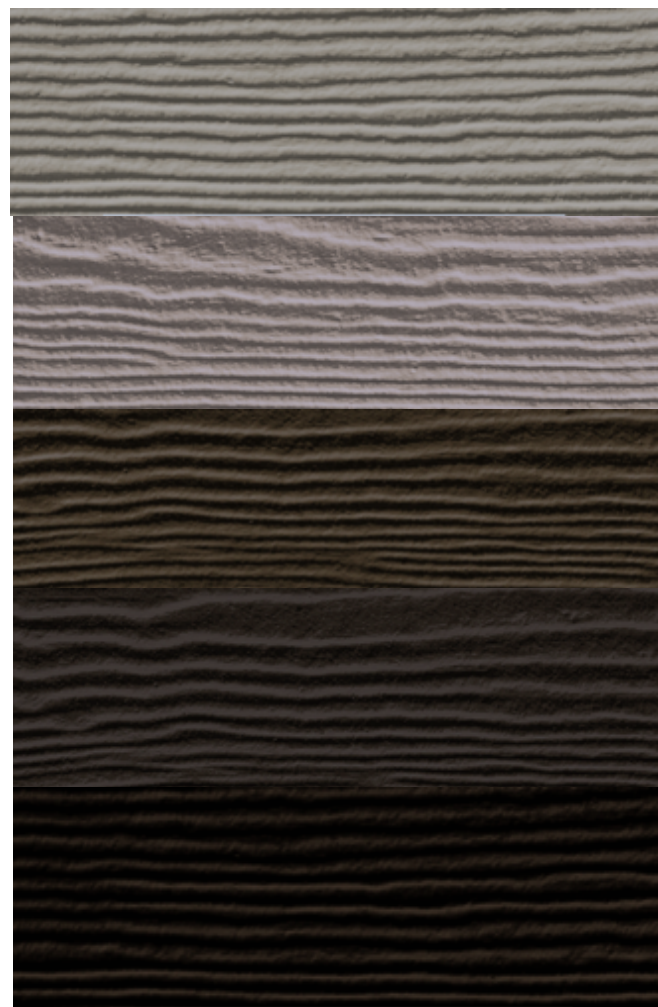
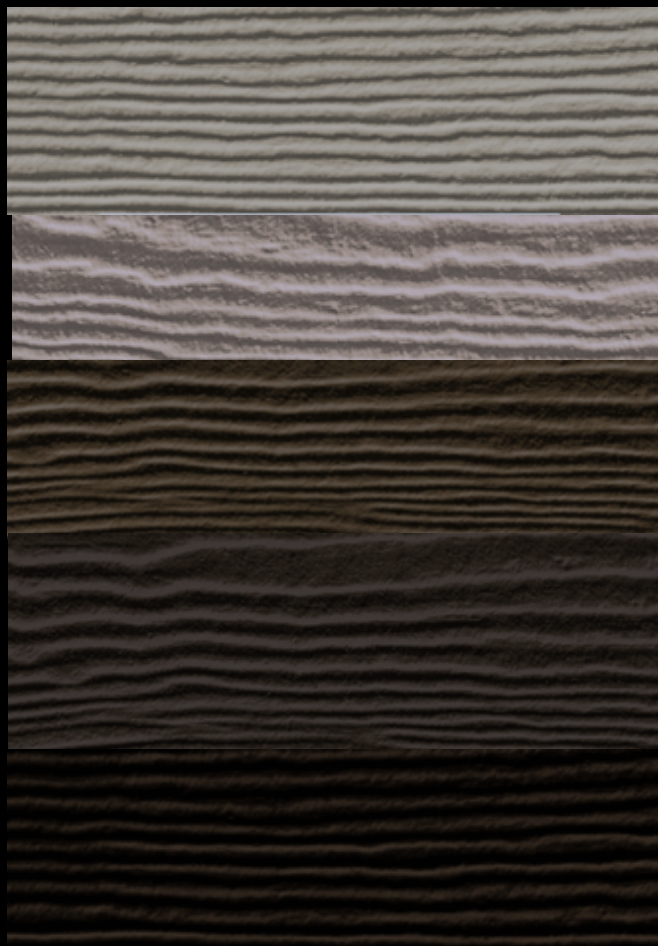
White arched element surrounding windows in tower should be a color chosen from the final color palette to tie the project together, to be determined once the final brick selection is made.



## **KEY UNDERSTANDING**

Perception of color will change depending on adjacent color(s).

Note the subtle differences in colors on black and white.



Mix up colors to produce more contrast and variation.





Note how gray trim creates a duller effect.



Add a black frame to enhance colors.



Choose an off-white trim to pick up subtle tones & create a unified whole.

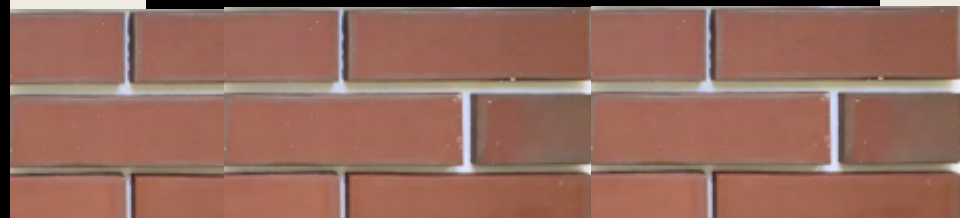




Add a harmonizing brick to create  
an aesthetically pleasing unified whole.



Choose a standard brick and project no longer works as an aesthetically pleasing whole.



There is much to consider, especially when choosing colors for such a large prominent downtown project that goes well beyond using one's "favorite colors."