

MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2016
COUNCIL COMMITTEE ROOM

Members Present: Chairman Norris, Bobowiec, Malay, Gibson, Pretz, Smunt, Withey

Members Absent:

Also Present: Russell Colby, Planning Division Manager
Ellen Johnson, Planner

1. Call to order

Chairman Norris called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll call

Ms. Johnson called roll with seven members present. There was a quorum.

3. Approval of agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

4. Presentation of minutes of the June 1, 2016 meeting

A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to approve the minutes with an amendment to change “Mr. Smunt” to “Dr. Smunt”.

PUBLIC HEARING

5. Eligibility of Property for Landmark Designation: 522 W. Main St., Darwin Millington Homestead.

Chairman Norris read the executive summary and opened the hearing.

Dr. Smunt asked if the reference to the existing shutters being a non-contributing component of the building was added to the documents. Ms. Johnson confirmed it was added to the section titled “The Property is suitable for preservation or restoration”.

There were no other comments.

A motion was made by Dr. Smunt and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to close the public hearing.

MEETING

6. Eligibility of Property for Landmark Designation: 522 W. Main St., Darwin Millington Homestead

No additional comments were made.

A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to recommend approval to the City Council for landmarking 522 W. Main St., Darwin Millington Homestead.

7. COA: 225 W. Main St. (façade improvements)

Edward Seaman, the petitioner, was present.

Mr. Seaman stated he reviewed several stone options used in downtown St. Charles. He presented photos of some of these, and pointed out his preference for the stone to be used on the knee wall along the west façade.

Dr. Smunt noted stone foundations on load bearing walls tend to have stones that are level with one another. He felt all but one of the options presented would work well.

Chairman Norris clarified the materials being used. Mr. Seaman said the limestone is a real stone that will be cut. He confirmed it will include a sill made of similar materials.

A motion was made by Dr. Smunt and seconded by Ms. Malay with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA using a limestone veneer and a limestone cap.

8. COA: 112 N. 5th Ave. (siding)

Eileen Kanute, homeowner, was present.

Mr. Colby reviewed stated the replacement windows were previously approved. He stated the siding and trim elements are still open for discussion.

Ms. Kanute said they are going to use 4 inch trim and casings. Dr. Smunt noted the wider trim is typically used on older homes in the area.

A motion was made by Mr. Gibson and seconded by Ms. Malay with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA for siding using 4 inch casings and 4 inch corner trim.

9. COA: 1 W. Illinois St. (sign)

Mr. Colby said the proposal is to retain two sign panels, but use one for a different business located in the building. The materials being used are the same as the existing ones.

A motion was made by Mr. Bobowiec and seconded by Ms. Malay with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA as presented.

10. COA: 200 W. Main St. (sign)

John Kuhn, representative from Banner Up Signs, was present.

Mr. Kuhn described the lettering. He said they will be using a 6 inch deep aluminum cabinet with illuminated acrylic lettering. The existing sign on the top of the building will be removed.

Dr. Smunt felt the color choice and lettering presented will be very complimentary to the building.

A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Gibson with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA as presented.

11. Special Use for PUD Amendment & PUD Preliminary Plan Applications for First Street Phase 3 (Buildings #2 & #3)

Bob Rasmussen, petitioner from First Street Development II, LLC, and Dan Marshall, architect, were present.

Mr. Colby stated these are PUD applications that have been filed and are going through the zoning review process. He said the Commission is being asked to make recommendations that will be forwarded to the Plan Commission. He noted there are two elements to the proposal. The first is amending the PUD ordinance for the first floor uses that are allowed in the buildings. He said the proposed hotel in Building #2 and the office and bank uses in Building #3 were not uses that were originally identified by the PUD approved in 2006. He said these uses are allowed in those buildings, just not on the first floor. The second element of the proposal is the preliminary plan for each building.

Building #2 Discussion:

Mr. Rasmussen discussed the renderings for Building #2. He noted the hotel is now a different brand than first presented. It is a franchise hotel that competes with Marriot Courtyard. The hotel requires a glass edge structure on the top of the building which gives it a very modern appearance. Mr. Rasmussen said he's not trying to make the building look like everything else. He felt the downtown area has a very unique blend of architectural styles and this new building will fit in well.

Mr. Pretz said he favors an old-fashioned look, but felt that can get monotonous. He said he is open to a different style in the downtown area as long as it is done correctly.

Mr. Bobowiec felt the proposal did not fit into the style of historic St. Charles, nor does it match the original goal of what the First Street Development project was meant to be. He is not opposed to the building, but felt it is not appropriate for the riverfront or in historic downtown. He noted the architecture is too dramatic. The signs into the city say “Welcome to Historic Downtown St. Charles”, and he felt a contemporary building takes away from that. He said he would not be able to give his approval for this proposal.

Ms. Malay agreed with Mr. Bobowiec. She felt they are far removed from the original concept for First Street. She noted the river is the focus of the downtown area and should be surrounded by the grandest architecture possible. She said new buildings should fit in with the area and the proposal is far too contemporary for downtown. She felt the three buildings together look like a block full of factories. Ms. Malay said she favors grand architecture that highlights arches and brick. She noted the original First Street concept was modeled after The Plaza in Kansas City. She said citizens would be against having such a modern building in this area.

Mr. Rasmussen noted the downtown Chicago area is interjecting different architectural styles and it works well. Ms. Malay said St. Charles is a much smaller area and Chicago isn't a fair comparison. She also expressed concern for the Hotel Baker, noting it is a national landmark and a great deal of money has gone into protecting it. She said she would like to know that both hotels could survive.

Ms. Malay said the city currently does not have the tourism that would allow the new hotel to survive. She said the original idea for First Street included first floor retail space that is currently not present in the downtown area. This proposal includes nearly a full block of non-retail space.

Chairman Norris asked if Ms. Malay was opposed to the scale of the building. She indicated she was not.

Mr. Rasmussen noted small retailers are very hard to find. He said we are not like Geneva, nor are we competing with them. He felt the goal was to create a community that attracts transient people on a regular basis. He said doing so would drive the local economy and fill the storefronts on Main Street. Giving up space to bring in one of the highest end hotel brands to drive people into the downtown area is worth it. He stated every other area that has done the same thing has been successful. Mr. Rasmussen advised the first floor will still have a retail component consisting of a bar and restaurant. He said he is a landlord in the city and knows how hard it is to get and keep retailers. Ms. Malay noted that adding retail was the idea behind being able to compete with Geneva. Mr. Rasmussen pointed out that people spend long weekends in Geneva, but their number one need is a hotel. They have nothing close to fill that need. He felt adding a hotel in St. Charles would provide an edge for the city, by keeping them here to shop and dine.

Mr. Rasmussen said he was open to ideas that would help tone down the contemporary nature of the glass part that needs to be included in Building #2, but he does not want it to look like an old building.

Mr. Gibson was unclear as to what part is considered the front of the building. Mr. Rasmussen said it is the First Street side. Chairman Norris indicated the concern would be the glass facing the north and whether or not they want that downtown gateway reflected in this style. Mr. Rasmussen asked if it would help if the glass edge remained, but the rest of the glass looked like the normal glass and brick on the building. Ms. Malay said it would help downplay the look, but she was concerned the whole block would still look too industrial.

Mr. Pretz pointed out they do not know the future plans for the area across from the plaza. He noted a new building could be added that would minimize the look of the contemporary nature of Building #2 from the north.

Mr. Gibson felt the east elevation looked rather plain.

Dr. Smunt said he is fine with the size and scale of the building, and the idea of adding a hotel. He agreed that getting small retailers will be difficult. However, he expressed concern over this type of structure being located in the historic district. He said they should consider the timeframe of the historic downtown and stay within the style of that time. Mr. Rasmussen said the challenge is that they can do that with a boutique hotel, but not a brand name. He stated the brand drives the business to the area. He said they have to find an architectural style that they can present to the brand hotel that will convince them to come to this town. Dr. Smunt clarified his main concern is with the east and west elevations. He asked if would be possible to design something a bit more complimentary to the era of the downtown area, but still have an appeal to the hotel brand.

Mr. Rasmussen noted local residents may only shop in particular stores or visit restaurants once every few months, whereas a hotel offers new customers on a near daily basis.

Mr. Gibson agreed getting retail into the area may not be feasible. He said having the hotel will be good for the City, and felt they could work on the design a bit to make the concept work.

Chairman Norris stated he was in favor of doing something that is on the cutting edge of having something downtown to get excited about, but still tie it in with the area. Mr. Rasmussen said he was going to work with the hotel to get the east and west elevations toned down a bit from the contemporary era.

Ms. Malay reiterated her concern for the success and longevity of the Hotel Baker. If the City and other groups are going to get involved in bringing tourism downtown, they need to have some shopping available. She said this is why she is concerned over losing shopping on First Street. If they allow the hotel concept, she said they need to address how they are going to work with what is presently available, and how to make it successful. They need put their efforts into bringing tourism to the downtown area. Otherwise, adding another hotel does not make much sense.

Mr. Pretz said the Commission's job is to consider development of properties without the restrictions of having to consider the competitor.

Mr. Bobowiec expressed concern over having a "white elephant" sitting on First Street if the hotel fails. He asked what they would do with the space if that happens. Mr. Rasmussen said the hotel firmly believes in the business plan and doesn't think this is a big concern. Mr. Bobowiec said the original plan was for permanent residents to help draw business to the local establishments. Mr. Rasmussen said other buildings in the area are helping do that, but hotel guests will eat out more often than local residents.

Chairman Norris read the Commission's action item. He asked if they were ready to provide a recommendation to the Plan Commission. Mr. Rasmussen said he preferred they wait on a vote on the preliminary plan until he comes back with new architectural renderings.

A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to recommend to Plan Commission approval of the size, scale, and mass of Building #2. [At the request of the applicant, the Commission did not provide a recommendation on the PUD Preliminary Architectural Plans for Building #2. The Commission will consider revised architectural plans at a later meeting.]

A motion was made by Mr. Withey and seconded by Mr. Pretz to recommend to Plan Commission approval of the PUD amendment to allow a hotel use on the first floor of Building #2 and that the hotel use is appropriate for the site. Motion passed by a vote of 4 ayes to 2 nays, with Mr. Bobowiec and Ms. Malay voting nay.

Building #3 Discussion:

Mr. Marshall presented his drawings. Building #3 is designed to look like a series of buildings. He said this was done due to the size and scale of the building, and to keep a unique look for Sterling Bank, which will locate at the south end of the building. He is using a mix of steel and brick. The remaining elevation is very simple. He noted they are still working on the condos so the windows may get moved around. The first floor will contain office space.

Mr. Rasmussen stated the bank will use this location as their corporate headquarters in Illinois. They will have staff from other locations coming into town.

Mr. Withey was pleased with the overall concept and is fine with the proposed uses.

Dr. Smunt said this isn't too different from the original approved plans and felt this was even better. He said he would like to see fewer casement windows.

Mr. Gibson said the balconies would not be unusable for a few months of the year due to the river bugs. He asked if there was something that could be done to give the residents some accessible outdoor space. He also asked if there was any potential use of the rooftop. Mr. Rasmussen said they looked into having a rooftop bar associated with a main floor restaurant, but

the numerous code requirements prevent that as an option. Mr. Marshall said it might be possible with the residential portion of the building.

Ms. Malay felt they were headed in the right direction, but questioned the depth of the staggered elevations. She noted the building across First Street looks a bit phony and asked to avoid a similar look.

Mr. Bobowiec and Mr. Pretz both said they are fine with this plan.

Chairman Norris stated they did a great job with the bank portion of the building.

A motion was made by Dr. Smunt and seconded by Mr. Gibson with a unanimous voice vote to recommend to Plan Commission approval of the PUD amendment to allow bank and office uses on the first floor of Building #3.

A motion was made Dr. Smunt and seconded by Ms. Malay with a unanimous voice vote to recommend to Plan Commission approval of the size, scale, and mass of Building #3.

A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to recommend to Plan Commission approval of the PUD Preliminary Architectural Plans for Building #3.

12. Additional Business from Commissioners or Staff

- a. Landmarks research**
- b. 2016 Projects Discussion**
 - i. Residential Design Guidelines update**
 - ii. Survey of Pottawatomie area**
 - iii. City Council Tour**
 - iv. Nantucket initiatives**

A motion was made by Mr. Pretz and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to table all #12 agenda items until the next meeting.

13. Meeting Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday, July 6, 2016 at 7:00 P.M. in the Committee Room.

14. Public Comment

15. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.