

RIVER DISTRICT DESIGN COMMISSION

MEETING OF

May 13, 2021

Members Present

Courtney Nicholas
Andrew Hessler
R.J. Lackey
Adam Jones
George Davis

Members Absent

Peyton Keesee
John Ranson

Staff

Lisa Jones
Doug Plachcinski
Clarke Whitfield

Mr. Davis called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ITEMS FOR PUBLIC HEARING

I. OLD BUSINESS

1. *Certificate of Appropriateness Request PLRDD2021-12 at 530 Main Street to relocate the main HVAC chiller exterior appliance from the rooftop to the ground adjacent to the northwest corner of the building. The applicant proposes screening the unit with fencing.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Present on behalf of this request was Charles Perkins, who stated I am here as a representative for the owners of the property and to answer any questions that you may have.

Mr. Davis stated since this is under old business and I wasn't here last month, I'm assuming that this is something that was tabled last month.

Mr. Perkins stated it was either January or February.

Mr. Davis stated really.

Mr. Perkins stated I haven't had a chance to get back before you until now.

Mr. Davis stated what was the question at that time?

Mr. Perkins stated Mr. Ranson had wanted us to look into using metal instead of wood.

Mr. Davis stated now I remember.

Mr. Perkins stated it's just from our point of view it is very cost prohibitive to do metal and especially the fact that it is over a hundred feet away from any property line. We

just think that wood is more suitable for what we need to do right there. It is barely visible from the street. That is our opinion and it is up to you.

Mr. Lackey stated what was your reason for not putting it back on the roof?

Mr. Perkins stated to be honest the ground mounted unit was a lot more efficient, which would help our utility bills and things like that. They would have had to do some work on the roof to put more support up there for a new unit. This was just the route that was suggested to us.

Ms. Nicholas stated the picture that is included here, is that a current fence or a proposed fence?

Mr. Perkins stated that is the fence that it has, and we are proposing to use identical to that.

Mr. Hessler stated it sounds like they have got us. I'm looking at the map and I remember looking at this back then and it is way at the back of the building. It is past all this parking and it is very far from a site line and it is not in the front facing the building. I don't know if there are any issues that anyone else has but at the very least the unit is covered.

Mr. Jones stated are you painting it gray as well?

Mr. Perkins stated we will paint it to match the building.

Mr. Jones stated okay.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Davis stated what are your thoughts on the fencing. Is it okay the way that it is?

Mr. Jones stated I don't have a problem with the fence and especially if Paths already has one on the street. I think theirs is much closer to the direct traffic of Main street. This particular project being that it is far back from the existing building.

Ms. Nicholas stated you also see something similar to that down at Me's around the dumpster. It is pretty consistent for the district.

Mr. Davis stated RJ are there any apprehensions?

Mr. Lackey stated you can't put a dumpster on the roof, and I understand why they would want it that way. I am inclined to say no because the guidelines say put it back. I certainly am not going to raise heck about it.

Mr. Jones started let me ask at Path's what is the fence covering right here?

Mr. Perkins stated I am 99% sure that it is a generator.

Mr. Jones stated thank you.

Mr. Davis stated I do not have a problem with the location.

Ms. Nicholas the guidelines say mechanical equipment should be located at the rear of the building in well screened enclosure. It is humongous with the guidelines themselves.

Ms. Nicholas made a motion that a Certificate of Appropriateness to be granted to PLRDD 2021-12 at 530 Main Street to relocate the main HVAC chiller exterior appliance from the rooftop to the ground adjacent to the northwest corner of the building and to screen it in with wood treated fencing. Mr. Hessler seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote.

II. NEW BUSINESS

- 1. Certificate of Appropriateness Request PLRDD2021-174 at 742 Wilson Street to install a new wall sign not to exceed 32 square feet.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Present on behalf of this request for Danville Speech and Hearing Center was Shakira Rosser. Who stated we have had the old sign up for a while and we are currently undergoing some renovations and trying to get more patients and members of the community into the office. We thought that a sign would definitely help with that. The sign would have no lightning. It was that option and a white option as well and I believe that is the one that we are leaning towards. It is a little over 26 square feet and I'm here for any questions that you may have.

Mr. Lackey stated do you have a picture of the white option?

Ms. Rosser stated it should have been included but I have a small picture if you would like to see it.

Mr. Lackey stated it is a cool sign.

Ms. Nicholas stated it is a good design.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Ms. Nicholas made a motion that a Certificate of Appropriateness be granted for PLRDD 2021-174 at 742 Wilson Street for signage for Danville Speech and Hearing Center with the condition that the proposed sign does not exceed the 32 square foot maximum size allowed under the RDDC guidelines. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote.

2. *Certificate of Appropriateness Request PLRDD2021-175 at 424 Memorial Drive for a mixed-use building rehabilitation and site design.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Present on behalf of this request was Graham Smith, who stated I am Landscape Architect and President of Site Collaborative, a registered corporation in Virginia and North Carolina and stationed in Raleigh, North Carolina. We are the site planners on this project for the Alexander Company and as joint partner with the IDA and the City. In general, I think you have seen the scope and the scale of what we are looking to do, meaning the National Park Services guidelines and standards there. Then with the renovations and putting approximately 620 parking spaces on the site in phase 1 approach and then 219 of those will be under the building in the basement area towards the lower floor. Then the other 400 would be on the east end and on the south west end the phase 1 building renovation would have 150 apartment units and those will be on floors 2, 3 and 4 with a ground floor access on the western end would be where the residents gain access. Then that would leave about 110,000 square feet on the 1st floor for unidentified commercial use at this time. The plans are to dedicate some land to the city for the white-water park in the extension of the River walk park. So, it will be come one long park along throughout the space. There will also be an easement granted for the River walk trail from the proposed River Park over to where the bridge crossing exists, where the mill used to cross. This project is not proposed just yet to that bridge. The city has just obtained that bridge and there is still some work to be done on that. This would be the easement to provide the trail to that spot. We are also working on the city for the River Front Park and on a possible white-water course and the River Walk Trail section as well. I will happy to answer any questions but I'm not the Alexander Company. I will certainly try to answer any questions about markets and economics but I'm a site planner. I will do my best.

Mr. Davis stated is this just a preliminary request to proceed with the plans to renovate this building. Is that what we are meeting here right now for just requesting to start basically?

Mr. Plachcinski stated I think essentially yes, they have indicated as far as the building goes it will be treating the concrete and restoring it and then they will be using steel frame windows to meet the department of interiors guidelines for Historic Rehabilitation of the building. As, far as the building goes, yes, there probably are some moving pieces on the site development and we will come back and report to the commission when they're completely in place.

Ms. Nicholas stated if we grant the Certificate of Appropriateness today are, we giving carte blanche to just do whatever is in their plans or are they going to come back to us for different phases for approval of different plans?

Mr. Plachcinski stated I think with the city being an partner at this point that we will be back or as the project begins to take shape there maybe a couple of things that are still moving like the pedestrian connection to the former pedestrian bridge along the mill and how everything else ties in throughout the property. As far as the building rehabilitation goes the design guidelines for that they will be according to the secretary standards and that should not be changing. Is that correct Graham?

Mr. Smith stated that is correct, yes. Because the whitewater course has not been final designed and the River Walk trail connection has not been final designed and the crossing across the river along the mill has not been final designed, we are looking at this approval for the White Mill itself and the surface parking in the kind of the area around immediately on that island or the island that we are going to create, or the peninsula that is where the White Mill sits, and that surface parking that's going to be south west of the building. I think we have a phase 1 and 2 and I don't know exactly what everyone has got. There are a few moving parts that are controlled by the city and we will come back for that like the whitewater park, the trail and stuff like that.

Mr. Lackey stated this is outside of our ability, but I was curious by nature. The whitewater park because I like to kayak, I'm curious of what that is going to look like.

Mr. Smith stated what we did a couple of years ago, the city and ourselves engaged a gentleman by the name of Scott Chiftly out of Colorado, who designed the Charlotte whitewater course and I think he is a 2 or 3 time Olympian as well. He has a masters in Hydrology at Georgia Tech. The goal is that it would serve both recreational and competition courses. The final designed has not been done yet. The recreational opportunity happened somewhat all the way from the western end of the building where we show a small parking lot and a possible raft or kayak drop in and they extend all the way out to the entrance of the river front park itself. The competition course because of the section that parallels the White Mill is a little bit of a flatter water section, we will have to add some drops to get some pressure there. The competition course probably starts to happen from what we have seen from where the angled pedestrian bridge is down until the river front park because that is where you are going to get more vertical drop and some of the obstruction elements will be built into the new channel section and with that we will have some moveable blocks and some things like that. That is the rough idea behind it and that would serve both recreational and competition type opportunities would be flexible depending on water pressures and some removable blocks would be in the bottom of the channel.

Mr. Whitfield stated is it still proposed to be Olympic grade as first proposed?

Mr. Smith stated we are trying to balance that with recreation use as well. We are trying to add in the idea that we would get more float days if we added in some opportunity to

recreation float. We haven't move forward with the final designs and we have a lot of conversation with Scott about that and the opportunity of where one starts and ends, and how to change and control the water flow, so that the competition compacity could be kind of world class verses other days when it just wants to be a recreational tube or kayak float. We are still working on a lot of the design.

Ms. Nicholas stated I have questions about the external parking. Looking at slide 16, I see 2 different entrances there from Memorial Drive. Have studies been down talking about the flow of traffic in and out and the visibility of that and the sight lines and other things like that?

Mr. Smith stated prior studies and a true TIA was done and paid for by the city when this was being considered as a Casino site with about 2200 parking spaces. We have not gone back and reconfigured that, we will engage that group to do a TIA. When we come in for an official site permits as part of the process. Those two intersections were chosen because of some of the cross access and because of the possibility of full movement across the streets. They line up with median breaks and with feet crossings from them. We don't know if they will be when the TIA is completed, and we don't know if full movement will be allowed there. Does that answer your question?

Ms. Nicholas stated it does. It says in here the windows about 45% of them would be able to be restored. Those that are going to be replaced with newer materials, it was my understanding that the guidelines said that they had to be replaced with same material. Doug can you speak to that a little bit?

Mr. Plachcinski stated I don't know the answer to that. I would assume yes from where I read in their application, they were planning on steel framed.

Ms. Nicholas stated it says here that the windows that are too far deteriorated or previously removed will be replaced with thermal broken aluminum windows and excursion profiles that will match the existing building windows. I just want to make sure that we have held other people to wood frames and we must stick with wood frames and that we are holding that as accountable and we are anybody else in the city.

Mr. Plachcinski stated Graham, would I be correct in stating that what you are proposing in replacement windows would meet the requirements for Historic Preservation tax credits?

Mr. Smith stated that I would say yes. I'm sorry that I don't know more about that specific question but yes, I would agree with your statement.

Mr. Plachcinski stated they would be metal and I'm believing that they will look almost identical or will to the extent as is possible to manufacture them.

Ms. Nicholas stated I don't have any problem with upgrading the efficiency and everything that is noted there. I just wanted to make sure that if we are going to hold smaller businesses owners to these exact standards then we apply it evenly.

Mr. Davis stated Mr. Whitfield do you have a comment?

Mr. Whitfield stated one thing for consideration is that departments sometimes likes a different in modern materials so you can see where this is the original and this has been added. I think as long as you hold them to both the State and the Federal standards for rehabilitation tax credits you will probably be fine.

Ms. Nicholas stated okay and thank you.

Mr. Jones stated let me ask you such is that both on windows and details like that. Is that for another meeting?

Ms. Nicholas stated that is included in here.

Mr. Plachcinski stated the building restoration is the most critical part of what we have discussed today.

Mr. Davis stated so that is essentially part of what we are voting on today?

Ms. Nicholas stated yes, that is why I wanted to clarify because were voting on a large chunk of things today.

Mr. Whitfield stated I know they are counting on being able to use the Federal Historic Tax Credits and the State Historic Tax Credits as that is being a large part of the financing of the building, you can be sure that is going to be what they do because they can't afford to do anything else.

Mr. Plachcinski stated I believe that is in the city's performance standards for the agreement to.

Mr. Davis stated we can be sure that the city is also going to be heavily involved in the decision-making process on some of these things that will be coming up?

Mr. Plachcinski stated yes, the city will be very, very involved.

Mr. Whitfield stated the city and the IDA.

Ms. Nicholas stated it will be painted to match the original color? We are not getting wacky here.

Mr. Smith stated you guys don't like the idea of blue?

Mr. Hessler stated I know the plans are getting phased will the exterior renovations ultimately be phased as well or at least in the case all the concrete and paint everything will be done kind of all in one time and the entire building. So at least it will minimize how much time it looks like a construction site as far as the exterior. I didn't know if that included the windows and if the windows would be done like in sections. If 2/3 thirds of it would be done in phase 1, 1/3 third of it in phase 2?

Mr. Smith stated I believe the windows were not proposed to be done in phase 1 but the 1/3 that is left for phase 2 and I believe the windows were going to be saved for phase 2. I believe they will paint the rest of the building first.

Mr. Plachcinski stated with that being an extremely large component of the exterior rehabilitation I think that they are waiting. The developer is going to have perspective of the market absorption of the units. If they will begin phase 2 as soon as it is viable from a financial standpoint, I am confident that, given our current market they are looking for a reason to go ahead and continue in phase 2.

Mr. Smith stated they would love to roll right into phase 2 while phase 1 is still happening.

Mr. Whitfield stated based on interest that I can't discuss that has been expressed that is very viable.

Ms. Nicholas stated I know this but from looking at what has been provided I'm pretty sure that I know the answer to this but at one point there had been a proposal of developing the roof, possible gardens, restaurants, and other things like that. Is that still part of the consideration or has that been changed?

Mr. Smith stated it has been changed a touch with the Casino and some of the other mixes jammed in there before that was part of the option. There is a building code issue with some high-rise building code concerns in developing the roof that the developers are not comfortable in developing the roof just yet.

Mr. Davis stated from what I have read the developers are trying to make some use of the canal that runs beside the White Mill building?

Mr. Smith stated that is true, that is where we are proposing to build it as a whitewater channel. Basically, start from that west end all the way through and it goes into a 60-inch pipe as it gets to that angel of the pedestrian bridge of the east end of the building. It goes into a pipe and cuts across right in front of the little damn. Our goal with the whitewater canal is to excavate that canal that has been there along the building and the extend it out through and around the parking lot next to the river front park. That is our hope and that is not the final design of that.

Mr. Davis stated Graham we thank you very much for being with us today and for all your answers. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Mr. Graham stated thank you guys very much for the time and the opportunity. I appreciate it.

Mr. Jones stated I am super excited to see this white mill gets some new life breathed into it. How exciting will that be coming down Memorial Drive and seeing something like the prints that we are seeing. I am super excited about the Alexander Group remotely showing interest to come here and do this. I am extremely excited about that and what this will do for our city.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Ms. Nicholas made a motion that a Certificate of Appropriateness be granted for PLRDD 2021-175 at 424 Memorial Drive for a mixed-use building rehabilitation and site development improvement in line with what is in the application and as approved by Department of Historic Resources and the Federal and State guidelines. Mr. Lackey seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The March 11, 2021 minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Approved By: