

Meeting Minutes of the Design Review Board (DRB)
Meeting
Tuesday, October 1, 2019

The Design Review Board (DRB) met in the City Hall Council Chambers on Tuesday, October 1, 2019 at 5:30 P.M., with the following members in attendance: Ricky Richardson, Mike Henthorn, Tip Pitts, Kevin DeMark, and Carolyn Schoepf. Representing the Planning Department were Natalia Rosario, Planner III, and Julie Roland, Administrative Assistant. City Manager Chris Story and Craig Lewis, Stantec Design Services also attended this 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 members of the Board were present, constituting a quorum; and he went over the procedure for the meeting.

The Agenda for the October 1, 2019 meeting was approved by acclimation.

Disposition of the Minutes from the August 6, 2019, and the July 2, 2019 Meetings.

Both sets of meeting minutes were approved by acclimation.

Old Business – None.

New Business:

Conceptual Review and Approval of the proposed Restoration/Redevelopment of proposed Residential and Commercial Mixed-Use Development located at 186 E. Main St., in the DT-6 District from William Gray, Principal Architect, on behalf of Alexi Orehowski, Owner.

Ms. Natalia Rosario, Planner III came forward and was sworn; and said entered the meeting packets the Board Members received via email, tonight's presentation, and slides into evidence as Exhibit A. She said they had seen this one before in a different iteration; and that William Gray had now been brought in as the Architect on the request.

Mr. William Gray, Principal Architect, McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture came forward on behalf of the Owner and he was sworn. Mr. Gray showed some slides that included the downtown area and one of 186 E. Main Street; and he said it was most recently used as the former Blood Bank.

[Editor's Note: Board Member Carolyn Schoepf arrived to the meeting at 5:35 P.M.]

Mr. Gray explained to the Board Members they were going to restore the large openings on the ground level and on the upper level they would pull the façade back a little. On the ground level there would be offices and retail. They proposed to keep the original facade and pull a new façade in with it. He showed a slide of the rear elevation and mentioned it would be similar to another building on Dunbar Street that had a staircase encased in glass. They would clean up the courtyard a little and make sure there was proper ADA access. He showed a slide that showed the relief between the new proposed façade and the original façade; and he said there had been some comments between the City and Mr. Craig Lewis, the City's Design Consultant about potentially slanting those in as they saw in other downtown spaces; and he said that was kind of up for grabs. They were proposing to take all the plaster up and restore the brick façade to what it was, and expand the columns to attach the storefront to.

Mr. Richardson asked about the purpose for pulling the façade back.

Mr. Gray said one reason was for protection from the sun, and the biggest reason was to allow for porch type elements for the residential units upstairs. He said the dark color in the slide was an applied stucco material on top of the masonry.

Mr. DeMark asked would the intent for that be for signage.

Mr. Gray said potentially. He said as far as landscaping, nothing had really been designed yet; but they were talking about having a small courtyard that would be open to all the tenants. They preferred not to have cars park there, like they do now.

Board Member Questions:

Mr. DeMark said they had previously talked about the HVAC units, and this did not show it at all; and he asked where the HVAC would be located.

Mr. Gray said they had not had that discussion yet.

Mr. DeMark asked what about the trash.

Mr. Gray said they planned to service a lot of that from Dunbar Street side where there would be an elevator in back; and they recognized it would need to sit in an enclosure.

Mr. Pitts asked how many residential units were proposed.

Mr. Gray said that was actually debatable right now; and the owner had wanted five or six; and they were trying to convince him to rethink that a little.

Ms. Schoepf asked what size were the proposed units.

Mr. Gray did not know the square footage yet; and said they had not designed it. The idea was there would be one and two bedroom; but the owner was really pushing for all one bedrooms. He said there had also been discussion for this to potentially be an Air B & B.

Mr. Henthorn referenced the slide of the back of the building and asked if the brick wall was just for the stair.

Mr. Gray said it was.

Mr. Henthorn asked if the units that were behind that would not have any openings.

Mr. Gray explained it would kind of be like the way Drayton operated.

Mr. Pitts asked about the property line.

Mr. Gray said he believed it was the sidewalk.

Mr. Richardson said he liked the upstairs with the porches recessed.

Mr. DeMark said he liked it better than he did the last time.

Mr. Richardson said regarding the first floor; Mr. Lewis had made some good comments about the awning. He felt in keeping with the Price's and Aug Smith's stores, he felt that would be a welcomed addition. If there were retail tenants in the front stores, they would really appreciate it; and conceptually he was o.k. with it.

Mr. Henthorn asked Mr. Gray if he could talk a little about Mr. Lewis; comments regarding the bays coming out to the front.

Mr. Gray said throughout downtown they saw where the bays came out and windows kind of sloped in; and you had the actual door out a little bit. In a downtown retail setting you were pushing what you were selling regarding a visual view.

Mr. Henthorn asked Mr. Gray if there was any reason they would not do that.

Mr. Gray said no.

Mr. Richardson felt it was a pretty effective presentation if it was retail; and there was an awning to stand under.

Mr. Gray said one of the comments was to maintain some sort of verticality; and he felt there was something they could do to sort of carry that pattern (that vertical element).

Mr. Henthorn said he kept looking for it but it wasn't there. He was wondering if the shadow did not show up on the rendering.

Mr. Gray said it was not there.

Mr. DeMark said really they were just looking at conceptual approval of the exterior tonight; was that correct.

Mr. Richardson said the Board Members wanted to make sure it was a functional building.

Mr. DeMark said he would make a motion to give it conceptual design approval and he was seconded by Mr. Pitts.

Mr. Craig Lewis asked Mr. Richardson if he was incorporating his comments into that for the next iteration of the project or what.

Mr. Richardson said before they voted they needed for Mr. Lewis to talk about his comments on the project.

Mr. Craig Lewis, Design Consultant, Stantec came forward and was sworn; and he suggested the Board Members needed to include into a motion regarding incorporating certain elements he had detailed in his report to them. He said walking along Main Street on both sides the recess would be abnormal. He thought the only one he was aware of where the ground level recessed was at Wild Wings; and he felt they could see how that felt when it was not activated. He felt it was a very dark negative space. Mr. Lewis encouraged that; and he had mentioned in his memo there were some practical reasons why they had historically not done that – it brings more light on the street in the evenings; it also helps to get people to be able to see things. On the ground level you didn't have that much of a recess light issue as you would on the upper story. He pointed out the canopy just because of like today was a hot day and to have a little bit of covering on that side of the street – it would be a nice thing to consider. Clearly there seemed to be a precedent about the way it was regarding a canopy for the Aug. Smith's building; but it did not mean this one had to; but it just meant there was clearly a precedent to have a canopy there.

Mr. Henthorn asked how big the recess was.

Mr. Gray said both levels were about 4'.

Ms. Schoepf said that was not anything like Wild Wings.

Mr. DeMark asked what if they did the windows out flush, and recessed at least the door.

Mr. Richardson said that was typically how Main Street looked – the door was set back and the windows came up to storefront, just like at Prices and next door.

Mr. Lewis said 4' would be appropriate and would give proper door swing to an egress.

Mr. Richardson said when he walked from his office to downtown; he seeked out the canopies going down Main Street because of the sun.

Mr. DeMark said no; it was about a foot.

Mr. Gray said basically they would let the upper level be the driver for the new wall.

Mr. Richardson said the trees downtown looked a little weak; and he asked City Manager Story if the City addressed those. He thought there was also an empty tree well and asked if there were plans to replant that one.

The City Manager said there were no immediate plans for that; but everything west of Liberty Street were in Silva cell; much healthier long-term planters. The curb line had not changed in a long time; and those tree wells he referenced were not as accommodating as the newer ones.

Mr. Richardson wanted to encourage the City to get a plan. He asked about at the corner of Pine and Main Street; were there going to be some tree plantings in that area.

Ms. Rosario said she would be happy to send him something regarding that.

Mr. Richardson asked if there was any more discussion regarding this before they moved any farther.

Mr. Henthorn felt Mr. Lewis had some very good comments.

Mr. Richardson agreed and thanked Mr. Lewis for the commentary.

Mr. Richardson opened up the public hearing and asked anyone who wished to speak in favor of the request to come forward and state their name and address for the record. No one came forward. He asked anyone who wished to speak in opposition to come forward. No one came forward. Mr. Richardson closed the public hearing portion.

Board Deliberation:

Mr. DeMark moved to grant conceptual approval; and he was seconded by Mr. Pitts.

Ms. Schoepf asked would this vote incorporate the comments that were made.

Mr. Richardson explained that the design team had heard their comments and they now knew what they needed to do before they came back to the Board for a final approval. They should now come back to the Board with a more refined, architectural rendition.

The motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

Preliminary Review re the Judicial Center Parking Deck proposed at 180 Magnolia Street, located in the DT-6 District, bounded by N. Daniel Morgan Avenue, Saint John Street, and Magnolia Street, from William Gray, AIA, McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture, on behalf of Spartanburg County.

Ms. Rosario came forward and said this was for conceptual review and approval of the Judicial Parking Deck which needed approval prior to the other buildings on the site, because the new parking deck would be built on the current parking lot.

Mr. William Gray, McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture came forward again, and he was still under oath. He said the last time he was before the Board on this item was the previous spring; which at that time the purpose was to prime everyone on the initial project. Mr. Gray said the entire project involved three phases, one of them being the new Court house, which he referenced on a slide, the new Parking Deck, which he referenced, and the Central Energy Plant, he pointed out. Today he was here to discuss the parking deck; and he had with him Walden Jones and David McCutchen, the Civil Engineers, and Joe Lauer, Clerestory Projects.

Mr. Richardson asked before he got started, a question about the slide; and he asked had the parking deck changed locations from the previous time the Board Members had seen it. He thought previously it had seemed much closer to the road.

Mr. Gray said that was correct; and he explained at that time they did not have a good civil design and had since learned important information regarding certain soils, etc. and that area was not suited to hold the parking deck, and they had to move it closer to Library Street. He said it would also be a shorter walk to the new court house. Mr. Gray showed a slide of the planting plan, parking deck and new court house; and said what they planned to do would be one way in and one way out. You would come in Library Street off of Magnolia. There would also be a small access lot for ADA, Handicapped users with some ramps. He pointed out where there was a surface lot and the intent was to screen the whole deck in vegetation. Right now it was 100% precast deck with some brick accents; and it was intended as the central area for entry. He pointed out the pedestrian connection that housed the elevator and the stairs. Those would feature brick accents.

Mr. Richardson asked Mr. Gray how he would manage peak pedestrian traffic going back and forth on that road (kind of like at the hospital); he knew it was not under "their" purview, he was just curious.

Mr. Gray said unless one of his colleagues wanted to correct him, they did not have that defined in place yet; but what he could tell them was that one of the consultants that helped them with the deck was an expert in traffic control and vehicular traffic. He said vehicular traffic would not be controlled coming in to the deck.

Mr. DeMark asked so there would be no access control.

Mr. Gray said there would be a ground type treatment to kind of slow people down, so people could not just charge down Library Street. He referenced a slide and said everything was precast; and the corner treatment would be in brick accent. He showed a slide of what would be the glass & elevator/stair area; and he pointed out the connection that went back to the court house. Mr. Gray showed a slide of a different view looking down Library Street. He explained they were planning on planting vegetation all around the building to screen it, which was not an unusual strategy; which he said was used around the city regarding parking decks. A slide looking back from Daniel Morgan across the surface lot was shown; and he said there was proposed new vegetation along Daniel Morgan, around the parking lot and surface lot, as well as in the surface lot against the building. He said over time it would grow and create a visual barrier from the public way. A slide was shown of where the energy plant would be located.

Mr. Richardson asked if that was a fair representation of the proximity of the parking deck relative to Daniel Morgan Avenue.

Mr. Gray said it was.

Mr. Richardson asked how far it was in feet from the roadway to the corner of that building.

Mr. Gray said it was relatively close.

Mr. Richardson said what he was seeing did not look relatively close; and he said again that when this plan was first shown to the Board Members it appeared very close at the time.

Mr. Gray explained again the building had moved; and it had now gotten taller, and the footprint had changed. He explained the new parking deck alone would have 682 spaces and the adjacent surface lot would have 72 spots, and he pointed to another small area that would have 8 spots (1 lane in and 1 lane out). He said the ground level followed the grade, and as you go up; were the upper five levels. He showed a slide of an idea they had for the parking deck to be lighter in color, (a more neutral brick) they were playing around with. Mr. Gray explained their design team consisted of 30 plus people, and they all felt the parking deck needed to take a second seat to the court house. The court house would be the building that would cost the most money; and it was a nine figure project. They all felt the parking deck did not need to compete with the court house.

Mr. DeMark asked would the lighter color compliment the court house, or would it be in conflict with it, as opposed to the other color he had shown.

Mr. Gray said they did not yet know which they were going to do right now; but it would be a different material so it did not look like an extension of the court house.

Mr. Richardson asked would it try to pick up some of the architectural elements of the main building or not.

Mr. Gray said it would not be a neo-classical parking deck. He said all of the parking deck elements would be kind of subdued.

Mr. Richardson asked how long before they knew what the new court house would look like.

Mr. Gray said probably late 2020.

Mr. Richardson said he wanted them to bring them some artistic flair to the parking deck.

Mr. Gray said all he could say was, they did not want to compete on any level with the court house; they did not want to detract from that.

Mr. Henthorn said it would be a huge building, so he did not think they could ignore it, and they needed to pay some attention to it. He knew there must be some tremendous budget restraints; but thought they needed to put a little more effort into what it would look like. Mr. Henthorn said when you came around Daniel Morgan that parking deck was the important building from an urban point of view; and he felt they needed to think about it a little bit.

Mr. Gray said he would really lean on this Board for guidance regarding what the treatment for the building would be.

Mr. Henthorn said if he was doing precast, why not just put some interesting details regarding the spandrel panels. He thought that would help deal with the scale of the building.

Ms. Schoepf agreed with Mr. Henthorn; and said there should be some continuity between the two buildings.

Mr. Richardson said he assumed it would be cheaper to go up rather than to go down regarding the parking deck.

Mr. Gray said that was correct.

Mr. DeMark thought when they first talked about this there was a massive grade change; and he asked if that had gone away.

Mr. Gray said it had not gone away.

Mr. DeMark asked would they be importing fill.

Mr. Gray said no; and he explained the grade sloped down to Daniel Morgan from Magnolia Street; and the lower level of the deck followed that grade; so it did drop. There was a lot behind the probation building they could not really see on the slide that was linked to Daniel Morgan and all of that would be built up a little, and there would be a retaining wall they could not see yet. It was on the actual site plan.

Mr. DeMark felt it would look different with the wall.

Mr. Gray said the next time their team came before the Board, it would be a more refined and accurate rendering. He said Mr. DeMark was right, the building would be more elevated.

Mr. Richardson said he guessed there were people that figured out how much parking they would need for a judicial center.

Mr. Gray said yes there were; and they would have enough parking. The parking had been figured by the consultant he had referred to earlier.

Mr. Richardson asked would the judges and so forth park underneath the judicial center.

Mr. Gray said yes. He explained there was also some growth that would be built into this building also; and this deck would hold enough parking for decades out.

Mr. Lewis asked Mr. Gray wasn't the need for parking on the decline.

Mr. Gray explained.

Mr. Joe Lauer, Clerestory Projects Group explained from the audience what drove the occupant load.

Mr. Craig Lewis, Stantec, said from a design standpoint, this needed to be considered a little more urban.

Ms. Rosario mentioned the visibility triangle.

Mr. DeMark asked was there a traffic light there.

Mr. Gray said no.

Mr. Pitts said one thing that was interesting on this plan regarding Daniel Morgan was the traffic count was fairly low.

Mr. Gray said they were proposing to slim down the lanes some.

Mr. Lewis asked was there a reason why the access lanes did not get dedicated to bike lanes, better sidewalks, and street treatment.

Mr. McCutchen, McCutchen Engineering said they had not talked about dedicated bike lanes yet; and they were kind of looking at it from a lane going each way and two-way traffic.

The City Manager said he did not think their interactions with SCDOT were very far along at this point.

Mr. McCutchen said no; and that actually no sidewalks were ever shown for the plan except on the southern side.

Mr. Lewis asked from a site standpoint, that Daniel Morgan regarding the block before it and after it – did turn into more traffic; so they would have people moving and they did not want to discount it. He mentioned the other side of Dean Street; and he would recommend that for all the other things the City was trying to do – like widen sidewalks and bike lanes. Mr. Lewis said he knew it was early in the process, but they did not want to get too far along without talking about it.

Mr. Richardson asked how far away they were from putting shovel to dirt in the parking lot.

Mr. Gray said there were some buildings there that needed to be demolished first.

Mr. Richardson asked were they talking six months or a year.

Mr. Gray said not that long.

Mr. Joe Lauer, Clerestory Projects Group said the buildings should be down by the end of the year; and the parking deck and site work started.

Mr. Richardson asked Mr. Lewis, the City Design Consultant to give his comments.

Mr. Lewis came forward and said parking decks were a challenging piece; and this one would be there for a long time. He said the nice thing was when they reoriented the site, they did make space on the other side with that surface lot; which could theoretically be a building in the future; but it still would be a very tall building and it would be seen – so you would see it from a lot of different perspectives. Mr. Lewis said it would look very utilitarian and people would wonder why they did not build something that would look as good as the structures that were going to be behind those buildings in the future. From day one on this project, they had identified this would be a very big building; and he strongly encouraged considering what that massing would look like; and he felt there were lots of things they could do that didn't have to cost a ton of money. He encouraged the team to bring some sort of artist on board. The deck did not have to overshadow the court house, but he felt it could be creative and interesting. The new court house itself would be an element of creative art. Mr. Lewis said the proposed trees were not going to look like they had depicted them in the drawings for about 25 years. He mentioned he had a grammatical error in his comments; and that he did not recommend conceptual approval tonight. He encouraged the team to come back with some more ideas.

More Board Questions:

Mr. DeMark asked Mr. Gray how tall was the building.

Mr. Gray said he did not have that information; but it was a 5 story building.

Mr. DeMark asked would it be taller than the court house.

Mr. Gray said the court house was a more massive structure; and the court house would be much taller.

Ms. Schoepf asked was there parking on top.

Mr. Gray said yes.

Ms. Schoepf said it looked to be seven stories to her.

Mr. Gray said it was five stories and a surface lot.

Mr. DeMark asked was there a six story parking garage in the City.

Mr. Gray said no; he knew the one on Dunbar Street was five stories and had a small kind of sunken underground portion. Mr. Gray explained the design team's position again on the deck vs the court house; and he said they had looked at other parking decks in the City for kind of a precedent; and he was sure there might be some refining details they could do.

City Manager Chris Story showed a slide of the project and he explained that a portion of it would be like a campus feel, with greenery, and hardscape that people would be primarily viewing it through walking or because they were turning into or coming out of the parking deck. He pointed to some faces that would be seen from cars only. He said they would not be in the court house campus at that point moving along at approximately 35 mph. This area might get a little pedestrian traffic, but he suspected as Magnolia became a much more interesting street; that would be where people would choose to walk, as

opposed to around the curve; so he thought it did make some sort of sense to think about how it played from the vehicle from on the northern and western side and not be so concerned, because it would not be seen as part of the court house campus.

Mr. Henthorn said he kind of agreed with him; but he still thought it should be an interesting element in the City.

Mr. Richardson opened the public hearing and asked anyone in the audience that wished to speak in favor, in opposition, or if anyone just wished to ask questions, to come forward and state their names and address for the record. No one came forward. Mr. Richardson closed the public hearing portion of the meeting.

Board Deliberation:

Mr. Richardson said he was a little disappointed that this major deck would not look much different than the rest of the parking decks in the City; not that there was anything wrong with the others; he had just felt this one should be different because they had talked about maybe having some artistic flair. He liked the lighter color he had shown as one of the options. He liked the fact from a pedestrian view that they would be seeing the glass façade entrance to the deck.

Mr. DeMark kind of agreed with the City Manager's analysis on perhaps the portion of the deck that faced the court house; but there needed to be something else that could be done to improve the rest of the parking deck appearance.

Ms. Schoepf felt it should incorporate some of the components the court house would have.

Mr. Gray said again his entire team felt very strongly about the fact that the deck should not match the court house.

Mr. Richardson asked the Board Members if anyone wished to make a motion or not.

No one made a motion.

Mr. Richardson explained to Mr. Gray they would need for him to bring them something with a little more creative before they could give conceptual approval of the deck.

Mr. McCutchen, McCutchen Engineering asked the Board Members if they could say at this point from a planometric point of view that the site plan arrangement would be ok; and they were just trying to focus on the architectural features vs. the building.

The Board Members agreed they were fine regarding a placement on the site for McCutchen's civil perspective; but they needed Mr. Gray to bring them something different regarding the design elements for the parking deck.

Mr. Craig Lewis suggested to the Board Members it might be helpful for the petitioner if the Board could approve the site plan; and have the retaining wall and the parking deck details come back to them.

Mr. DeMark moved to approve the site plan and he was seconded by Ms. Schoepf. The vote was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

Mr. Richardson said they would look forward to seeing them back in the future.

Staff Announcements or Board Questions:

Mr. Richardson asked the City Manager had there been any update regarding the Cambria Hotel.

The City Manager said they had not received anything more as of yet.

Mr. Richardson asked the City Manager about the apartments on Daniel Morgan.

The City Manager said they were in motion; and there was a little bit of delay regarding HUD approval; but that Mr. McCutchen was working on that proposal as well.

Mr. McCutchen said they were moving on that one; they just replotted the properties and had it recorded.

Mr. Richardson said it was sometimes hard for them that were not in construction or engineering design to appreciate what retaining walls looked like; but they had quite a retaining wall at Silver Hill.

Mr. McCutchen said someone had referred to it as the Great Wall of Spartanburg.

Mr. McCutchen mentioned another project they had been in conflict with from Mr. Lewis about a retaining wall on another project regarding it was too high; and they had kind of backed if off with more green space and landscaping and had gotten it down by a couple of feet.

Mr. Lewis said in the meeting Agenda there was mention of Jeff Spec coming to Spartanburg regarding some continued education training, and he had worked with him throughout the years. He said it was a great presentation; and he felt the entire Board would benefit from the presentation if they could attend.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 P.M.



Kevin James DeMark, Chair

Edited by Julie Roland, Secretary