Minutes
Design Review Board
November 3, 2020
Virtual Zoom Meeting

The Design Review Board (DRB) met via Virtual Zoom on Tuesday, November 3, 2020 at 5:30 P.M., with the following members in attendance: Lauren Rogers, Kevin DeMark, and Lucy Lynch. Absent were Ricky Richardson and Carolyn Schoepf. Representing the Planning Department were Martin Livingston, Community Development Director, and Julie Roland, Administrative Assistant, Planning Department. Craig Lewis, Stantec Design Consultant, and City Manager Chris Story also attended the meeting.

Mr. DeMark, the Chair, called this meeting to order on November 3, 2020 at 5:30 P.M.; 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 three Board Members were present, constituting a quorum and two were absent. He went over the procedure for the meeting. Mr. DeMark had each Board Member introduce themselves.

The Agenda for tonight’s Meeting was approved by acclamation.

Disposition of the October 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

Ms. Lynch moved approval of the minutes; and she was seconded by Ms. Rogers. The motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

Old Business: No old business.

New Business

578 North Church Street-Owner/Applicant seeking approval of proposed building’s form, massing and placement on the site for proposed new mixed-use project in the DT-S district; William Gray, Applicant & Architect, McMillan Pazdan Smith, on behalf of Owners, Northside Development Group.

Mr. Livingston said we have a project located at 578 North Church Street, the DT5 district. Parcel Number 7-12-01-174.00 from William Gray Applicant, Architect, McMillan Pazdan Smith on behalf of owners, Northside Development Group. I will share my screen so that William can go through his presentation.

Mr. DeMark said, Danny Balon, Seamon Whiteside has requested to be added to be part of the presentation, I believe from the Developer.

Mr. Livingston said I promoted him as a panelist.

Mr. Livingston said Mr. Gray, I believe, your presentation starts here.

Mr. Gray said I know today there’s so much going on and I know we’re the sole presenter tonight and I appreciate the time and thank you all for making this a priority for the developer of this property. Again, also very grateful for the time you’ve spent just on the phone and via email, kind of helping us through this and getting us to this point. I know everybody kind of has some concerns and we’re happy to talk through that and kind of how we’ve carried the project forward up to this point. I do want to start this off with just making sure or highlighting that we have a few neighbors and friends here in the meeting with us tonight, and I didn’t have a chance to go through the list, but with Wofford College, we have their CFO, Chris Gardner on the phone; and with the hospital system Phil Feisal. Obviously, you just
welcomed Bill Barnet, he's on the call as well. And I believe Tony Thomas with the Northside Voyagers will be on as well. So, it's obviously Mr. Fletcher, myself and Danny with Seamon Whiteside, the Civil Engineer, but we also have a little bit wider of a team that have been a part of this project since the early days here as well. So with that; I'm going to go ahead and get to the presentation and be respectful of everybody's time and try to get through this as quickly as possible for your evenings. He said some of these slides are repetitive from the first presentation, but I think it's helpful just to understand the context within which we're working. This yellow block that you see on your screen right now, pay attention to Magnolia Street and Church Street; which is a kind of plan north east of this yellow block; that was the Sunshine Inn which was demolished in cooperation with multiple parties. I think the City, Wofford, the hospital system and Northside were all a part of that, and we're studying what we can redo with that parcel with Mr. Fletcher's leadership. These are some views, Church Street looking at Northwest. Again, the parcels highlighted in yellow, just to kind of give everybody a flavor of the area.

The next slide is looking in the other direction down Church Street. Again, showing the MoneyGram location, and then of Mr. Evans' house who had joined the call last time. It was kind of across the street, and this is looking down towards the City, Wofford would be on your left. This will be Magnolia Street. Also, Magnolia Street looking back towards downtown or the back of the MoneyGram site. And I believe to the right of this is where the Ellington's going to go; the affordable housing, multi-story building. It's in construction or close to it now. And then the next slide shows Magnolia looking kind of North from that location. So, we're further down looking at the site. Wofford would be across the block to our right and the Ellington would be to the left. Okay. When we left, we obviously took this exercise and our feedback very seriously, and Civil Engineer, Mr. Fletcher and myself, immediately hopped on a call and kind of unpacked our takeaways from the meeting. So, things we heard were really no significant pushback from the Board about the siting of the building, having it against what we've deemed as the primary frontage or principal frontage being Church Street. And we heard there was a desire for some more detail to the back or what we're calling the parking side, the Plaza side of the development, which opens up to Magnolia Street and we're excited to show you some of that tonight.

We also understood and acknowledged the importance of the view of the building from the Ellington; obviously there's substantial investment taking place there in that affordable housing development and it's taller than ours. And we want to use our development to give them something to look at and hopefully our renderings communicate that vision a little bit further tonight. Hopefully it's conveyed that we're very excited about the project and what this could be. We think the stakeholders that have joined us tonight are as well, and just really excited about the steps we've taken to further define the rear of the development. Furthermore, we understand that there's been a lot of emphasis and focus on what this looks like for Magnolia Street. We've done our best to acknowledge that. Obviously, we're going to have to park this thing and I want to say park this thing, I mean, address parking issues on this parcel; but we acknowledge and hopefully the Board does too that whatever we put here, that's going to be a challenge and we've got to deal with that somehow. So, we'll get into that in a minute as well. So really, I think tonight, if we can come out of this with some direction about the general siting and massing, we would be able to go into that kind of next layer of detail as outlined in the application. And I realized that the new application that I guess was accepted a couple of months ago, it's pretty a new process for this Board. And we've just struggled with being able to give that level of detail when we just don't have the general concept kind of agreed to at this point. So our goal tonight would get some crystal-clear direction on our massing and siting of the building as well as parking, and then we will be very eager and excited to get to that next layer of detail. Danny, do you want to talk about the site at all.
Mr. Balon said the site has stayed relatively close to the same as we had it before. As you can see, we've changed the parking a bit. We got rid of the drive-through per y'all's recommendation from the last meeting, which should make the Board happy. As you can see, we have the streetscape upfront. The Church Street streetscape as required. We have parking and screening in the back as required. This site does not show the section of the DOT streetscape that Craig had referred to at the last meeting. So, this does not include that, but we've taken care of the DOT requirements at the front, at the red light, including the shared access easement that we discussed with the Church property next door. And then the Plaza area actually has been increased on this plan. Basically, we utilized some of the area that we got back from getting rid of the drive-through and we've increased the gathering area, which will include a fire pit, cover dining area. And to William's point, we don't show as much detail on this plan yet for that gathering space. He's got some more details in some of his exhibits, but until we get to the point that we're kind of on the same page with everybody with the site, we have not specifically detailed this space as of yet.

Mr. Gray said Just so everybody knows, I do have some updated images on my computer that were not part of this package. I understand that it's not protocol to share that unless everybody wants to see it, but I'll go through these really quickly. And if you need additional detail, we can pull that up. I just don't want to break protocol or blind-side anybody. So, this is a rendering you saw early on. Again, the architecture was intended to reflect some of the elements of Wofford and specifically one of the developments down Evins Street, which looks more like a retail building than an institutional building, but we take some of the cues from that and try to play off of that contextually a little bit. Again, the materials were aluminum storefront, painted white brick, some cementitious siding or Hardie Board, and then painted profile or some painted accents. The next slide is the same elevation, I believe. Yes, but just kind of a sharper view looking towards the side of the building that starts to get adjacent to the parking lot. The next image shows what we're thinking for the rear Plaza. And obviously we don't have a lot of landscaping in here yet, but we just wanted to really convey kind of the architectural intent here. We picture this being an active area, something, exciting to look at for the neighbors across the street, the new development, Ellington. For Mr. Fletcher, this is probably the most critical part of the site. This is where the magic happens. We hope to have a nice-looking building that addresses Church Street and relates to its context, but this is going to be the sweet spot. And this is really one of the ways that we envision this development engaging in addressing Magnolia Street. Another view just kind of looking within the Plaza. Over to your right, would be the parking area that you saw on Danny's plan. I've got a better view that I did not add to this package, but is zoomed out, but this is a kind of an aerial view looking into the Plaza from a little closer than the Ellington would be looking at it, but again, just trying to communicate some of the level of activity that would be happening out there. One thing I mentioned earlier was that at this stage, we just don't have a good comfort level or good understanding as to the Board's direction on massing, and siting and parking and all of that stuff. So normally, we'd have our mechanical units placed on the roof and be talking a little bit more about that detail. We anticipate that coming next after we get to that layer of detail at this stage. Hopefully I got another one, and that's it. Again, I do have some other views if anybody wants me to present them, but I don't want to force that in.

Mr. DeMark asked Craig, do you want to add some commentary from your side, please.

Mr. Lewis said I'd be happy to. Thank you, William for that. So, before the Board, you have a number of key decision points with regard to this particular site and kind of try to highlight what the big picture items are on this one. And we've been having conversations with the development team. I want to say we go back to May, perhaps, in some of those conversations. So, it's been going on for a while. I think in some ways they're the same conversations that we've been having all along, which in large respect,
have to do with Magnolia and that sort of treatment along that edge. And so that's sort of fundamentally, I think, what you all as a Board are going to be asked to provide some guidance on. I believe that this is a site that has two primary streets, both Church Street and Magnolia Street. Given the new housing that's going in across Magnolia Street, I think that sort of sets a precedent for expectations along that edge. I mean, before that came in, we might be able to have a slightly different conversation about what Magnolia looks like, but they've really set the precedent. As a result of that project, that required us to engage with SCDOT to set their standards for what the streetscape and cross-section is going to be for Magnolia. We went through that for a couple of months with them; bike lanes, sidewalk, street trees, the on-street parking the whole nine yards. So, we do feel like that is a precedent that has been set that needs to be recognized as part of this planning effort. Then the next piece is just whether or not there's going to be building frontage along Magnolia. I think that's, again, sort of another fundamental question that this Board is being asked, whether it's important to provide building frontage along Magnolia to provide that edge or whether having frontage along Church Street is okay. And then that brings in the issues with regard to properly buffering in sort of screening, if you will, in an appropriate way, the backside of these buildings. So, there are a number of exceptions regardless of what happens that would have to be approved by the Board. You often have one or two. So, it will be the first time we've had eight or nine on this particular application. So, I think all these things are important, but you're going to have to address all these particular issues. Like I said, it comes down to the streetscape along Magnolia is, I think, fundamental issue number one. Fundamental issue number two is whether or not there should be building frontage along Magnolia in addition to frontage or some recognition of frontage along both primary streets. And then the logistics of the site plan and the architecture are, if they dropped down to number three, but it's a low number three because those first two items really sort of dictate the bigger picture. So that's what you're being asked to do. My staff report had a number of comments. Obviously, we felt like the application was not complete based on the new submittal package. I think we were trying to be a little generous on some of the items, but there were some that were just plain missing out of it. So, in that regard, I think, any kind of approval tonight would be inappropriate, but what I would say is if you choose as a Board to provide guidance that says, "It's okay for the building to simply front on Church," that I would have made a number of recommendations on how to properly treat the backside as well as Magnolia itself. There's some guidance along in that regard.

Mr. Lewis said this Board can certainly provide some guidance that asks for something that's more substantial along Magnolia as well based on that interpretation. So that's what you may have before you. I mean, like I said, these are fundamental issues. I don't even think it's worth having a conversation about the architecture and the sort of men in the area. We've got 10 feet. We're arguing about along Magnolia Street with the streetscape. That's going to have a small ripple effect across the site. Once we kind of get to an agreement on that, then we can start to talk about some of the other issues. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. DeMark asked Mr. Livingston can you pull up the site plan that Seamon Whiteside did that has the bays of the project.

Mr. DeMark said that will be great. And I'm going to ask some technical questions and if Craig or William or Danny can help answer them that would be super helpful for me once this drawing gets pulled up.

Mr. DeMark said can you kind of give me an idea from A to D how long that building is roughly.
Mr. Gray said I don't have a dimension plan here, but I can get one for you in just a second.

Mr. DeMark said so if I rotated that entire building between Magnolia and Church at the bottom of the wedge, does it go from edge to edge or is it bigger than the width of the site.

Mr. Balon said the back property line is roughly 330 feet long, plus or minus.

Mr. Lewis said the building itself is 25 parking spaces wide. That's 250 feet.

Mr. DeMark asked is the quantity of parking that shown in this plan sufficient for the four uses that you've identified.

Mr. Fletcher said barely. One of the issues that we're trying to address is and I think it says it on the site plan, but we share 10 of these parking spaces with the Plaza owners, which is owned by the Catholic Church. And that's based on prior easement agreements that are both of our predecessors and titles aired when the site was a hotel. So, we're required to share those 10 spaces, so we're showing, I think, 69 spaces, but really, we have 69 shared spaces, but parking is a priority for us because we want to activate this outdoor space and you activate it with restaurants and kind of retail users who want to be indoors now. And so that's why we're trying to preserve this outdoor gathering area and preserve parking so we can recruit those types of users who want to use that as an area.

Mr. DeMark said so set roughly 69 spaces; and I'm not into parking, I just want to best understand it. From a massing perspective, I think it's important that we address both Magnolia and Church. I understand the challenges of this site. I understand the challenges of the use, and I understand that there's the access at the streetlight, which is very critical for development to get folks in and out from both directions. I get that. So, is there a way to widen Building A or Building D to best address both Magnolia and Church. Why not bring D closer to Magnolia or bring A closer to Magnolia and share that edge of the building a little bit more kind of like the way the outdoor gathering area does. Almost making this a deeper "u".

Mr. Gray said I'd look for some guidance on the one value we have is that Mr. Fletcher has talked to some tenants and they've seen this and kind of guided him a little bit on how we developed this in terms of our drawings. I mean, I'm sure he could have that conversation with them. I can't really speak to that honestly, but our thinking is right, wrong, indifferent, but our thinking and our intent here is to explore and strengthen that urban edge, if you want to call it that, without putting a building there. We've talked a lot about nice landscaping, screening, we've got a pedestrian connection. Our intent right now would be to hold that edge and dress it up without putting a building on it. There's a number of ways to create that perceived density and that kind of inviting approach that we're trying to achieve here. Without talking offline with Michael about this or Mr. Fletcher; I just don't know that stretching the building just to touch Magnolia Street is 100% going to achieve that. Mr. Gray said but anything's game. I mean, we just need to unpack it a little bit.

Mr. DeMark said so the pedestrian connection is really Wofford, is that fair. I mean the pedestrian traffic from Wofford coming to this space. So, at the signalized intersection of Evans, the street that goes down Wofford.

Mr. Gray said that's correct.
Mr. DeMark said it almost makes me want to say that they're some visual connection to that great patio space that you have in the back. And I don't know how to achieve that. Maybe there's a "via" that creates a visual connection between Church and the patio space. Because you're right. You're creating a visual edge along Magnolia; the patio follows the line of Magnolia. I think we probably need to best understand what the red line is at the parking along Magnolia. Is that a low wall. Is it just landscape. It's very tight, I can't really tell along that edge. Does anyone else have any thoughts. Lauren or Lucy.

Ms. Lynch said I've got something kind of along those same lines, and I think we talked about this a little bit last time, but it kind of worries me just the Church Street side of this being really dead or at least to B and C or maybe all of them going to have two fronts kind of; or is one side going to be a little bit more. I mean, I don't know who the tenants are, but where's the back going to be of the program that's going to be.

Mr. Fletcher said that's a good question. That's the challenge of these sites, but they're going to face Church Street, but they're going to open up and really face Magnolia as well.

Ms. Lynch said because it seems like the main active side of this building is going to be the Church, the Magnolia Street side. And it just worries me that Church Street is going to feel a little ghostly.

Mr. Fletcher said the most similar project in Spartanburg to me to this one because its new construction is Main and Pine. There's a street on Pine Street, but the people eat out there. No, I don't know.

Ms. Lynch said well, I mean, that feels a little ghostly to me.

Mr. Fletcher said; that's what you get when you want buildings up on front of the street to create an urban edge. I mean, do people want to eat on a highway. I don't know. That's why I'm trying to put them behind the building where it's a little quieter and a little more inviting, I think. We're going to address. It's going to look like a front, but you're right. I mean, it's got to potentially have some access there, but they have got to have a back of the house for the restaurant or the office of retail user where you don't have just doors and glass everywhere.

Mr. Gray said the one thing I think this development has going forward that maybe Main and Pine didn't is that they talked a little bit about the pedestrian population of Wofford College. I think, yes, Lucy, you're correct in that those are somewhat dead entrances, but I think they will be way more utilized than they are at Main and Pine because you're going to have people crossing. Hopefully crossing Church Street to come over there and enter that way. And then you're also going to have the benefit of an active backdoor with the Plaza. I think it's hard to forecast that, but my suspicion would be that people will utilize those entrances much more than Main.

Mr. Fletcher said now with Wofford, you got the hospital within walking distance as well, which is a few thousand people who work there. Like Craig said last meeting, if this side is a gateway to downtown and to the Northside, I would anticipate with all these hundreds of apartments being built in the Northside of those folks, including the Ellington building walk and access it through the existing sidewalks and bike lanes on Magnolia Street. I'm hoping it's a multi-access site, not just coming from Wofford, but we do have it designed. We're kind of the terminated Vista on the chopper. From the Wofford side, that's what you'll be seeing is that side of the building, but there's a lot more to the project than just that entrance.

Ms. Lynch said what about the code requirement of having the building be two stories. Was that ever a part of the thought process. Was it ever going to maybe be two stories or what happened there.
Mr. Fletcher said we looked at it. There are a couple issues with it. One, we studied the market demand and didn’t think it was there for a dozen town homes on the second story. It’s incredibly expensive and we don’t have the economies of scale. And I didn’t think there was a market to build 80 units there for me. And then the second issue was just parking. I can’t have restaurants and office and retail and then have a bunch of residential there too without building a deck. There’s a pretty dead site the way it is with 17,000 feet of retail and doing residential, I just run out of parking is the challenge on that.

Mr. Gray said if you can remember the elevations, one of our goals was to have this unit D be a taller volume and that critical corner or kind of catty-corner from Wofford’s campus. And that be reading as a two-story volume. It would really be one story with the mezzanine and then C, B and A would be a lower kind of one story of massing.

Mr. Fletcher said you get away from that, the minimum two-story requirement. We’d like to have a large presence of a building, but functionally, since it is kind of this retail commercial use, building a fake second story is not good for the environment or for the feasibility of the project. So, we want to kind of call a spade a spade if we can.

Ms. Lynch said no, I don’t know. And I was kind of into my thoughts. I was just going to say I’m okay with this package being incomplete because I can certainly understand needing to get this siting nailed down before really moving into the architecture. So, we’ll wait to comment on the architecture.

Mr. DeMark said if we allow what’s being presented as the massing, not saying we are, but if we allowed that, the Magnolia streetscape, which is further up in this drawing package that shows the bike lane and the grass and the wall, that’s not going to work necessarily. Is it with the way the quantity of parking that’s needed.

Mr. Lewis said again, I mean it’s off to scale, but sort of defer to the site planners. My guess is that they probably end up losing two parking spaces. We’ll just say in big round numbers, you lose two parking spaces because you’re essentially squashing the site 8 to 10 feet closer to the building to provide for the appropriate sidewalk, the bike lane, the SCDOT standard bike lane, the planting strip as well as sort of enhanced parking area screening along that edge. So, we’ve talked about whether they have on-street parking on that edge, whether they don’t have on-street parking. I think you’ll note in my staff report that I said, "Listen, if they’re not going to have building massing over there, there’s no reason to have the conversation about street parking so we can set that one to the side. I think those other things are critical. And why are they critical. While you’ve got precedence certainly on this Board to talk about those things, the Cambria Hotel. I mean, we fretted over what was effectively 100 feet of screening along there to make sure that in fact they had the same amount. Danny, I think you might have been part of that conversation. So, you remember that was a big part of that issue.

Mr. Lewis said we’re talking about 350 feet. Had a similar conversation on the Northside with the apartments. A couple of blocks away, they had parking along the edge as well, and they had an accentuated Plaza, streetscape area that they provided as a buffer, if you will, to that parking. So, this is something that the Board has, I think, struggled with. We recognize that parking is still going to be sort of a necessary evil, a lot of these places, but making sure that the pedestrian area is important and considered. So again, I think by removing two parking spaces, one of the Northside of the site, one on the South side of the site, moving everything over just a smidge, those things can be accomplished along
Magnolia. So, I'd like to ask the design team to take a look at that, to make sure that we can get that streetscape in there.

Mr. DeMark said the streetscape, which was the number one, the building frontage, which was the number two. And we kind of talked about the building frontage, I think a little bit. And then there was the logistics of the site plan, which really depends on one and two. And then we still have the two-story conversation and the massing and the architecture and where does the mechanical go and all that. So, I still feel we're in a little bit of a quandary here because this is by far the largest number of exceptions the Board has ever been presented with to make this project work. And I want to make it work, but I also want to make sure that we're reviewing the design that the City has set forth. I might be the only one struggling, but I'm struggling with the addressing of the Magnolia Street side. I get the importance of Church Street, and I get the importance of the pedestrian connection from Wofford. This is a site that is kind of like a gateway, a beginning of the Northside development. And we made the Ellington meet the criteria of the edge with the parking and the landscape and all that stuff; and now we have a project directly across the street and we're contemplating not making them follow the same precedent. So, I'm conflicted.

Mr. Fletcher said I think the distinction though is we're almost at double jeopardy because there's an assumption that we're supposed to have two primary frontages, a principal frontage. And the word principal means one. I mean you can't have two principal frontages, you got to have one. And so that is the challenge we're addressing the principal frontage on Church Street, but then we are being told we don't have a rear to the site, we got to have a backside principal frontage. And so that's fundamentally inconsistent. And that is why it is so hard. I mean, if we have just had to put the streetscape on Church Street, and we've done it. It's the second bite of the apple that's so hard to do. And I think we're willing to look at expanding that buffer between the street back there. I mean, to me, you just shrunk the courtyard a little bit and then you solve that issue. So, I don't know if that's a deal killer, but putting buildings on both sides of the street, it is not deep enough to do that. I don't know how we do that and keep this concept a lot. You want an eight foot sidewalk back there, not four feet, I think our design team can certainly contemplate that, but we just got to answer those threshold questions before we start designing for plans and screening the roof and all those other things.

Mr. DeMark said I understand completely and I'm excited about the project. Where I'm struggling is all of the exceptions. If there were one or two that would be easy.

Mr. Fletcher said there's really only two or three because it's the height of the buildings and the streetscape. I mean, arguing that we're not setback the same as the people across the street. I mean, the code says it's on the same side of the street, but we're being compared to the Ellington. It's like the code didn't say that. So, some of that stuff will get just a little too technical on how we're supposed to be complying or not complying with this double frontage standard. I think once you eliminate the double frontage, you don't have many conflicts at all.

Mr. Gray said that's exactly what I was going to say. I think as a Board, if you can help us understand principal frontage and tell us what the principal frontage is, that addresses a lot of the concerns. I mean, that's what you see that come up in the comments over and over again. I know it doesn't seem like we've done a lot between the last time and now; but we have studied how to park this thing in a number of scenarios. And I mean there's only so many ways we can skin this cat and we've arrived at the same conclusion every time.
Mr. Fletcher said the code says, "All lots must front a street." It doesn't say must front two streets. Stuff like that, you just get tripped up and it's very difficult to satisfy and then still have parking. That's our challenge.

Mr. DeMark said I understand what you're saying. The uniqueness of this site, which has two frontages, is the challenge. And I don't know that we've ever been challenged like this before. Craig, is that fair.

Mr. Lewis said I think that's fair.

Ms. Lynch said I get the frustration about the two frontages. I'm just looking at Craig's comments on the exceptions here and talks about downtown should be urban and density and having a two-story minimum height and all that stuff. I think for me, that's more of the part that's missing, but I get it. I mean, I get it. I'm kind of conflicted to Kevin. I don't know what the right thing to do is.

Mr. DeMark asked Ms. Rogers if she had any thoughts.

Ms. Rogers said having heard this presentation only once, and not having heard the first one; at this point, I'm just listening and taking what you and Ms. Lynch are saying, and also what Will and his team are saying just into account. At the moment, no, I don't.

City Manager Chris Story said it's a great lesson in the fact that we write codes for concepts and objectives, and we have situations where the partial geometry and the proposed use don't allow a fully satisfactory outcome, right. And then this, you just can't get there. So, my advice to the Board would be not to be terribly concerned with precedent here because I think you'll find that this tapering that goes on between Church and Magnolia is not a very common case, and we're going to have a heck of a hard time with the other parcels. If we're going North in the next one, we would have a very difficult challenge as well. So, you're going to have projects in situations where the optimal outcome of full code compliance just cannot match with the program and use. He said in a perfect world, we would be able to have the detailed planning of the multiple parcels around that, that might allow us to come up with a way to incorporate the commercial program that Mr. Fletcher has for this site, and still have a use approach for this particular awkward parcel that could work to hold Magnolia a little bit better, but that's just not a practical reality for us right now. It's just about making sure that a good solid effort is made to recognize that Magnolia does matter too. And you get us a project that can succeed.

Mr. DeMark said that's our goal. Chris, thank you for that. I do agree with what you said. And Craig, I think at some point we have to work through the best of what we have. And maybe what we decide is we agree to this massing as is, we ask for the sidewalk edge, and we make sure that the architecture of the Magnolia side is as strong as the Church side because it is the corridor from the Ellington and whatever future development is going to be along Magnolia.

Ms. Lynch said I agree with you, Kevin. I don't think I was here for most of the Ellington project but you mentioned that they have several rounds of complying with all these exceptions and roles. I mean, does that become problematic when something's okay one place and then not okay another place. I mean, does that sort of set a precedent.

Mr. DeMark said it is a dangerous place to be because if we enforce one thing and another project comes and we don't enforce the same guidelines, then it sets a horrible precedent or it sets a precedent.
Maybe not a horrible precedent, but it sets a precedent that someone will come back and say, "Oh, well, you did this down the road. Why aren't you going to do it here."

Mr. DeMark said William and Mr. Fletcher, I think if we can accept this massing as is, we want to make sure that we have the frontage, the streetscape along Magnolia is very important because it's also very important along Church. So those two frontages are important. The building has to stay where it is and I think there needs to be some infill architecture of the backside, but also please realize that the backside is a dual role. It's the outside, or it's backside of the building. It has to be serviceable. Obviously, we don't want a building that's not serviceable. So, we don't want a restaurant to go out of business because there's no way to get to the trash coral or their services don't exactly work. Every restaurant has a back door and those back doors are not always the prettiest. So be interested in trying to figure that out, maybe there's a service corridor or something like that that is internal to the building versus to the exterior and falling out onto that patio, which I think could be very dynamic. You can use whatever other word you want to use, but there's got to be some type of pedestrian connection from that patio in the back to the street. Maybe the restaurant has a front seating area and a back seating area. I think as it develops, and it comes before the Board again for preliminary approval, I think we need to see more of that evolution.

Mr. Gray said totally acknowledge that. Absolutely.

Mr. Lewis said so kind of summarize for them to give them some specific direction. So, it sounds like the Board is saying that they are willing to allow for North Church Street to be the only building frontage. That Magnolia is treated more appropriately. We'll say, "Better living through landscaping," but certainly the streetscape that we've talked about and some enhanced landscaping and the pedestrian connections that you talked about. So that at least gives them the envelope in which they can then mature their design and come back to you next month.

Mr. DeMark said Craig; maybe what we need to do is issue a secondary memo that says, "Based on what the Board discussed tonight, these are the three or four pieces of direction that William and Danny are going to take back to Mr. Fletcher and work on and hopefully come back in December." And here's the other thing I'm going to throw out there. If time is of the essence and we need to do this quicker rather than later, I'm open to that. The Board has done that in the past before. If there's some hiccup or a hitch if we need to do a two week turnaround or something like that, we're willing to do that to help so as to not slow or stop the project. So that's an option knowing that late November and December gets to be holidays and people aren't around.

Mr. Balon said can I ask one question for verification. When you say streetscape on Magnolia, are we talking the full approved DOT section with the parking and the bike lane.

Mr. Lewis said with the exception of the on-street parking.

Mr. Balon said he just wanted to make that clear.

Mr. Lewis said I would suggest that you consider more than just the code minimum four-foot screen landscape area along that edge.

Mr. DeMark said I think we can say no to the parking, even though the Ellington is going to have the parking. Although if you had the parking, it might be extra spaces that would ultimately be used by your
users, but I'm okay if we don't do the parking. You may decide. Danny may say to you, "across 300 feet, we can get 15 extra spaces," or whatever the number is and maybe that's enticing.

Mr. Balon said thank you for the verification.

Mr. DeMark said since this is not an approval hearing, Martin, do we need to have a public hearing.

Mr. Livingston said no.

Kevin DeMark said we can certainly open it up. If there's anyone that is interested in saying anything about what they've seen tonight, raise your hand on Zoom and we can let you speak.

Public Comments

Mr. DeMark said Phil, will you please identify yourself and give us your street address, and then you're welcome to talk about the project or ask a question. Mr. Feisal could not be heard at the moment.

Mr. Barnet said I'm sorry Phil couldn't speak. I'm delighted to be here and the fact that Phil Feisal, the president of the hospital is on this call is pretty exciting to me. I know this is a very difficult challenge or a very difficult piece of property. And I think back on the original property that we inherited, which is the old Sunshine Inn, which our motel and the effort on the part of Wofford and all of us to rid the community of that property is a very difficult piece of property. And I know you all have a very challenging conversation, but I was excited when Alex Evans wanted to talk last month regarding his support of the project. I don't speak for Phil Feisal. I don't speak for Sam, or Chris with Wofford, but we all came together to try to rid this community of an eyesore and we did it successfully. And there's a lot at stake. I want to thank Michael and William and everybody who is stuck with this thing. There is no easy answer to this project. I don't think the Northside is very much involved in whatever the conversation is about Magnolia, but I agree that we can have two principal streets, and that there's no perfect way. And I really do worry that if we don't find a middle ground for this project, that we lose Michael, and then ultimately there's no way for this project or this property. It's just a very complicated piece, but it is so very important to the Northside, to the evolution of our retail potential, to the Bon Haven property, the hospital, to Wofford itself and to the Northside. So, I couldn't lead more for the group to come together to come up with a thoughtful, positive answer to the use of this property that advances the community. I'm fully supportive of Michael and William. Mr. Barnet said I just wanted to say my final comment would be that every month costs money to somebody. And there's no easy answer to this project. So, I hope that your group and all of us can come together with something that makes the best sense for the Northside and for the community as a whole. Thank you.

Mr. Demark said Mr. Barnet, we appreciate your feedback. Mr. Feisal, can you hear us. There was still silence.

Mr. Thomas said we met with Mr. Fletcher last month and the Voyagers feel good about this project and we've been able to share what we can with the community. And I echo Bill's sentiments about the project. I know that's a very narrow piece of land that you're trying to develop and make something happen there. So, I'm really interested to see what you guys come up with on the landscape on the Magnolia side. I agree with what William said at the very beginning about the concept of having that open for the residents, and having that being a place to the residents at the Ellington can view to sort of.
make that an attractive space. But Bill pretty much said the same things that I wanted to say. I just really want to see that this project serves the community well, Wofford, the Northside residents and the new Bon Haven project and all of that. So, if you can tie all that into that and think of that as in reference to your new designs or whatever you're going to do, that'd be great. But we really like the project. The residents of the Northside really are liking this project. And Mr. Fletcher, I would like for you to know that we're on board with you and that we really like it. So full steam ahead. I wish you the best in your work here to get this thing right.

Mr. Gardner said I'm the Chief Financial Officer at Wofford. We have also been in contact with Mr. Fletcher about this project. We are excited about it. And I know, as we've talked and I've listened to the discussion, I think that fundamentally the objective for any parcel in this area of the City would be to create a vibrant urban experience. And we think that with the connection to the campus, our students at this moment do not have any retail or restaurant locations that they can easily walk to. And this project will be an exception to that. And we'll hopefully be the first in a series of projects that might be areas where students can walk to. And so, having the space that they've designed, we think we can create a vibrant urban environment because we believe our students will be interested in and frequenting this location. So, I'll keep my comments brief, but we're excited about the project.

Mr. DeMark said having seen no other public comments, I will close the public comment portion. And I just want to make sure that William and Danny, you have a clear direction from us as to next steps. And if you need to have a special intermediary meeting if time is of the essence, please let us know or reach out to Martin or Chris at the City, and we can make it work if we need to do that.

Mr. Gray said before we hang up, it means a lot that everybody gets on this phone call and the Board, all the people in our community. It means so much for everybody to take time out of their evening to do this and your thoughtfulness and the way you process information and kind of wring your hands around some difficult things and your accessibility and just every aspect of it. I just want to commend everybody and just say thank you.

Mr. DeMark said well, that's what we're here for. We're here to work with you and we're here to make it work. Mr. DeMark said this is a challenging site. I think we have some good direction to move forward on and we're looking forward to your next submission.

William Gray said thank you.

Mr. DeMark said thank you everyone. For the Board, we talked about the minutes. I think Julie Roland also sent around something about some continuing education that was online and want to make sure that everyone has done that. I think last meeting, Lucy had started it, maybe she hadn't finished it, but maybe she has now.

Ms. Lynch said done two sections now then four. I have two more so.

Mr. DeMark said Lauren, I don't know if you've started yours, but if you can make sure you get that completed by the end of the year, that'd be great.

Ms. Rogers said yes, sir. I sure will.

Mr. DeMark said the other thing we'll talk about briefly is trying to meet in person. So, Martin Livingston mentioned that some of the other Boards are meeting in person.

Mr. Livingston said C.C. Woodson Community Center was one of the locations. So far only the Board of Zoning and Appeals is meeting in person. Everyone has determined based on the level of COVID response or COVID cases that they're still going to remain online until that is reduced.
Mr. DeMark said the Vice Chair has suggested that we try to meet in person at some point. I want everyone to send me an email separately and just tell me your thoughts, and that's how we'll do it. You send me an email personally, and I'll take all that information and get back to Martin and the team. We'll just see how it works. Obviously, if you don't feel comfortable, I don't want to do it. Even if there's one that doesn't feel comfortable, I don't want to do it. I don't want to put you in a position where you feel it's uncomfortable. Obviously, we would wear masks, obviously we would socially distance. The public would be socially distanced as well. Can't really do it outside, have to really do it inside. So just think about it and let me know. Maybe we try and do it in January for the first meeting of 2021. Okay. Mr. DeMark said if we don't hear from anybody and we don't have a meeting in December, I'll let you know. Usually, we don't have anything in December and if I don't talk to you, have a great holiday season and a Happy New Year, but we'll let you know if we hear something back on this project. Thanks, everyone for coming.

There being no further business; the meeting adjourned at 6:40 P.M.

Kevin DeMark, Chair

Minutes edited by Julie Roland, Administrative Assistant