

# **Meeting Minutes of the Design Review Board (DRB)**

## **Meeting**

### **Tuesday, September 1, 2015**

The Design Review Board (DRB) met in the City Hall Council Chambers on Tuesday, September 1, 2015, at 5:30 P.M., with the following members in attendance: Ricky Richardson, Bill Joslin, and Jessica Greer. Mike Henthorn and Tip Pitts were absent. Representing the Planning Department were Assistant City Manager Chris Story, Julie Roland, and Natalia Rosario.

#### ***Roll Call***

Mr. Richardson, the Chair, stated that notice of this meeting was posted and provided to the media 24 hours in advance as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

Mr. Richardson said three Board Members were present, constituting a quorum; and he went over the procedure for the meeting.

The Agenda for the September 1, 2015 meeting was approved by acclamation.

**Old Business** – None.

#### **New Business:**

***Public Hearing regarding approval regarding proposed new construction of The Broadview Apartments to be located at 191 E. Kennedy Street in the DT-6 District, along the eastern edge of the Kennedy Street Parking Garage, from Tara Hile, AIA, McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture on behalf of Andrew Babb, NAI Earle Furman, Developer/Future Land Owner.***

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Assistant City Manager Chris Story came forward and was sworn; and he submitted the meeting packets the Board Members had previously received, as well as the slides and presentation into evidence, as Exhibit A. He informed the Board Members the property for the proposed project was tentatively referred to as the Broadview Apartments and was owned by the City of Spartanburg, and would be transferred to the Development group when it was approved by City Council. The project involved an apartment building which would connect to the Kennedy Street Parking lot which was already owned by the City.

Tara Hile, AIA with McMillan Pazdan Smith Architects, Greenville, SC came forward and was sworn. She informed the Board Members the proposed project consisted of a twenty-eight (28) unit proposed apartment building (approximately 35,000 square feet) and would be four stories with a lower level that would make it feel like five stories along the Kennedy Street level. Slides were shown of the proposed apartment project; and she explained there would be one and two bedroom units, along with some studio apartments. Ms. Hile explained there would be quite a bit of slope (approx. 8 to 10 feet) from the top of Converse Street down to Kennedy Street. Slides were shown and explained of the different views. A slide of the preliminary site plan was shown. The proposed main street entry would be on the Kennedy Street façade with a courtyard entry into the building along Converse Street. The courtyard would run along Converse Street along with a buffer planting area and masonry wall to transition down the street to the lower building corner. Parking would be within the parking deck with access at each level. She did not know if there would be any parking on the street.

#### **Board Questions:**

- Mr. Richardson had a question on one of the slides regarding parking access into the apartments. Ms. Hile referenced a slide of the parking and explained since there were two potential property owners, they had a three-hour property line which would run along the parking deck and then turn up and run along the back side of the building (in which they could not have any windows or openings) based upon the Fire Code.
- Mr. Richardson asked how many floors had access to the parking deck. Ms. Hile said four floors and they were staggered. She said there were only two apartments which were townhomes on the Kennedy Street side that would not have direct access into the parking deck.

- Mr. Joslin asked how the residents that did not park in the parking garage would gain access into the building.
- Ms. Hile explained they could walk to the lower level lobby and use the elevators, or along the courtyard there was a gated entry.

Ms. Hile continued her presentation, and explained regarding the site plan slide regarding setbacks, the site was zoned DT-6; and the property lines had not been negotiated or set yet, but they would meet the requirements and would be within six or seven feet on the Kennedy Street side. The Converse Street side would house the retaining wall, and the detention/stormwater pond would be underneath the courtyard. She showed a slide of the apartment unit plans, and explained on the lower level were two townhomes along the Kennedy Street side, and also mechanical and storage spaces, etc.; and she explained the studio apartments would be located in the center of the floors, with the two-bedrooms located at the ends. Ms. Hile showed a slide of the proposed materials; and she explained that over 60% of the building would be brick, as well as an accent brick for the retaining wall and courtyard wall that would have a stripe in it to give it a little more character. The upper portion, fourth floor would be lapped hardi-panel siding, and two different kinds of railings (metal) and (slatted wood), and the windows would be aluminum. Ms. Hile said the blank wall was on the back of the property.

#### More Board Questions:

- Mr. Joslin asked what was currently across the street. Ms. Hile said it was a carwash from the Hot Spot.
- Mr. Joslin said per the Code in the DT-6 area; it was not required to have store front frontage.
- Mr. Joslin asked Ms. Hile to tell the Board Members how would they activate the street. Ms. Hile said they tried to break down the scale somewhat by dropping the wall a bit with rails and a grill.
- Mr. Joslin asked was there any way to open up the area a little in order to make it more transparent and still provide safety to the residents. He felt the wall was really tall, and in the spirit of the Code the Board Members were trying to promote connectivity to the street. Ms. Hile said that would be possible.
- Mr. Joslin asked Ms. Hile would it be possible to terrace the wall corner a little bit. She explained they had studied different patterns, but she felt they could do something there as well.
- Mr. Richardson said he concurred with Mr. Joslin's comments regarding the wall, as they were trying to get the street interaction.
- Mr. Richardson asked Assistant City Manager Story if there had been any conversation about any proposed streetscaping along Converse Street. The Assistant City Manager said they were talking about taking it down to two lanes, some parking, and a bike lane.
- Mr. Joslin felt the proposed apartments would be a beautiful and welcomed addition to downtown Spartanburg, but he was struggling with the wall and the softness of the street edge. He would like to see that wall not be so imposing if possible and still maintain the safety of the residents.
- Ms. Hile felt landscaping would help soften it some.
- Mr. Joslin asked was the market mainly young professionals and early families. Ms. Hile said there would probably be some retirees as well.
- Mr. Joslin said if the courtyard was activated with activities such as grilling, etc.; and he said if there was a way to open and soften it up particularly the corner of Kennedy and Converse, it would make for more street connectivity.
- Mr. Richardson asked would it be inconceivable to have a walkway or entrance into the courtyard with some seating. Ms. Hile said she had looked at that and they do have one at the far end; but she felt that softening with landscape would be better than a giant staircase.
- Mr. Richardson said it would provide seating, gathering without creating such an impermeable façade.

- Mrs. Greer mentioned a hotel that recently came before the Board that had about the same situation; and the Board had them put a stairway in the middle.
- Mr. Joslin said the Code was trying to activate the street.
- Mr. Richardson and Mr. Joslin loved the look and the feel of the building; but they did not like the huge wall.
- Ms. Hile felt the tenant's balconies would be used a lot which would promote some connectivity, but she agreed with the Board Members.
- Mr. Joslin asked would it be a pet friendly place. Ms. Hile did not know for sure but she felt it would be.
- Mr. Joslin said walking pets would be a way to engage; and if there was a place for people to sit would help.
- Mr. Joslin asked to look at the slide of the site plan again; and he went over to the screen and pointed out some areas in which he felt improvements could be made.
- Mr. Joslin felt the building itself met the Code, but asked Mr. Richardson could they ask for a resubmission of the wall.
- Mr. Richardson said it looked like they would be taking out some big oak trees; and he asked about the rule for taking out and putting back big trees. The Assistant City Manager explained there was a little more flexibility in DT-6.
- Mr. Joslin asked about lighting; and he felt what the City might have planned for Converse Street might cause another issue in the evening hours. He said if the wall was imposing and dark people would go away from it, rather than to it. Ms. Hile said they had not quite got to that point yet about lights, but felt they could do something there to help out with the lighting.

Mr. Richardson opened the public hearing and asked anyone who wished to speak in favor or in opposition to the request to come forward. No one came forward. Mr. Richardson closed the public hearing.

#### Board Deliberation:

- Mr. Richardson felt it was obvious what the Board Members had issues with; and he said he would really like for the developer to come back at the October meeting and present something better regarding the wall and sidewalk they were all unhappy about. He asked Assistant City Manager Story if there were any serious time constraints on the project.
- Assistant City Manager Story said he did not think there were any immediate time constraints because City Council still needed to act on a potential agreement and potential land transfer, and if there was something the Board wanted to take a second look at regarding the sidewalk and the wall issues, that could be done at a subsequent meeting. He felt as long as the developer felt the Board was good with the building itself, it would give a degree of comfort to them that they were not looking at any major changes to the development plans.
- Mr. Richardson said he would really like to hear what the absent Board Members thoughts were regarding what the Board Members present tonight thought; and he asked Mrs. Roland to please send Mr. Henthorn and Mr. Pitts an email with their thoughts and to please convey them by email to the rest of the Board.
- Mr. Richardson asked Ms. Hile to see if she could make some adjustments regarding their concerns and come back to them in October.
- Mr. Richardson asked Assistant City Manager Story if the City looked to develop this or did the developer come to them. The Assistant City Manager explained the developer had come to the City with the proposed project; and probably had been influenced by a number of factors, such as the

Community College opening up right across the street, and the additional activity downtown in general.

***Re-election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2015-2016.***

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Mr. Joslin asked Mrs. Roland if they could move this item to the next meeting. Mrs. Roland said they could put it on the next agenda.

There were no Staff announcements.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 6:15 P.M.

  
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Ricky Richardson, Chair

Edited by Julie Roland, Secretary