

Meeting Minutes of the Design Review Board (DRB)
Special Meeting
“Thursday”, March 22, 2018

The Design Review Board (DRB) met in the City Hall Basement Training Room on Thursday, March 22, 2018 at 5:30 P.M., with the following members in attendance: Ricky Richardson, Mike Henthorn, Tip Pitts, and Kevin DeMark. Gabriela Giron was absent. Representing the Planning Department were Assistant City Manager Chris Story and Julie Roland, Administrative Assistant. City Manager Ed Memmott, also attended the meeting.

Roll Call

Mr. Richardson, the Chair, called the meeting to order and 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 four Board Members were present, constituting a quorum; and he went over the procedure for the meeting.

The Agenda for tonight's meeting was approved by acclimation.

Old Business:

Public Hearing regarding proposed new construction of multi-unit housing, mix-use development at the parcels: TMS#7-12-05-345.01; 7-12-05-288.00; 7-12-05-290.00; 7-12-05-291.00; 7-12-05-292.00; 7-12-05-293.00; 7-12-08-294.00; 7-12-05-295.00; and 7-12-05-296.00 for the properties located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Howard Street and College Street in the DT-5 District, from Brian Keith, JHP Architecture, on behalf of the Northside Development Group, Developer.

Mrs. Hawkins, Project Manager, Northside Development Group came forward and thanked the Board Members for taking the time to meet with them again at tonight's special meeting. She said they had been working diligently to try and make some changes to the project since the last meeting; and they would really love conceptual approval tonight if at all possible. She said they had recently learned that they were approved for the HUD 108 Loan.

Mr. Brian Keith, Architect, JHP Architecture came forward and informed the Board Members that they really appreciated the opportunity they were being given at tonight's special session. He also thanked Staff and Mr. Craig Lewis who had all worked very hard, and in whom they had been in constant contact with. He said rather than go through the entire proposal again, he would focus on what they heard from the Board Members at the March 6th meeting, and how they have responded. He said he would let Mr. Cullen Pitts present the VCOM portion. Mr. Keith said the main things they heard at the last meeting were they needed to pull the buildings up closer to the street; needed to have greater relationships between the buildings on both sides; continuity with VCOM building; and they needed to work on the street relationships. Mr. Keith said in revising the proposal they kept the main bar kind of the same, and they had adjusted it to make it more exactly wind up with the Phase I on the other side; and that Phase I had also had some changes happen in that the office side had been switched over to this side. They felt it was a positive thing in that it would help activate the plaza. He referenced a slide of the grade changes and explained; and he said they did not need a variance of any kind now and they had been able to pull it up a little closer to the street; and that the VCOM also met the requirements. He explained the Wofford Building evolved into a smaller efficiency loft and that footprint had gotten a little more condensed because they incorporated some things on three levels now. They shifted the whole student lounge to be up on the street, and the storefront would be designed to be adaptable to doors and openings when they had worked through the Wofford security issues. Mr. Keith said they tried to maintain a little bit of a plaza space because they heard from Northside they did want an area in which to have some little gatherings; they had really tightened that up, and simplified the linkage pieces and also held the curb. They worked in terms of their building and picked up some of the VCOM's brick material and textures; and the Wofford building would be picking up some of what was going on across the street in order to tie in more continuity so that they don't all look exactly the same, but things would line up and there would be more continuity. Mr. Keith said they would still have a lobby element, but it would be a little more refined and a little more simplified. They still had the streetscape going on. He said one thing Mr. Lewis

had brought up was to work on how they might rework the intersection of College and Howard Streets. He explained that was issues with the City and the State Highway Department; and although Mr. Lewis wanted Howard Street to get tighter (which they totally agreed with); they had to design in the here and now; but had tried to do so in a manner they believed would be adaptable to make it a more walkable street. He showed a revised view of the intersection of Howard and College that showed the connecting piece with the Wofford residential piece and the NDG Offices, Access Health with housing above it; and said they still had the sense of a lobby and entrance because it still served the lobby interest and security purposes which would have doors at the NDG offices with the ability to spill out. He showed a slide of the student lounge and said it would be designed to allow for doors at the very least. They were stepping up the retaining walls so the building would actually stay down and the sidewalk would go up and they had some sort of sunken plaza to deal with some of the grades. Mr. Keith said they had the two levels above it and the garden on the side. He said they were picking up in this building the same brick that VCOM would be using and another portion of the building he referenced would use the same brick on parts of the building to have continuity, and that part of the building would be lined up with the new leasing offices. He said that view down Howard Street would be really activated; and that they still had some articulation, and the basic idea of a simple textile mill building with a little bit of brick articulation but more simplified. He said it would be a simplified lobby/student lounge and housing. Regarding the other side of Howard Street on the back side, they were still trying to deal with some of the grades, and there may be some additional retaining walls. He showed the little garden/courtyard space in between VCOM and the Wofford residential. Mr. Keith showed another slide looking down College Street and said the VCOM and the Wofford Residential were really close to one another; and they would pick up with some of the same retaining wall and stones, and use the same kind of water line VCOM would use. He showed a view looking up Howard Street and said you could see the downtown in the background and the VCOM in the distance and said they were maintaining the streetscape on both sides and keeping that urban closure. He said they had a little more room now and would have some more landscaping opportunities because they had pulled the building up a little more from Raindrop. He said Raindrop would be repositioned and it needed to line up with what was happening on that side.

Mr. Cullen Pitts, Architect with McMillan Pazdan Smith came forward and said one of the things they had been doing from a floor plan perspective on VCOM, they had tried from a massing perspective to align with their neighbors; but there were still a lot of things they needed to work on such as trying to figure out what the steps were, the grade, the distances between the steps. He said it was still basically the same circulation, and they were working on getting a very efficient footprint. VCOM liked the idea of a front and back door, so there really would not have a back side of the building, and all four sides would have to be designed. Some of the changes they had made were they kind of toned down some of the details which they had heard at the previous meeting. He said they backed off with some of the detailing, but still kept some of the stone there. Mr. Pitts said they still had to work out some distances when they got more involved with the Civil Engineers. He felt what was deceiving was that JHP was a little ahead of them on thinking through the hardscape, and if they showed more tree wells instead of all the grass, it would look better; and they were waiting on the Landscape Architect to catch up with them on that. Another thing they had done was try to make it not look so much like a medical office. They tried to design it more so it would look like anything could be in it. He said some of his own thoughts were that most one story urban buildings were perpendicular to the street; and that this one was parallel to the street. He had kind of taken that approach to pick up on the rhythm that you would typically see in that type of facility and then repeat that pattern. Mr. Pitts said instead of having individual windows that he previously had, he thought they could take the exam room windows and mirror them and put the windows back to back to give larger window spacing's. He said they can pick up with some of the details with JHP on how they have their openings and kind of do something similar. Mr. Pitts said he took away the vertical in walls which he said were kind of brutal on the end, so he moved those on the inside to help frame the entrance. He also raised the parapet to give more height so they maybe could have an internal gutter situation instead of an overhang. He said the entrance was still similar to what they had last time and they were still working through that, but the idea would be to have almost kind of a two-story entrance element that would be glass and have a roof on it.

Board Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Richardson felt the fenestration on this building really made it a lot more inviting now to the street; and he thought it was a much softer, much prettier building than before. He also liked the fact that the left edge had moved up to the street.
- Mr. Keith said he would add that they worked with Mr. Pitts and his team to make sure that their piece that moved up actually lined up and was the same dimension as their piece so there was continuity.
- Mr. Cullen Pitts informed Board Member Pitts there were some old water oaks on the site that may need to come down; but they still had a lot of work to do on the detailing.
- Mr. Richardson complimented Mr. Keith and his team on a great revised proposal; and he felt the Wofford Building looked fabulous and was a big improvement over the previous one. He understood about the retaining wall, but now it does not separate the entire building. He also liked the fact that the building sat up more on the street as much as it could. Mr. Richardson thought the newer proposed lobby tied everything in better and it really stood out. He liked the overhang and said it now reminded him of the former Aug. W. Smith Building. He felt having the long building lined up with the one across the street made a lot more sense. He knew they had not redesigned the NDG and Access Health Buildings but there seemed to be some accents that were not there before, which made a really big difference.
- Mrs. Hawkins said they heard from the previous meeting they needed to have more continuity, and tried to achieve that aspect.
- Mr. Pitts felt it was a lot better than it was before as well; and he really liked the way they had activated the corner. He also loved the idea of continuing some of the stone that VCOM would have, etc.
- Mr. DeMark asked Mr. Keith if he could roughly say what the dimensions would be of the community garden area.
- Mr. Keith said roughly about fifty feet; and they may be able to work with Mr. Pitts and his team in that they may be able to slide their building over a little more; but they had a programmatic limit regarding Wofford.
- Mrs. Hawkins said the outdoor space was a part of that programmatic aspect. It was a living, leaving community around environmental, social and economic sustainability so there was the goal to have some engagement space and that they were not right up against VCOM. Mrs. Hawkins said Wofford representatives were here to speak about that building.
- Dr. Nayef Samhat, President of Wofford College said the program was about engagement and finding those spaces in and around the building to engage the community on a daily basis.
- Mr. Henthorn said it was all about how it was developed.
- Mr. DeMark said he did not want it to just become either a concrete jungle or a big yard of grass. He said the front lobby area had a feeling of community and they wanted to make sure they had that connection however big it was.
- Mrs. Hawkins said to that point that Wofford had a vested interest in the project and they would own that building eventually, and she knew the programming and design would be very important.
- Mr. Henthorn felt they had really come a long way in just a couple of weeks, and it was a much better proposal. He really appreciated them providing the extra views they had asked for, which helped him to see what that space was going to look like from an urban point of view.
- Mr. Pitts liked the improved plans and he really liked the space they had opened up as well.
- Mr. Henthorn explained it all came down to how you detailed the space.
- Mr. Richardson asked about what the Access Health's purpose was.

- Mrs. Hawkins said they provided case management to uninsured and underinsured individuals and found them a medical home. She said they service around 3000 clients across Spartanburg, which kind of aligned with what NDG did, which was working with the population in the community to support low and moderate income families and households.
- Mr. Richardson asked were they a Federal outfit.
- Mrs. Hawkins said they were a Not for Profit 501C3, and that right now they partnered very closely with Spartanburg Regional until the new space would become available, because in a lot of peoples cases their first option for a doctor was an emergency room visit. She said this was to try and eliminate that and try to get them to a medical home.
- Assistant City Manager, Chris Story informed Mr. Richardson, the Chair, the he wanted to acknowledge for the record and to enter into evidence the meeting packets and reports the Board Members had previously received, along with Mr. Craig Lewis' reports and presentation as Exhibit A.
- Mr. Henthorn said there were several comments in Mr. Lewis' report that he would like to see addressed in a future submittal but he felt this was not a final project.
- Mr. Richardson said he knew that Mr. Keith had better things to do than to continually come before this Board, but this was a very important project and the Board Members would love to be informed as the project developed. As their plans for the other side developed, such as anything even as garbage container placement, etc. the Board would like to be informed.
- Assistant City Manager Story said for the record there was a number of advisory points to be considered as they moved from granting on conceptual approval to the final documents. He said the conceptual approval as proposed would incorporate confirmation of the points of exception which were the one story, but there are a number of things they still need to consider as they undertook the full design.
- Mr. Pitts said on page 3 of Mr. Lewis' report, he would like to see the streetscape, sidewalks, etc. he had mentioned as well.

Mr. Richardson opened the public hearing and asked if anyone else in the audience had anything they would like to add regarding the proposal.

- Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College President, said it was an important project for the College and he thought it was a wonderful opportunity and a transitional opportunity for the Northside.
- Mr. Richardson asked if there was anyone else in the audience that would like to speak in favor or against the proposal; or if there was just anyone that might have a question. There was no one else to speak. Mr. Richardson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Pitts made a motion to grant conceptual approval of the revised plans as had been submitted and he was seconded by Mr. Henthorn. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

Revised 2018 Design Review Board Meeting Schedule

At the previous March 6, 2018 Board Meeting, it was discussed by the Board Members to change a date or two on the 2018 Board Member Schedule. Regarding the Revised Schedule it was the consensus of the Board to also move the July 3rd meeting to be held on July 17th instead of July 3rd. The revised schedule was approved by acclimation.

Staff Announcements:

- Mrs. Roland informed the Board Members that the Planning Department's new Associate Planner would begin work on April 2, 2018; and she would be a very much welcomed and needed addition to their team.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 6:10 P.M.


 Ricky Richardson, Chair

Edited by Julie Roland, Secretary