



City of Charleston
Design Review Board
Minutes
May 16th, 2022
4:30 p.m.

A meeting of the Design Review Board was held at 4:30 p.m. on Monday, May 16th, 2022 at 2 George Street and adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

Board members present: Erica Chase (Chairperson), Andy Smith, Erin Stevens, Jeff Johnston, and Ben Whitener

Staff members present: David Meeks, Andrea Derungs, and Eric Pohlman

Chair called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m., introduced Board members and Staff, and explained protocol for the meeting.

The following applications were considered:

(NOTE: Unless otherwise remarked, Chair voted all items, Copy of complete staff comments/recommendations are attached. Copies of all recusals/letters/emails/petitions mentioned during this meeting are on file.)

1. 1513 Savannah Hwy. – TMS# 349-01-00-017

Request conceptual approval for the renovation and new addition of a carwash building at the Mercedes dealership.

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| Owner: | Baker Motor Company |
| Applicant: | Glick Boehm/ James (Billy) Bishop |
| Neighborhood/Area: | West Ashley |

Presenter: Billy Bishop

Project Detail: Billy said this was a renovation of the existing showroom and service drive. The new showroom would infill the canopy of the existing showroom, the service drive would be relocated to the west side of the property, and the carwash would be relocated to the rear of the site. He noted that they would be adding underground retention in two different areas for stormwater and would add additional plants to the front buffer to meet existing guidelines. The new showroom would be a two story, seven car showroom, which would bring the dealership to scale with other ones in the area. The first floor would have two delivery areas, sales offices, and a lounge. The second floor would look down onto the showroom space and would have offices, a conference room, a break room, locker rooms, and 1,500 sq. ft. of covered outdoor space. They would use the second floor to screen the mechanical equipment, which would be in wells. The height of the building would increase by 10 ft. Billy said the guiding design principle was the duality of the dark base and the silver, white roof line, which they had made as transparent and minimal as possible while still emphasizing the transition between interior and exterior. They were using butt glazed glass with horizontal bands to keep the design as simple, clean, and transparent as possible. Most of the glass would face the inventory and, from the glass, the building

would transition to a more private area. He noted that the roll up doors for the delivery room would allow them to get the cars into the showroom without obstructing the glass. The materiality of the carwash was similar to the rest of the campus, dark gray masonry and a lighter stucco. The carwash would be screened with landscaping as much as possible. He said Mercedes dealerships were required to have a swoosh design, but they had rounded the corner of it to give it a softer transition from the glazing to the metal panel. Ben asked if the the swoosh was a prototype. Billy said that it was and that the options were to have it slightly pronounced, like their design did, or to have it as a ramp for a second floor showroom. Jeff asked Billy to point out the different materials. Billy said the column with the Mercedes logo and the swoosh were both black metal panels, the roof line was metal paneling with a soffit underneath, and the exterior and interior columns were polished aluminum. Jeff asked what the space next to the swoosh was. Billy said it was Mr. Baker's office.

Public Comment: N/A

Staff Recommendation: Conceptual approval.

Board Comment(s)/Action: Ben said the swoosh almost read as if it was something different. They either needed to do something with it or make it go away. He also asked the team to make sure the mechanical units weren't visible from the eastern side. Jeff said the swoosh read like graphic design. If they could add another layer to it, such as a balcony or stairs, it would make it more interesting. Andy said, overall, he liked it, but he suggested studying the plant species.

MOTION: Conceptual approval, with staff comments #2, 3, 4 and 6. Board comments, 1) to study the diagonal metal panels on the front façade, 2) study the landscape pallet to be more in context with the existing site and the area of the auto mile.

MADE BY: BW SECOND: AS VOTE: FOR 5 AGAINST 0

*Erica Chase was excused after the vote was taken.

2. 43 Sumar St. – TMS# 352-08-00-006

Request conceptual approval for the mixed use development at the former Piggly Wiggly on Sam Rittenburg. Project program includes: civic, restaurant, retail and business use as well as public open space and underground parking.

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| Owner: | City of Charleston |
| Applicant: | Landmark Enterprises/Jonathan Oakman |
| Neighborhood/Area: | West Ashley |

Presenter: Jonathan Oakman, Andy Clark

Project Detail: Jonathan said the project was a reflection of what the community wanted. Andy said Sam Rittenburg was the commercial corridor of West Ashley while Old Towne Road had more of a residential character, so they fronted the buildings along Sam Rittenburg. He said they wanted to pull the buildings apart to make the site as pedestrian friendly as possible and that the emphasis of the development was the civic lawn. With the amount of traffic in the area, they thought it was import to surround the lawn with buildings as a sort of security barrier. In order to have sufficient parking, they had subsurface parking. They were proposing two subsurface stormwater storage spaces, as well as above ground cisterns, which would improve the stormwater retention for the site by 20%. The landscape pallet included drought-resistant, native species that would provide seasonal color. The two ends of the site were anchored by 3 story buildings, the civic building and office building. In between were 1 and 2 story restaurant and retail spaces. They would primarily be using masonry with exposed steel and wood accents and were in the

preliminary stages of designing a water feature at the northern apex of the site, which would act as a gateway to West Ashley. A water feature would also provide additional stormwater retention and offset some of the traffic noise. He noted that some of that area was on a DOT right-of-way, so they would be working with them to ensure they complied with all requirements. Looking north along Sam Rittenburg, there was a 3 story office building with a proposed coffee shop on the lower level, which invited pedestrians into the site. The civic lawn had a covered stage and several balconies/rooftops that overlooked and engaged the space. They had sized the pedestrian walkway to be large enough to accommodate outdoor dining, and at the terminus of the walkway, you entered into the pre-function space of the civic building. To the left, the spaces along Sam Rittenburg were public meeting spaces and conference rooms. To the right was an assembly space. Moving along the pedestrian corridor, the first floor of the buildings included an arcade with restaurant space on either side. Upstairs were two outdoor dining/bar areas. The office building on the south end had a coffee shop and office space connected by a covered walkway. The other retail/restaurant space featured an ice cream parlor and retail space. Jeff asked what the size of the lawn was. Andy said it was around 5,500 sq. ft. Jeff asked what the topography of the site was. Andy said it was essentially flat and that the buildings were raised in an attempt to create some separation from the lawn so that there would be space for people to walk and have a seat. Jeff asked Andy to talk about connections into the site. Andy said there was a crosswalk on Sumar St. and that the buildings would break to allow access in and out. He also pointed out that there was a bus stop on that side that could potentially double as an Uber/Lyft pickup spot. He said there was a sidewalk along Old Towne Road, but they were thinking of using that more as a landscape buffer and connection point to the water feature. Ben asked if the water feature would have a fence around it. Andy said it was in a very conceptual stage, but they felt there was a nice opportunity to create a water feature there. Ben asked if they had studied a garage as opposed to underground parking. Andy said it wasn't aesthetically desirable. Ben asked if they had to have two trash/recycling areas. Andy said one was for the civic function and the other was for the office/restaurant function and that, due to the volume of trash produced by the restaurants, they thought it was best to have two locations instead of trying to fit it all in one. Ben asked if the cistern on the northern side of the site could be relocated. Andy said it probably could, but it was something that showed the City's commitment to Charleston Rises. Ben said the width of the stairs for the 2 story restaurant looked like it was constrained. He asked why the civic building had a different look than the other buildings. Andy said they wanted the civic building to be more formal than the restaurant and retail units. Jeff asked if it was their intent to have the entire site be parked underground. Andy said it was. Erin asked if the lawn was going to be living sod or synthetic turf. Andy said both were being explored, but to have living sod, they would need to have a lot of soil on top of the parking garage. Erin asked if it would be a consistent surface or if it would be broken up by planting beds. Andy said it would be consistent with some raised seating along the edges.

Public Comment:

- **Donna Jacobs** said it was exciting to see life come to the site. The team had listened to a lot of citizens' comments when creating the design. She said they had been able to give it the "Disney effect," where all the infrastructure was underground and the pretty parts were on top. She noted that the County was going to do a significant rework of the suicide merge intersection, which would help with bike/ped access and connecting the adjacent neighborhoods to the site. She was excited to see how the underground water storage would play out, as well as how the apex of the site would be developed to serve as a gateway to West Ashley.
- **Councilmember Shahid** said the City had purchased the site several years ago and noted that the plans for it had come a long way since the originally proposed 20 pump gas station. He said the project had been delayed a bit due to the County reworking the suicide merge intersection but that the development would provide a place for West Ashley residents to come together. He said the design took the context of neighborhoods, office spaces, grocery stores, and strip malls into account, as well as the neighboring I-26 and Charles Towne Landing. It was a mixed-use area, but the design meshed well with what was already there.
- **Eric Pohlman** said he had been working on the development for 4 years, and he thought the project was indicative of the way they wanted the revitalization of West Ashley to go. He said the

architects had taken all of the citizens' comments into account and managed to accommodate them all on one site. He said the architectural form was also a new design style for the area.

- **Isabel Hopkins** wrote that she was enthused about the project but thought the design looked like a roadside motel.
- **A resident** wrote that the use of cisterns was forward thinking, but the design should be changed.

Staff Recommendation: Conceptual approval.

Board Comment(s)/Action: Jeff said it was going to be an amazing project and there was good vision for the design and execution. He liked the idea of the courtyard and thought the scale looked appropriate. However, he questioned the raised portion and wondered if it separated, rather than united, the space. In his mind, the courtyards that were most successful were the ones that were protected and where his children could run around freely. While it was important to be open to the parking lot, he wondered if there was a way to make it more secure. He also encouraged the team to strengthen the pedestrian alley and congratulated them on the creative solution of underground parking. Ben said it was very well thought out and he liked that there was a consistent style to the buildings. He questioned if they could do more with the design of the civic building to help distinguish it further. He didn't like the cistern at the main entrance and said he would prefer it to be relocated. On the restaurant side, some articulation needed to happen where the circulation was constrained to 5 ft. He suggested pushing out the wooden scrim wall to provide more space. He also wished the mechanical units were in a well and noted that if they were 10 ft. or less from the edge, they would need to have a guardrail. Erin said there needed to be thoughtful development of the water feature and that it needed to function as part of the site. Currently, it read more as part of the road. She said it should speak more to its context and better represent Charleston's natural ecologies. Andy said he agreed with Erin and that water features tended to become planters very quickly when they weren't well thought out. He also cautioned the team to keep wind in mind when it came to fountains. He said there needed to be more pay-offs at the end of the vistas and strongly encouraged the team to use natural materials on the lawn. He also advised them to pay attention to the orientation of trash enclosures and how their gates opened. Jeff said it was going to be difficult to service the trash from the restaurants along Sam Rittenburg. He also questioned if the wall behind the water feature could be more transparent.

MOTION: Conceptual approval with staff comment #2, and Board comments: 1) To study the height from the public green to the surrounding buildings, and potentially make the green space more secure for children playing. 2) Study the car entry into the underground garage as it pertains to the proposed pedestrian axis. 3) Study the location of the roof mechanical to ensure no parapet guardrails will be required. 4) Study the termination of the vistas and look to provide more transparency through the site. 5) Study the water feature so that it speaks to the context of the site and area. Study the shape of the water feature. 6) Study the stairs to building 3 so they are not so constrained. 7) Study the trash enclosure locations and be mindful about the swinging gates.

MADE BY: BW SECOND: JJ VOTE: FOR 4 AGAINST 0

*Erica Chase and Dinos Liollo were recused from this item.

3. Approval of the minutes from the 5.2.22 DRB meeting.

MOTION: Approval.

MADE BY: JJ SECOND: BW VOTE: FOR 4 AGAINST 0

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Submitted by Andrea Derungs

