



City of Charleston
Design Review Board
Minutes
May 2nd, 2022
4:30 p.m.

A meeting of the Design Review Board was held at 4:32 p.m. on Monday, May 2nd, 2022 at 2 George Street and adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

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

Board members present: Erica Chase (Chairperson), Andy Smith, Dinos Liollo, Erin Stevens, Lucas Boyd, Ben Whitener, and Jeff Johnston (arrived @ 4:45 p.m.)

Staff members present: David Meeks and Andrea Derungs

Chair called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m., introduced Board members and Staff, and explained protocol for the meeting.

The following applications were considered:

1. 1133 Savannah Hwy. – TMS# 349-08-00-009

Request demolition of the IGA grocery building which is over 50 years of age.

Owner:	SJC Ventures
Applicant:	Phillips/Eric Porter
Neighborhood/Area:	West Ashley

Presenter: Jonathan Thomas

Project Detail: Jonathan said the first phase of their project was completed in 2016-17. Now, they wanted to demolish and replace the IGA grocery store. It was in a state of disrepair, especially the rear of the store, and the low duct height prevented the building from being repurposed. He noted that the building was over 50 years old, did not have a lot of historical value, and that there had been several additions/renovations, so the original character of the building wasn't present.

Public Comment:

- **Carlton Swift** said other former A&P Centennial buildings had been repurposed in other towns, and he hoped that some of those design features could be incorporated into a new build if the demolition request was approved.

Staff Recommendation: Demolition.

Board Comment(s)/Action: Ben asked if they would be able to review the plaque staff was recommending. David said they could request to do so. Dinos commended Mr. Swift's research.

MOTION: Approval for demolition with staff comment #1.

MADE BY: DL SECOND: AS VOTE: FOR 6 AGAINST 0
 Jeff Johnston was not present when the vote was taken.

2. 1133 Savannah Hwy. – TMS# 349-08-00-009

Request conceptual approval for 4 new retail buildings as part of Phase II of the West Ashley Station development.

Owner:	SJC Ventures
Applicant:	Phillips/Eric Porter
Neighborhood/Area:	West Ashley

Presenter: Jonathan Thomas

Project Detail: Jonathan said they had tried to make Phase 2 match the Phase 1 design as closely as possible and had worked with David to accomplish that. Erin asked if the parking in front of Doscher's would be reconfigured. Jonathan said that it would be resurfaced and restriped, but it would not change significantly. He mentioned that they wanted to activate the connection to the unnamed street to make it more inviting and walkable. Dinos said the space would be a natural connection to the Greenway. He asked what the sidewalks and green space at the rear of the building were for. Jonathan said they were service entries. Dinos said it was odd to have the riser room on Building 300 facing Savannah Highway. Jonathan said the building was visible from all 4 sides, so they had done it in an attempt to be creative and that, when you looked at it in elevation, it didn't look like a riser room. Dinos pointed out that there was one on Building 200, too, but it was behind the building. Jonathan said they put it there because that corner of the building wasn't as visible. Andy asked if they had looked into engaging the tennis center behind the site. Jonathan said they could look into that, but they would have to work around the existing drainage ditch. Lucas clarified that the new buildings would be in line with Whole Foods. Dinos asked how they had addressed the pedestrian experience. Jonathan said they had tried to make it as pedestrian friendly as possible. However, Savannah Highway was not very pedestrian friendly, which was part of the reason for setting Building 300 closer to the road. He also noted that they had taken the sidewalk all the way up Farmfield to try to make a connection to the tennis center and trails behind the site, but said they could do better on making the connection to the unnamed street more inviting. Jeff asked what their parking count was. David said they were around 44 spaces over the zoning requirements. Jonathan noted they did have a parking agreement with Swig and Swine for 18 spaces, but they weren't dedicated spaces.

Public Comment:

- **Eric Pohlman** said the developers had been in contact with City staff since 2021 to ensure they developed the site in a way that kept with the guidelines of Plan West Ashley. The proposed plan was a good example of revitalization in progress and would shorten trips for residents with new entertainment and shopping destinations.
- **Donna Jacobs** noted that the Bikeway and Greenway were nearby, so she encouraged the Board to pay attention to accessibility for bikers and pedestrians. She requested that Building 300 be set back further from the road and that all the facades include details that made them look like entrances. She said the current proposed design was not special and needed a punch. She also recommended lowering the landscaping.
- **Katie Zimmerman** emphasized the walkability and layout of the site. She said you currently couldn't cross Savannah Highway to Doscher's in a wheelchair, and you couldn't get to the Greenway without crossing Farmfield. In general, it was not an easy site to traverse. She said the site would continue to be a gathering place for West Ashley, so she encouraged a site design that would mirror that.

Staff Recommendation: Conceptual Approval.

Board Comment(s)/Action: Dinos asked if there was a good reason to keep the unnamed street closed to vehicular traffic. Erica said it would depend on who owned the right-of-way. From a transportation and planning standpoint, any cross connection was looked favorably upon, unless there were objections from the neighborhood. Jonathan said he could research who owned it, but it had been closed before they began Phase 1 development. Erin asked what improvements the neighbors along the unnamed road were asking for. Jonathan said they wanted general improvements. Erica said if the City owned the right-of-way they could at least improve the area for pedestrians and cyclists. Andy suggested not letting the connection to the unnamed street terminate at a dumpster, varying the species of canopy trees, breaking up the concrete with some plantings, setting Building 300 back further, and focusing on the rear elevations of buildings. Erin said there was a balance between setting a building close to the street and having it back far enough that there was a comfortable space for people. She suggested adding a cushion since it was next to such a high-speed, busy street. She requested adding landscaping to the parking lot to break up the hardscape and create a more comfortable and welcoming space. Lucas said the hyphen needed to read like one; the whole thing should read as two buildings connected together. He said they had the nice, curb-less, paver area in front of Whole Foods and wondered if it was possible to extend that across the entire length. Ben agreed that the patio area should extend the entire length and that Buildings 500 and 600 should be brought out further since the renderings made it appear that the hyphen stuck out further. Jonathan said moving Building 300 in from the road and removing the head in parking in front of Buildings 500 and 600 would eat into the small amount of excess parking they had and would be a problem for the development. Ben asked that the meters and electrical units on Buildings 200 and 300 be covered or screened. Andy said they could do angled or parallel parking to regain some of the spaces they would lose by extending the paver area. Ben didn't like the idea of having utility doors on front pedestrian paths and suggested moving them to the northern side. Dinos said there was an absence of unity in the proposed 3-dimensional manner. He suggested reintroducing the canopy and said the elevation faded out at the end. Lucas said you could almost treat the whole front facade as a microcosm of a traditional main street. Jeff said the whole thing was logical, but he struggled with it as an idea of a place and knew there could be more. He said the architecture needed to respond to the activity and that the connection to the unnamed road was under-thought. He encouraged the applicant to allow the connection points to inform the architecture and said the current design felt like a standard strip mall. Dinos said it was hard to make a pedestrian friendly site when you hadn't addressed the pedestrians. Erin noted that most of the greenspace was behind the building, near the service entry, and that, by shuffling things around, it could become a space for people to use. Dinos said he wanted there to be a village concept that balanced both pedestrian and vehicular access and wondered if there could be a way to accommodate golf cart access through the connection to the unnamed street.

MOTION: Deferred, with staff comments # 2-7 and Board comments 1) To provide as much transparency in the buildings as possible. 2) Develop a stronger scheme for pedestrian experience and embracing more of a village concept. 3) Reexamine access from the "Unknown Street" ROW and incorporate it into the planning of the site. 4) Strengthen the hyphen by possibly by including a canopy as in front of Whole Foods. 5) Study the distribution of the green space in the overall plan. 6) All exterior building utilities should be screened. 7) Omit exposed block on building 200. 8) Study the parking and the parking patterns in front of buildings 500 and 600. 9) Shift building 300 slightly away from Savannah Hwy. 10) Provide more variety in the landscape pallet. 11) Study the termination of Building 600. 12) Elevate the design of the rear façade of building 600 as seen from the pedestrian entrance from "Unknown Street."

MADE BY: DL SECOND: ES VOTE: FOR 7 AGAINST 0

3. Approval of the minutes from the 4.4.22 DRB meeting.

MOTION: Approval.

MADE BY: DL SECOND: BW VOTE: FOR 7 AGAINST 0

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

Submitted by Andrea Derungs
Clerk of Council's Office