

The Design Review Board (DRB) met via Virtual Zoom on Tuesday, September 1, 2020 at 5:30 PM with the following members in attendance: Kevin DeMark, Ricky Richardson, Carolyn Schoepf, Lucy Lynch, and Lauren Rogers. Representing the Planning Department were Natalia Rosario, Planner III; Julie Roland, Administrative Assistant; and Martin Livingston, Neighborhood Services Director. Craig Lewis, City of Spartanburg's Design Consultant, was also present.

#### **Roll Call**

Mr. DeMark, the Chair, called the public 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. DeMark said all five Board Members were present, and he went over the procedure for the public meeting.

**Mr. DeMark had each Board Member introduce themselves for the Zoom Recorder.**

#### **Information Item to be discussed: Review of the City's Downtown Code and Discuss Applicant Submission Requirements:**

Mr. DeMark said the purpose of tonight's public meeting is really to get an overview of the downtown code, to make sure we're all on the same page. He said Craig Lewis, Stantec Design Consultants had put together a package of what we should be looking for, as well as the document that Lucy and I worked on with the executive team from the city on, both a preliminary and a final submission with some required documents. Just to try and enhance what we're getting and making sure that moving forward, the packages that come to us are complete and checked off prior to submitting to the DRB, and also a timeline of what that... the requirements need to be met. Basically three weeks from the date of our meeting so that staff's had a chance to review it and provide a document to us about 72 hours prior to our meeting. Okay? If there are no questions, I'll pass it over to Craig Lewis, with Stantec, the City's Design Consultant, and he can introduce what he's going to talk about today.

Mr. Craig Lewis had Ms. Rosario share her screen regarding the proposed Applicant Submission Requirements; and he said what we want to cover are some of those the high level elements of the downtown plan and code, and some of the things that you all particular board members are going to see on a regular basis, some things to be on the lookout for. And also I'm going to discuss the reason behind some of these standards, which I think is really important. Because they're not arbitrary, this, in terms of a code, is a relatively thin code managing a relatively large area. And we want to try to have sort of just enough rules, but not too many. And I think this has always been the direction that we've gone.

Mr. Lewis said So that's where we are, and before we leave this screen, Natalia, while we've got this up, what Kevin had just introduced, we put together this list of documents. We're going to try to provide a little bit more rigor going forward. I think we've done a pretty good job up to this point. Natalia and her staff I think have done an excellent job wrangling a lot of different characters and trying to get stuff that is useful. But I think as we get more projects that are coming in and we're getting more people, not just the usual cast of characters, people coming in from outside of Spartanburg and national, to give them a sense of what the expectations are.

Most of the time for folks, they just need a good checklist and they can follow it, no problem. I think where we've had problem is in trying to work people through the system and hold their hand. And we just have to write down, "You need to submit this and this and this," and that's how it gets [inaudible]. The other thing that we're introducing as part of this, in addition to what Kevin mentioned in backing up things one more week, the initial... we've always had a concept plan review and a final, we're going to call one the preliminary view and one the final review. The preliminary view for those of you, you all are

familiar with certain architectural processes, we're going to say that that's the schematic design plan. That is a nomenclature that is very familiar to architects and designers. That's how most of their contracts are set up. And the elements that we're asking for at this stage in the game are going to be very consistent with what they're expected to provide to their clients at this point in time. There's a couple of few things that might be a little unique, but otherwise we're... the point here is, we want to get just enough information on both sides, there's and ours, so that we have a sense that they're heading in the right direction. And then when they go and spend the remaining 85% of their fee on doing their design work, that they're not going to get into the end and get a, "Oh gosh," and have this big risk item there at the very end. So it's intended to provide some element of predictability. We added this preliminary review a number of years ago as an interim step so that they didn't get too far down into a project and need to make major changes.

So that's the point of all this. The other piece that we're inserting into this, it is something that we do, but again, it's applying just a little bit more rigor to the process, and frankly we've had one or two folks that have just driven us to this point. We have a number of folks that we work with really well. And let's be very clear about that, we got a lot of good folks that have been... it's been easy for the city to be flexible with because they are in turn providing you all with the right information when you need to get it. Unfortunately, that's not the case with everyone as we've seen recently.

So we're using what's called a completeness review. This is something that a lot of communities have normally in their zoning process. It is, we're going to go down the checklist and we're going to make sure that they have all of the items that we require before we allow them to move forward. And so that's something that we're just going to do very quickly, as soon as we get it in, and make sure that they have all of the required documents. If they don't, we're going to give them 24 hours to get it in otherwise they're getting pushed to the next month, is what I would recommend in that regard. So that's what we've got with regard to the preliminary review and the final review. These are the, I think, what should be the official guidance, but I think it still allows the city and you all the flexibility to still receive information to keep projects moving, to keep working with people who are working in good faith as part of that. So that's where we are with that. Mr. Lewis asked if anyone had any questions.

#### Board Questions:

Mr. DeMark said he thought that was good; and I appreciate the work on putting it together. And one of the things that we talked about earlier today was, if a variance has to be submitted or some modification to what we expected within the code, they do that during the preliminary submission so we have a chance as a group to understand what that variance might be and not bring that to our attention at the end of the project, or at the end, right before final approval.

Mr. DeMark said one other thought is, is that if they do it, if they have that and they incorporated it and it gets to the final, we need to... and this, I think goes back to Natalia and Juliet, really hinges on us knowing that we previously approved it, and maybe it ends up being part of your final review so that you know, "Hey, we talked about it in the preliminary, do you think they need a decent job with it for the final?" And that way we're not rehashing the original conversation. I think that can muddle it or make it more complicated. We may not like what they've come up with, but we should at least acknowledge that we've talked about it before, I think. Somehow we have to note that.

Mr. Lewis said he thought he was right. And actually, as I'm looking at, Natalia, you don't have the latest and greatest, and I'm wondering if you just have it... and we passed around a couple of them today. I'm hoping that I sent the latest and greatest, but if you let me share my screen, I'll just show the latest version.

Ms. Rosario said yes please go ahead.

Mr. Lewis said all right; we're good now; and to the chairman's point, this modification of standards, this is what we call it. And this is where you grant these exceptions. We don't call them variances, we have to be very clear about that because that's a term of law that is a unique one.

Mr. Lewis said not what you all are doing. It gives you more latitude. That was important. So we've included that as part of this preliminary review, and this will show up. And it typically does in my reviews in the final, I look back at my previous review and say, "We granted these exceptions before." So they've already been disposed of and we ignore those.

Mr. DeMark had a question for Mr. Lewis or Ms. Rosario and he said, I just had this thought. Do you think that we should put something in here about where they send this package to? Like should there be an email address? Should there be a box.com depository or something? I let the city figure out where and when, how it gets put there, but I'm just trying to think of, to automate it as much as possible, the process, if it went to a box.com.

Ms. Rosario thought that was good.

Mr. DeMark said or link, then there's less movement for you or Natalia, because basically then you don't have to shuffle it around and figure out-

Ms. Rosario said right.

Mr. DeMark said another thought was how to get it to everybody. And so just a thought of how this gets modified once it leaves Craig's office back to the city and then back out to the potential submitter.

Mr. Lewis said yes.

Ms. Rosario said she did not have any experience using box for other people to submit, although in theory the way that box works, that should be pretty easy to do. I think it would be helpful for myself and for you all just to get these packages to you in their complete forms as the applicant intended it, because there have been times where it's like, "Well, here's an update. Here's another update, and here's an update to this one." And we end up getting a whole bunch. I've tried to clean that up here recently and use boxes, but it would be easier if they could just submit straight into the box.

Mr. Lewis said there is one small thing that Natalia and I've talked about, and it's really just a [inaudible] time to breathe a little bit and get some technical expertise on the city side is, being able to eventually post all of these applications to the websites so that people, the general public can search for them. And so that's sort of the next step of this. So people, they can pull it down like, "Oh, there's a project going on. It's right here. It's got the approved drawings," and whatever, they can be part of that. So that's the next goal.

Mr. DeMark thought that evolution has a lot to do with... and I don't want to speak for Chris or Martin because this probably includes spending some dollars, but what is the software that the city uses that would allow these meetings to just flow to the web? There are other cities that use, I'm drawing a blank on the name, but it's a pretty snazzy system where the agenda's posted, all the drawings are there. The

Zoom is somehow integrated into it, and when they meet you click on the Zoom and up pops the presentation, and it's all in one place.

Ms. Rosario said if Mr. DeMark got the chance, if you can remember which city or cities have that, so that we can check that out, that'd be really cool.

Mr. DeMark said he would send it to her.

Mr. Lewis said it CivicPlus.

Mr. DeMark said he thought the county of Spartanburg has it, but the city does not.

Mr. Lewis said So [inaudible] officers are moving to that platform, but it integrates agendas and minutes and meetings, all kinds of stuff.

Mr. DeMark said it's pretty fabulous from what I've seen at other places. It's just the pandemic started, we've had some projects in various places in Florida and DC, and they use these platforms and you're able to watch. And they even stream it live to TV in some of these bigger cities. So it's neat.

Speaker 7 Cool. We'll do the research and try to figure out if that's possible. Right now I think we stream to Facebook for our council meetings. I did want to go back to the second page, Craig. Speaker 7: The second page has two weeks, three weeks encourage, we shouldn't say that kind of stuff to folks who [crosstalk]

Mr. Lewis said we can make it three weeks. It has been a week, which has been a real strain.

Speaker 7: Yeah. Yeah. And we've had to advertise these meetings two weeks before.

Mr. Lewis said so having three weeks, it makes a lot of sense. I'll just go ahead and do it. Okay. All right. Easy peasy. Okay. All right. So I guess we can move over to the workshop piece. So what I got put together, it's a semiformal slideshow, but the point is that this is a workshop. Please ask questions as we go along. This is an opportunity just for everyone to get to know what it is that we do month in, month out, and at the speed of which you're comfortable. So I'm going to talk a little bit about the history of the code, the groundings of it so you know where this sits relative to the rest of the world. There's a legal underpinning for this. And then I'm going to talk a little bit about the core principles, why that's important, some of the key elements of the code that you'll see on a monthly basis.

Mr. Lewis said some of the standards that we, I wouldn't say struggle with, but they come up time and time again, and it's just important as a reminder, like why are these things important? So I pulled out six or seven of them that I thought were things that we regularly are addressing with applicants. There may be others that are a part of that. So again, this is a workshop for you all. This started in 2007 when the city adopted their downtown master plan. Just by way of history, the city actually has a pretty good history of planning. There's a lot of plans that have been done, interesting to wade through those. Some of you will remember when Main Street was a mall, that was a plan. Someone wrote it down and they did it. And there's a whole bunch of other things that were also part of that plan.

And we had a one plan that was going to have an executive golf course right in downtown. Now we have mini golf behind a brewery. But a lot of things I think come out of plans. But what made this different was, rather than having the big idea, it was about looking at Spartanburg as a series of small moves that all mesh together. Because when you look at downtown, downtown has a number of these sort of big

projects in different corners. A lot of that was a major property owner has property on hill, has property down here, has property over here, and they did their big project. And there's just a lot of this stuff in between. But what we've seen in the last 10 years or so since this plan was adopted, was a renewed focus on all the little infill projects in between.

We're still getting some significant large projects, for sure. But the preponderance of all these low projects, I think is the testament to that. And you all have seen it. It's about connectivity, first and foremost. It's about connecting the different parts of downtown and being a move around. It's about housing. The downtown plan was about bringing housing back to the downtown. When we did the downtown plan, I think we had less than a dozen housing units in all of downtown, and now we have probably in excess of a thousand plus more coming online. It's about mixed use infill and redevelopment. It's saving the buildings that are really important and adapting them and updating them. It's recognizing the downtown should be an urban place.

Buildings are close together. It's about being a pedestrian-scaled area. It's about minimizing the impacts of parking. All those things are important. And then lastly, downtown is about putting people first. So that doesn't mean that there's a decent sidewalk everywhere, that's a basic minimum, but it's an attractive sidewalk. And there is a street that is encouraging people to walk. And what encourages people to walk are interesting, lively storefronts, a beautiful street-scape, public art, street furniture, all of those things all play into creating a memorable experience. And so that's what it is all about. Fast forward, and I forgot the date, we'll say 2016, 15, 16, 17, North side developed their master plan, and they needed a way to streamline the zoning that's up there, and so we expanded the downtown code to the North side areas.

So that's why you all see all those projects. It's again, based on a plan that's been under construction now for a couple of years, and we've seen some great success happening as a result of that. So a lot of really positive energy. The code itself is done within the legal construct of what's called the South Carolina comprehensive planning act. Now you all as board members are going to have to take some training as part of this act. And you'll probably hear this. Again, you all fall under what's called the Boards of Architectural Review, that it call different things in different communities. There is a BAR in a couple of different communities. The historic of BAR, Board of Architectural Review or Board of Historic Review, same thing, it sets up the same elements. It gives you all the same authority to be able to do different things with it. So that's important.

And it allows you to establish restrictions, additions that regulate buildings and structures. So that's where you get your authority. Everyone asks like, "How do we have the authority to be able to do that?" You point right to the statutes to do that. That's not the case in a lot of other States. South Carolina has very explicit authority. It varies from state to state. I would say North Carolina's is not nearly as clear as yours is. So you have that. Now, I think what's important to know is, right now, unless there's legislation that you set up locally that says otherwise, all appeals from your decisions go to circuit court. So we're going to talk a little bit about why that's important and what we need to do about that.

Thankfully we haven't had any issues go to circuit court, now doing this for 10 plus years. But doesn't mean that it won't ever happen. So we just thought that, as projects get bigger and more expensive and people come from out of town, they don't bring their architects as much as they bring their lawyers. So we just need to pay attention to those elements more than anything else. We get in the meat of the

code itself, and I'm going to go through this section by section, but in a high level, there's an administration piece. Here's the important piece, the reviews that you all do are really about all the buildings in the downtown, on the North side, except largely for single family homes. You're not going to look at individuals, single family homes. There's a little bit of an exception to that. We've looked at a couple projects as of late, particularly in the North side where there's some land, where we have looked at general single family home designs. But we've really looked at the subdivision plan, right? So the one that we just looked at recently up on-

Ms. Rosario said Silver Hill.

Mr. Lewis said Yeah, Silver Hill, that area. So that project has a combination of town homes, which are absolutely in your purview and detached single family homes, which are not going to be. You're not going to see each home that comes through. They're going to have a lot, they're going to have to comply with their setbacks, but they'll be able to design and build according to how they see fit. So they'll just get their permits directly from the Natalia and her staff in that regard. So as we talked about earlier, you can approve something, or you can grant some kind of modification of the standards. So those are approved, deny, modify, those are your key elements that are part of that.

Ms. Lynch asked so going back to the Silver Hill thing, so what puts, the question of single family houses, what makes it need to go before the Designer Review Board if a developer is going to string together like three or four lots and do six or eight cottages or something like that? Is it just at someone's discretion, whether that needs to be reviewed or what's the... I don't know why I can't like figure out if there's a clear answer to this.

Mr. Lewis said so if they are existing lots and they don't have to build any new streets, then they just simply go to staff for subdivision plan. If they're creating a new subdivision, they're creating new streets, then they're going to come to you all.

Ms. Lynch said O.K.

Mr. DeMark aside Mr. Lewis if he could share this entire document so they would have it for future reference.

Mr. Lewis said It would be my pleasure. My pleasure. Thank you, Lucy. That's an excellent question. So there are, within this code, the city has a zoning ordinance and they have a bunch of districts that are part of it. And Natalia, I don't remember how many districts there are a dozen and a half or so.

Ms. Rosario said a good bit.

Mr. Lewis said we think it's four that are part of this, and so these are the references. So if you can imagine that the downtown is one big district, these are four sub districts, by way to classify it. So we've got a boundary over the North side, in the downtown, and within that, we've got these four different sub districts and they kind of look and feel like zoning districts if you're familiar with the zoning ordinance in general, they have some basic standards to go along with it. And they ramp up according to the numbers. A T3 area is going to be the least dense area that we're looking at, as opposed to the T6 area's going to be the most dense area that you all will look at.

Mr. DeMark asked and that would be DT3 be North side-

Mr. Lewis said yes.

Mr. Lewis said So you can actually, on this plan, so DT3 in this is the really light salmon color; and that's almost exclusively in North side. We've got a little bit that shows up over here off of St. John, back behind the old TK Gregg center. Sorry.

Mr. Lewis said and then DT4 is really more of a neighborhood mixed-use area. That's the darker color salmon, also the TK Greg and then tying into Silver Hill. The T5 is this blue, which is visually most of the area, it's the major corridors coming into downtown. And T6 is really the central core that everyone thinks about.

Mr. Lewis said All right. So we do have a use table. We almost never talk about it at a DRB meeting. And they're pretty... we have to have this use table. It's what hooks us into your state laws. State laws say you have to have the district with a uniform standards and use provisions. And so we do have these use provisions, they're pretty flexible, and so they're intended to encourage mixed use. And, I think by and large, they have worked really, really well. We really haven't run into issues from a use standpoint in these areas. And so it's interesting to think about, point out to Martin and Natalia, that the downtown code covers, I don't know, 20%, 25% of the land area of the city now. We've got some good experience ratio under our belt. So maybe it's time to think about going into other areas. And this board has talked about expanding this out to some of the major corridors and things like that. So you all have done well through the years from a management side, and you've got a good reputation in that regard. We do have our dimensional requirements. You'll see these a little bit in what we'll talk about. I think by and large, these are your setbacks, but unlike many zoning codes where you have these minimum setbacks, you have to be 25 feet back off the road, we actually are encouraging you to be very close to the sidewalk. So in some cases we've got to have a setback that is a maximum. And I'd say actually in most cases, you'll see that both for the T4, T5 and T6, where all these maximums, they're a part of that. There're ways that you can be flexible in what that maximum is, but that is measured from the back of the public sidewalk, so that everyone knows. We have worked with developers where they need to set back a little bit further and so they dedicate some additional right of way, and that helps and comply with that. [crosstalk]

Mr. DeMark asked Mr. Lewis let's just make sure everyone understands what the back of the public sidewalk is. Is that the side closest to the structure?

Mr. Lewis said yes.

Mr. DeMark asked was that how you would understand that? And that sidewalk width is a minimum dimension of 12 feet today?

Mr. Lewis said it varied from district to district.

Mr. DeMark asked does that include the... Sometimes we also talk about the landscape strip that is part of that. So there's the back of the curb, the landscape strip, the back of the public sidewalk and then the building, right.

Mr. Lewis said that was right. You got it. The other thing I think that's important that you'll see that's a big differentiator, I mean, if there's anything that really differentiates one district from the other, its height. So you'll see that in a T3 area, the maximum height is two and a half stories. We do allow for a full third story with your approval. So that's baked into that. In a project we did at the North side recently, had that. And then T4 is four stories. T5 is six stories, T6 is 10 stories, and you can really exceed that if you're able to. So that's the sort of biggest differentiator in all of that. But again, all these, they're the absolute minimums and really try to encourage a sense of intimacy with the sidewalk zone that Kevin just mentioned. So that's the big part of it.

Mr. Lewis said the one thing that you will not see in this code, which we actually talked about with the Danmor last week, is parking. This code regulates parking location, not number of spaces. That's very intentional. I think if you look at downtown as a whole, and you look at it as an aerial, you'll see that there's a good amount of asphalt in downtown today. We're actually trying to remove some of that and make it much more productive. We have all the parking spaces we could ever need to build out downtown today. Sometimes it may be a little bit less convenient, a block or two or three away, but in downtowns, I think people are getting used to the fact that they can walk a little bit further than they used to. That's all part of that. So we're trying to discourage that mentality in the downtown thinking that we have to provide parking onsite.

Mr. Lewis said the city has done a great job through the years of improving streets, adding on street parking to a lot of these streets, consolidating sites so that it's not just for individual apartments lots, there's one larger one that gets you 25% more that's part of that. So all that I think is all part and parcel of the conversation. Civic and landmark buildings. We have not had any, I don't think, that have come through the Design and Review Board. I'm trying to think of their have been any. So they've been, we do have a few that have popped up since the downtown plan was done, but now are coming through the design review board. So there's some basic things, but generally speaking, they're very high level. And it just intended to really focus in on what's most important. The Catholic Church on East Main, actually they do an excellent job, almost all of these bullets. They couldn't help where they were located originally because that's where they are, but otherwise they set themselves up and that building as an important landmark. It's set back behind a Plaza. There's a sense of elevation about the building that gives it a sense of prominence and importance that civic buildings should have. The only building that we probably have addressed is the courthouse. That falls under these standards. We actually haven't really looked at the courthouse yet, we've just kind of gotten glimpses of it. We've argued about the parking deck. That's been the key thing at this point, but at some point we're going to start talking about the courthouse. These are the standards that they're going to go by when it comes to that.

Mr. Lewis said there are a couple of nuances about this that I think are important to point out. There's what we call a required shopfront. When we were looking at the code back in 2007 originally, there were things particularly along Main where, mostly market-based reasons, building owners did not treat the ground level as a main street, it was space to rent and they would rent out to just about anyone and they would make changes to the storefront as a result of that. We used to have a lot of office on the ground floor. There's still a little bit left, but most of that's gone. And so the point is, as a pedestrian, we want to encourage people to keep walking. And the things that keep people walking around is a sense of activity and entertainment, and the things that generate that entertainment are retail and restaurants. And so those are the key things that we're looking at. We recognized that originally, we had talked about, let's just require that all the uses on the ground floor be retail and restaurants. And some cities were doing that. Because they're at that point in their maturation. You all are almost there. And it's been amazing to see how far things have come in just the last decade. But essentially what we said was, in certain areas, we recognize that the interim solution may be an office, but at least when you're doing your improvements to the storefront, don't just box everything in and put a little window, a little window and a simple door, because that will deaden the street. At least have big open windows as if it were a store so that you could flip over very quickly to what would be a preferred tenant on that ground floor. And so to be able to do that.

Mr. Lewis said and we've had some people through the years that have gotten creative with some of these spaces and the offices, having artwork, it changes over, it gives us a sense of that. So that's an important component. And I'll talk about another reason for that in just a minute, but we have that and

it's primarily along Main Street today. But there's these little dots that show up on the zoning map, that's what that is. There's a little art on Church Street, there's a little art out Main Street. I think there's a few other little pieces here and there. Side yard parking, this was another component. You'll see that the locational criteria mean that parking needs to be generally to the rear of the buildings, in the downtowns, but in some streets, particularly Kennedy Street, there was already a pattern of having buildings and a parking lot next to the building. So building off of that pattern, we'd say, "Listen, we'll be okay with that. And so you don't have to kind of fill the frontage like we do, what we require of other streets. You're allowed to put a parking lot next to the building." Now, you all recognize what happens, it's not something that we prefer because, it requires a pedestrian to walk across 60 to 70 feet worth of a dead zone. Not an ideal situation, but it's an okay interim solution. And there are certain streets where, when we look at the good, better and best, this is still a good condition. So it's still gives us sidewalks. It still gives us a really solid building that really is up at the street, but the parking is pushed back just a little bit, but it still forms the side yard. So that's the, again, Kennedy street is the area that you're going to see those kinds of buildings over time.

Mr. Lewis said the last one we have is this Main street height overlay. This is actually a residual that came from the old zoning ordinance. But if you see this building, which is just a really great, great building. I think having this one as a good example, the point is, is that there's a general historic height of about four stories along Main street and to not insert buildings along Main street that impact that. Now, it's important to point out that Main Street is not a historic district. If it was a historic district, it would have to go through a historic review, its part of that. But what we decided was, in lieu of creating a separate historic district for this area, we would apply similar standards but not do that. It allows individual property owners to still be individually nominated onto the national register so they could get tax credits for that, but it is not a historic district, an active historic district as part of it. So that's just keeping in mind. We've had a couple of projects that came through. The drugstore on Main that we saw, gosh, last year, the first glance at that. They were almost there, they had a full four stories, but they still had the upper stories, were still too close. They needed to push it back. So those are things we're going to take a look at over time. So let me get back to these core principles. And they-

Mr. DeMark referenced one of the slides and asked so the way that building was approved was because it's higher than 60 feet. It had to be set back.

Mr. Lewis said Yeah. It's higher than four stories. So from the street, from Main Street, it's technically only three. So that four story that pops up, and I think there's actually two above.

Mr. DeMark asked so there's two above, right.

Mr. Lewis said so they set that back. Now, normally we would have asked them to set it back 60 feet but they were able to mask the way that they built with materials and colors and everything else. And we looked at the views, we saw that it was kind of clear setback from Main Street as a result. So that was a way that we-

Mr. DeMark said so you don't lose the original three story look of the building from the street perspective- but you still give them the ability to go higher because the original view is preserved. Is that fair.

Mr. Lewis said that's exactly it. Yep. It maintains the sort of historic height lines of the core. And the other piece too, honestly, you've got some really nice, this was one of them, one of the best, frankly, but you've got some really nice historic buildings. And so it encourages the adaptive reuse of those rather than a demolition. So I think that all worked out really well. So there are some core principles that are

embedded in part of this. Connectivity is one. We talked about that. It's important to point out with connectivity, there are two components. There's the journey and the destination. So I talked about the need to have a nice [inaudible], but also having places to walk to. So again, the city I think has done an excellent job at building sidewalks, building green ways, building bicycle network, they are all part of that. So that's a core component of that.

Mr. Lewis said they talked about housing and why that's important. And really just trying to encourage more and more of that as much as we can. That mixed use infill, encouraging buildings to grow and adapt over time. I think what's important and what I always ask, I also serve on a design review board in my community, and we always ask, "Okay, so you're proposing this, and this is your current user, well in 15 or 20 years when the market shifts and it becomes something else because all great buildings do, how adaptable is it?" And so you think about the Montgomery building, which is one of the old classic buildings in downtown. It has been a number of different things through the years. And so now its latest iteration switch from office to housing and some other components as well. So those are the types of things that we would like to be able to see that adaptability of building over time.

Mr. Lewis said this beautiful hotel today could easily be housing or office at some point in the future as well. So different things, but there's nothing about this building that says it absolutely has to be a hotel forever in a day. It can fill in as just a beautiful building on its own and be adapted over time. We talked about what it means to be urban. So here are a couple key things, key notes and takeaways that we struggle with because oftentimes we get designers that come to the design review board who are used to designing on highway. And when you design along a highway, you have to design for high speeds and far distances, which often means that you're requiring a building to yell at you from afar. And so when you're in a downtown area, you don't have to yell because people are walking slowly or you're driving slowly, or you're walking as a pedestrian along the ground floor. So what animates is the things in the storefront, the signage, a little bit of the lighting, the canopy colors. That's really what we perceive when we see a lot of these great places. And so we don't have to over-design a lot of these buildings. And a lot of times we've seen it. We've seen it recently where they end up spending a lot more money than they need to. They have these sort of acrobatics when it comes to some architectural features that are just totally unnecessary. They'll never be perceived. And in some cases we just have to tell them to calm down. Simplify it. Walk around, not just what's happening in Spartanburg, go to Greenville, go to Atlanta, go to Charlotte, or to any great place that's got really great walkable environment these days. You'll see most of the buildings are actually pretty simple. They're simple wall, punched windows. Sometimes there's more glass than there is brick, but generally speaking, [inaudible] simple cornice at the top of the building. There's a sign band or some element where the signage is. Everything else basically gets field applied based on who the tenant is. And so that's the stuff that really is the most important things that we'll see as pedestrians. And that's really what we're going to look at as part of it. That's a key thing.

Mr. Lewis said we've seen things where people want to make a long building look like it's many smaller buildings. Well, there's no reason to do that if it's not many smaller buildings. [inaudible] examples in Spartanburg where you have a building that is 150 feet long, that's perfectly well-proportioned and very simple in design. It doesn't have to look like many smaller buildings that tenants downstairs help to divide that up. So that's why you'll see for me, you'll see a lot of comments that will try to simplify a lot of those things and focus on the pedestrian scale design and all those pieces. So that's a big part of it. Surface parking, again, surface parking doesn't show up on our radar, generally speaking, unless it's in the side yard, generally speaking, it's in the backyard. Again, many of you all remember this space right here, Morgan square used to be a parking lot. And the 18 spaces or whatever that was there, you would

think would be the most valuable 18 spaces in the absolute world because people held onto them. None of those tenants are there, but all these spaces have filled back in and it's a much more valuable place today, even though we've actually taken away parking along there. And we've continued to take away parking actually. I mean, just recently, just took away some more parking spaces and added more outdoor seating spaces. So I think that's important. And it's going to be something that we're going to do a little bit more with each project. And then putting people first, as I mentioned, its safety, security, and entertainment all those things are important.

Mr. Lewis said these long expanses, these big blank walls are going to be really discouraged. We look at parking structures, it's one of the things that we were looking at, at that courthouse parking structure that we looked at, I guess that was sort of end of last year. It's a big building, and it's a big sterile building in many ways. So these are things that are important for us to take a look at. And visual diversity happens with stuff that gets applied at that ground level, which I've talked about. So here's some of the standards that I think are important. Building entrances, we're talking off a lot, like every single project we talked last month with the Danmor. Their entrances, and making sure that they had entrances on the streets so that it was obvious that if I'm walking up and down the street, I know where I can enter, and I know where I should enter. So we do require a functional entrance.

Mr. Lewis said and all of this language is really, really important. It seems a little legal, but I have enough experience in a lot of other communities when we say, "Hey, you've got to have a door opening onto the street." And they say, "Okay, we'll have a door. It'll be our steel egress fire exit. And that will be it." And so they called it a day and we realized after, that happened in a couple of communities, and we had to be a lot more clear about that. So those are things that are important. And it's all about creating this park once and walk environment. Minimizing blank walls, I've talked about. We'll talk about shopfront transparency. This is about making sure that there's glass and doors on the ground floor. So why is this important? As human beings, we'd like to see other human beings. We also like to hear other human beings.

When we're walking down the street at night, studies have shown people feel safer when they're actually around more people or where they know people are, or where they can hear people. They feel least safe where there is low lighting or no activity. So we want to encourage activity, and actually storefronts cast the best light on the sidewalks. So we encourage the merchants to leave... good merchants know this, they leave their storefront lights on and that casts the best light onto the sidewalk and fills it up. So very, very important. But we found that we actually have to tell them, "You got to have this much in glass." And so we often have had arguments about what percentage that is. We make them measure it. And we've measured Spartanburg, and we know what historically the pattern was, that's where these numbers came from. So there's precedent in that.

Raised entries. Again, referenced the Danmor, referenced the North side town homes. We talked about this issue last month. Why are these important? Well, there's a basic one, which is drainage, but commercial projects have to deal with drainage anyway. The second piece is, it differentiates between what's commercial and what's residential. You can see in this picture that the building on the right is clearly a residential occupancy because you walk upstairs, it looks and feels, as opposed to the door downstairs, very commercial. So there's a queue immediately. The next piece is, the fact that we're raising it up at the back of the sidewalk, if I'm walking down the street and you're at grade, if I'm living in the Danmor on the ground floor, then I'm basically at grade, I can look in and find out what you're having for dinner. And so there's not really a sense of privacy. And so ultimately that often means that those windows, the blinds are closed all the time because people feel like they need a sense of privacy.

By elevating them, it allows people to have some separation from the street. So you can either provide privacy by moving back or by moving up. So when we're urban places, we tend to move up. When we're more suburban places, we moved back. So that's the reason why we do it. That's the important components. We talked to about street-scape, and the basic workhorses really, 11 to 12 feet from the back of the curb. And then in some places, we have a planning strip and trees that are planted. Other places, there're trees and wells. So this should have a grate on top of it. And we've had some conversations internally about whether the city is going to use grates or not use grate. Kind of have to, avoid trip hazards and things like that. So that's part of it. So it's at 12 foot dimensions that starts everything. It provides enough sidewalk width, five to six feet, and enough planning strip width, six to seven feet to be able to get us what we need for healthy trees and wide sidewalks, they're a part of that. And then signage, lastly, you all really don't see signage. That stuff that's handled administratively, but just to know that the code includes signage. It's something that happens usually after [inaudible] buildings and people get tenants.

Mr. DeMark said he had asked for us to look at signage from time to time because there've been some blatant new signs that seem to just get put up in the downtown. And we need to be looking at this, and Natalia and I have talked about it, and I think we're going to start to see more. She's just sent me one this past week as it was related to, just a strictly a replacement one for one, which I didn't think the board needed to see. But if it's changing from what's existing to a different shape or size or light type, I think it needs to come before the board.

Mr. Lewis said it is certainly within your purview to request that. So it's been a while since we've done any updates on the code. The last one was about three or four years ago. I think it's worth taking a look at some of these things.

Mr. DeMark said one of the other things Natalia brought up, and I think is important for us to talk about as a group. There seem to be a lot of development that occurs along our major corridors that are not part of our downtown code, but people will stop me and say, "Did you see the Pinnacle bank? What are they doing? Why is that not within your purview?" And it's just outside the limits, and it's hard to explain, but at some point we probably need to update where our zones are. And since that was done in 2007, I think was the original master plan, there has to be something that pushes along to incorporate the, I'll call it the major thoroughfares. Main Street, all the way out to a predetermined position. And then Asheville highway is a big push. I think Pine Street is a big push. The road that goes out to the mall, which I can't think of right at this moment, that's Main street, the other way.

Ms. Rosario said that was W. O. Ezell Boulevard.

Mr. DeMark said there are lots of places where developments are going on that are in the city that we don't talk about and I think we would do them a service to provide some insight into what they're doing. Not to stop them, but to provide some type of design review.

Mr. Richardson said it was his understanding that Chris wants that to happen. I don't know the mechanism about what makes that happen.

Ms. Rosario said so during the comp plan that we're launching here, actually this weekend, we're hoping that we can get some feedback or mandate or discuss that as part of that process. I also think, and I mentioned it in the chat, not to distract but maybe some [inaudible] to think on, an update to the downtown master plan itself is probably appropriate here in the coming years. The two could work in tandem, but I definitely think that expanding the urban code down our corridors just make sense. I'm definitely in agreement with Kevin, a lot of his projects could benefit from additional design review.

Mr. DeMark said it's very hard to explain to folks that read in the paper, "Hey, the design review board looked at this and they looked back," and then they come and they say to you, "Whoa, did you look at this one?" And I go, "Well, no, that's not in the downtown area." And there's some question of what they consider what is the downtown area. And I think that the city will be great, maybe the newspaper person is still with us and can print that map and show that the downtown design review board only touches these areas.

Ms. Rosario said it was a good point. Our zoning map when you look at it, one, the categories seem arbitrary between what's downtown and what's not, they're not arbitrary. We're working with a very old school zoning system in the rest of the city and a very modern version in downtown. So basically we've got two different zoning ordinances, obviously going on. I'd preferred if we could streamline it, but anyway, yep.

Mr. DeMark apologized to Mr. Lewis and said he didn't mean to stop you, keep going.

Mr. Lewis said that's what this is all about. This is to have a [crosstalk]. So I'll just wrap on this one. And maybe on that, finishing up on the most attractive parts of this process, but I have to point out, you all are operating under what's called a quasi-judicial process. So you are in many ways like a court who receives evidence, then you have to render a decision accordingly. And if you ever have a project that goes to circuit court, the judge is going to look at the evidence and the information that you all received, and the methodology by which you made your decision, to determine whether due process was followed, and whether your findings were appropriate based on the evidence. So you've done a pretty good job. I'll make a couple of suggestions to just be on the lookout for. But generally speaking, you don't have a lot of public participation, although the Danmor, we got a bunch of people. It was probably the most people who have participated ever, since I've been doing this. But we need to, the stuff that people submit, the testimony that they provide is part of the record, and the decisions that you all make are based on that evidence. So when someone says, "Listen, I don't like this building. It's just a terrible building." You need to ask them, "Well, what do you think makes it terrible?" Ask them some probing questions, get them to provide something of substance. That's important. And so you're going to make your decisions to approve, to deny, based on those conditions that are all part of that.

Mr. Lewis said and generally speaking, we recommend that they serve up findings of fact that goes along with it, not necessarily have to be formal, but I'll recommend, a typical notion for you all would be after you've heard the evidence, the chairman will close the public hearing, you all will have your deliberations then we'll issue a motion. Appropriate motion would be, I move we find this application consistent, or not, with the downtown codes principles and standards, and approve or deny the application. So it just gives that little bit of extra, like, yes, we did in fact pay attention to it and we looked at the standards. It's stuff that I included in my staff review, but I think that's all part of it. Generally speaking [inaudible] and they do recommend that you do a roll call on your votes, just to make sure that you got a quorum and to make sure everyone's voting the way they need to vote. They'll just ask that, that's the only other piece.

Mr. DeMark said he thought it's been more easier since we've started to do these via Zoom. Sometimes I think when we're in the hall, maybe it's not as... I don't know, it just seems different when we're all together. The Zoom meeting, you can hear the person for sure saying yes and no, and, and who they are because there's video evidence. But great point, and I will certainly incorporate this language moving forward.

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Mr. Lewis said so it's just good practice, that's part of that. So that's it. That's kind of a deep dive, a lot of different things. Again, what it all comes down to is, we're designing a downtown for the community. It's for people. And so every decision [inaudible] at scale, like whether you feel comfortable walking in front of this building, whether you want to share that building with your friends. You go to a great dinner and you're walking around like, "Yeah, that building was built and that building was built and that they're just part of a great composition, and they should be all contributing to that composition over time. So your job is to curate that. Not as a museum, but as a living and breathing place.

Mr. DeMark asked if anyone had any questions.

Ms. Lynch just wanted to say she thought the whole presentation was really great. And I appreciate Craig putting that together. That was helpful.

Mr. DeMark said absolutely. Craig, I appreciate you doing it and thank you very much from all of us. And there's definitely some new board members that this certainly helps us all better understand what the requirements and the expectation of the code are. And now it makes sense when you send those letters to us that say, "I've done my review of this project, and this is what I think meets and doesn't meet this code." So that's great.

Mr. Richardson thought it was a great review and a reminder of what we're doing.

Mr. DeMark said If there aren't any other questions or comments, I think we can end the meeting. Thanks everyone for coming and attending and listening to Craig. I think this was great.

There being nothing else to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:40 P.M.



Kevin DeMark, Chair

Edited by Julie Roland, Administrative Assistant.