



City of Charleston
Design Review Board
Minutes
February 6th, 2023
4:30 p.m.

A meeting of the Design Review Board was held at 4:30 p.m. on Monday, February 6th, 2023 at 2 George Street and adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

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

Board members present: Erica Chase (Chair), Dinos Liollo, Ben Whitener, Ashley Jackrel, and Stephanie Tillerson (left at 6:45 p.m., returned at 6:48 p.m., left at 7:10 p.m., returned at 7:11 p.m.)

Staff members present: Travis Galli, Linda Bennett, Eric Pohlman, and Patrick Carlson, recording

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

Applications

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. 1731 Savannah Hwy. – TMS # 350-06-00-064 | DRB2022-000131

Request approval for the demolition of a 2-story house turned commercial and over 50 years of age.

Owner:	1739 Savannah Hwy. LLC
Applicant:	Stephen Ramos
Neighborhood/Area:	West Ashley

Presenter: Stephen Ramos

Project Detail: Mr. Ramos was presenting on behalf of the client and following up on a meeting from August 2022. He said that the Board had requested for more established chronology on the property, which he was prepared to provide, and asked that they reconsider in favor of full demolition. He said the structure used to be an integral part of the Stono Park neighborhood. However, as the region evolved, a buffer grew between the original neighborhood and the property in question as it became encompassed by the modern Savannah Highway commercial district. He said the building was linked to several communities in Hendersonville and Flat Rock, North Carolina, but that was arguably less about architecture and more about a loose cultural connection. He didn't find evidence that the structure presented a certain vernacular or architectural representation for the adjacent neighborhood. Although the stone exterior was unusual, the structure itself was very simple and not representative of traditional Charleston architectural elements. He said the history and past connectivity of the region was not being questioned, but the nature of the structure at that time was one that did not merit saving. He said that Stephanie asked in a previous meeting if a historical marker could be placed onsite or if the stones could be salvaged and reused in some manner. He said both suggestions were good ideas and could be more successful at conveying the importance of the property than it was doing sitting there undisturbed. He said that the site had been rezoned in the 1980s for commercial use and there

was evidence it had been used as such for the past 40 years. He acknowledged that the building could technically be saved and expanded but did not see a reason to pursue that option. There were several maintenance and structural issues that needed to be addressed and no longer represented an acceptable and accessible option as a modern commercial space.

Public Comment: Erica said that Noah Sanderson, Sallie Bendt, Jacquelyn Dianne, Camille Hamilton, Carlton Swift, Zach Liollo, Andy Holsomback, Catherine Sobieszczyk, Carrie Dean, Erica Schuler, and Colleen Condon had all submitted online comments that did not support demolition.

Donna Jacobs said that she was present to speak against demolition. She said she spoke in an August of 2022 DRB meeting against demolition because of its extensive historic narrative surroundings. Since the building represented the origins and development of the adjacent neighborhood, at the very least, it deserved an historic marker to honor its contributions. She thought that a better way to respect its influence would be to maintain the structure and let it tell its story within the context of West Ashley history. She said the sister property that was demolished to make way for a car dealership had also allowed for the DRB to expand its power over demolition applications. She thought it would be an appropriate response to use that power to save this remaining structure in order to showcase the growth of the community as it worked to preserve the remaining physical links to the past.

Kenneth Marolda said he was a member of the West Ashley Revitalization Commission. He agreed with Ms. Jacobs and quoted several lines from the Plan West Ashley documents to highlight the community's dedication to architectural preservation.

Eric Pohlman said that he supported Ms. Jacobs' and Mr. Marolda's statements but did not agree with City staff recommendations. He said the unique elements of the structure highlighted the distinctive nature of the regions that surrounded the clear architectural style of the downtown peninsula. It demonstrated the creativity of the post-war urban developers and formed the center of the question of what warrants preservation in the suburban landscape.

Charlie Smith said that the building was part of the historic conversation about the area and needed preserving to ensure the culture and character of West Ashley received the same amount of consideration as the downtown region.

Ben asked if the applicant had studied how to remove the later structural additions and incorporate the original house into the future development and Mr. Ramos said they had not.

Ashley asked if the stone layer was supported by a wooden frame and Mr. Ramos said that the façade was a stone veneer supported by studs throughout the building and would have to be completely removed in order to address the structural issues underneath. Ashley said she was not present at the August 2022 meeting that discussed this application and had not heard anything that would grant the property the burden of being labeled historic.

Mr. Ramos said that he evaluated the site from an architect's perspective and concluded that its structural design would not be approved and its aesthetic did not appeal to the present community. He said its context did not expand beyond the site and did not connect to the surrounding region. Considering all of those elements, he said that it did not add up to enough merit or historic significance to preserve this building for future use.

Staff Recommendation: Approval for demolition

Board Comments/Action: Dinos asked if the staff assertion of the structure existing in a poor state was based on structural analysis and Travis said it was based on research done by David Meeks. Dinos said the condition of the building could have been due to building maintenance issues but argued that the building needed to be judged according to the vision of what West Ashley wanted to preserve.

Ben said that he thought the original house was worth saving and thought that its unique nature made it worthy of preservation.

Ashley said that she didn't think it met that definition based on the guidelines of the DRB's purview. She recognized that members of the community petitioned for its preservation, but the application did not have enough detailed history to warrant saving.

Dinos said that he learned about the relationship between significance and preservation after working with the co-author of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. By defining significance as a cultural relationship, significance takes on more weight within the context of preservation. Dinos said that under those definitions, the building qualified as significant within the evolution of the surrounding community.

Stephanie clarified that the landmark overlay did not apply to this particular property.

MOTION: Denial

MADE BY: DL SECOND: BW VOTE: FOR 3 AGAINST 2

2. River Rd. (near Swygert Blvd.) – TMS # 312-00-00-050 | DRB2022-000139

Request preliminary approval for the construction of a new 2-story public elementary school (2nd thru 5th grades)

Owner:	Charleston County School District
Applicant:	Clancy + Wells Inc.
Neighborhood/Area:	Johns Island

Presenter: Mark Clancy and Bryant Stowe

Project Detail: Mr. Clancy said that he would be initially presenting on behalf of the owner and applicant parties. He wanted to showcase the proposed materials for the project and enforced their commitment to using an inspiration palette that represented Johns Island's unique cultural identity. The main entrances were designed to incorporate multiple materials across the façade to present an inviting and nuanced organizational point that appealed to children. The plan intended to arrange the drop off section using the architecture in a more creative manner compared to other schools. Mr. Clancy mentioned that the site incorporated several protected play areas between the classroom wings that also allowed for future classroom expansion before asking Mr. Stowe to describe the proposed landscaping and property details.

Mr. Stowe said that there was going to be a series of columns supporting a six foot ornamental fence to both keep people away from the pond and aesthetically tie the entryway into the architecture of the main building. The landscaping around the pond consisted of a wide variety of native plantings with a series of palms. The dumpster location had been moved to the south side of the building to provide easier access to the kitchen area and will be surrounded by a brick enclosure with additional native plantings. The fencing around the north play area will be a chain link fence with more plantings and the south entrance had been updated to accommodate more architectural and landscaped detailing. The original intention was to utilize the pond for classroom instruction but, for safety reasons, the pond will not be utilized in outdoor classroom sessions.

Staff Recommendation: Preliminary approval

Board Comments/Action: Erica said, unless there was a reason besides maintenance, that the play field should be surrounded by a more decorative fence compared to the proposed chain link border.

Ben confirmed that the south elevation's mechanical well had screening over it and pointed out the discrepancy between the dormer bump-out not aligning with the window below along the same elevation.

MOTION: Preliminary approval

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

3. 3030 Maybank Hwy. – TMS # 313-00-00-001, 023, 006 | DRB2023-000150

Request conceptual approval for the construction of a new town home community with 72 units.

Owner:	Maybank 3030, LLC
Applicant:	Vinyet Architecture
Neighborhood/Area:	Johns Island

Presenter: Tony Berry, Josh Lilly, and Justin Smith

Project Detail: Mr. Berry said that he would be presenting on behalf of the applicant. They had been developing the proposal for this site since the summer of 2021 and ultimately decided to annex it into the City of Charleston. The property had the expected 75 foot setback buffer from Maybank Highway with additional space set aside for a future road that would connect the property to other developments along Maybank. After consultation with the City's Stormwater Management department, the property was altered to accommodate some of the City's recommendations.

Mr. Lilly said that the property was in a special protection area that prevented the developers from adding any runoff volume to the region during a storm event. The primary method of combating that issue involved getting any stormwater directly into the ground using a variety of methods, such as infiltration ponds. Ensuring that the property's greenspaces utilized an assortment of pond installations was necessary to offset the amount of water that collected from the site's limited impervious surfaces.

Mr. Smith said that the size of the property presented several density and layout challenges but the proposal had several promising architectural leads that could lead to a thoughtfully developed community.

Ben asked if the team had investigated if the property could be arranged differently and the applicant said that they were dealing with a very limited property that prevented any development beyond 40% of the gross acreage. They intended to develop 72 separate units and they would research to see if they could be reoriented in a more meaningful manner.

Stephanie asked if there was a proposed sidewalk along the back road of the property and the applicant said that it was a planned road, at the request of TRC, which would allow for a future connection to residential developments that could be built north and south of the property.

Dinos said that the property appeared to have a rear elevation that would dominate the view from the entrance and asked if the property could be oriented in a different manner. The applicant said that they would see how that could be altered, however the proposed architecture style provided many dynamic points of viewing interest and wanted to continue to develop the site along those lines.

Staff Recommendation: Conceptual approval

Board Comments/Action: Ben said he thought that the site plan needed some more work, particularly the point of arrival. He said the spaces between the building and associated ponds looked as if they were placed without much thought and wanted the buildings to display more architectural variety and appear less disjointed from each other.

Dinos said the line drawings were well done but said the side and rear elevations could begin to look more cohesive by maintaining the horizontal elements along the base of the buildings. He said the end elevations also needed more attention and development in order to ensure the fenestration work on the front was not lost in translation.

Ben said he agreed with Dinos and proposing simplifying the direction of the siding in order to create a more cohesive look.

Stephanie said, from a design standpoint, there wasn't a lot of private space for the homeowner outside of the building itself and said it should be considered in future proposed layouts.

Ashley said that she would be voting against deferral because she thought the applicant should be given the benefit of the doubt in an effort to move the application process further along, but she agreed with all the reasons why the board was voting on a deferral.

MOTION: Deferral

MADE BY: DL SECOND: ST VOTE: FOR 4 AGAINST 1

4. 2280 Henry Tecklenburg Dr. – TMS # 309-00-00-467 | DRB2023-000151

Request conceptual approval for the construction of a new affordable housing community with 69 units.

Owner:	Gateway at the Charleston, LP
Applicant:	Studio 8 Design, LLC/Bruce Smith
Neighborhood/Area:	West Ashley

Presenter: Austin Doyle, Wes Bolin, Bruce Smith

Project Detail: Mr. Smith said that he was going to begin by talking about the inspiration behind the building. The proposed site was meant to address the need for more affordable housing but the site was very limited in size and posed several layout challenges. The applicant intended to create a single building with some parking underneath the structure that displayed an urban architectural style. The building was laid out as an L-shape with a dark-colored concrete parking deck below four residential floors composed of a basic light-colored brick base. The parking level would also incorporate metal screens and landscaping to soften the look of cars on the ground floor. The site would have a single point of entry around a large detention pond that would give access to an interior and exterior parking area and a space for emergency vehicles. The main entrance would be in the middle of L-shape but there were other stairwells and elevators located on either end of the building.

Dinos asked if there was any proposed direct access off of Henry Tecklenburg Dr. and Mr. Smith said the plan did not accommodate one. The pedestrian and parking garage middle entrance would be considered the primary point of access.

Ben said the building seemed to project a very large sense of mass sitting off of Henry Tecklenburg Dr. and Mr. Smith said the small nature of the site limited the potential layout options. Ben asked if the detention pond could be made smaller if it was made deeper to allow for more site space. The applicants said it had to be that size based on the property's outlet elevation.

Erica said the existing elevation looked very low and asked if the proposal would be elevating the site overall. The applicant said they would be elevating it based on all City requirements. She also asked if the proposed outdoor spaces were in accordance with state affordable housing requirements. They said they were, and there were multiple outdoor amenities that could be included but did not have a plan for anything specific at that point.

Public Participation: Austin Doyle introduced himself as the Motorside Towns HOA President and spoke to support the project’s objective but expressed issues with the design aesthetic and potential layout, in particular the navigation issues around the point of entry.

Eric Pohlman spoke to support the project as a member of City staff and Plan West Ashley. He said he recommended conceptual approval in order to ensure that the project does not lose potential funding streams that followed different approval schedules outside of the City of Charleston’s application process.

Erica said they received several comments in opposition but they were all concerning issues that were outside of the DRB’s purview.

Staff Recommendation: Conceptual approval

Board Comments/Action: Dinos said they all supported the approval of well-designed affordable housing, but he had multiple issues with the mass and scale of the proposed building design. He understood they had limited space but the proposed plan had overwhelmed the area to the fullest possible extent and it needed to be redesigned to look more meaningful with regards to its location.

Ben agreed and said the building needed a redesign in order to appeal on a visual level.

Dinos referenced other projects that incorporated quality architecture across a variety of affordable housing projects. He said some of the ideas could be applied to the proposed building and convey more of an inherent sense of attraction without being overwhelming.

Erica said she didn’t want to interrupt the momentum of the project, but agreed that it needed a drastic redesign.

Dinos said there needed to be more defined outdoor spaces, a defined central entry point, and a stronger architectural concept that took the property surroundings into aesthetic consideration.

Erica asked if all of the parking spaces were necessary and the applicant team said that they were incorporating the necessary space to satisfy what the City and state required.

Stephanie asked the applicant team to research if the state could grant a parking variance in order to allow for more building space.

Dinos said that the project was missing too many elements for approval and encouraged the applicants to go back to the drawing board and they could potentially call a special meeting in order to approve the updated look as quickly as possible.

MOTION: Denial

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

Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the 12/5/22 meeting

MOTION: Approval

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

1. Approval of minutes from the 1/17/23 meeting

MOTION: Approval

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

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Patrick Carlson
Clerk of Council's Office