

**Meeting Minutes of the Design Review Board (DRB)
Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 5:30pm
Dr. TK Gregg Recreation Center**

Attendance

Board Members Present

- Lauren Rogers, Chair
- Danny Balon
- Brian Sanders
- Jean Crowther
- Lukas Hauser (arrived at approximately 6:00 PM)

Staff Present

- Fredalyn Frasier, Planning Director
- Dominick Calace, Planner I

Others Present

- Paul Mills, Site Design, Inc.
- Zed Heydenburg, Site Design, Inc.
- Mike Osman, Steele Group Architects
- Members of the public

Call to Order

Chair Rogers called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM and conducted roll call. The Chair stated that public notice of the meeting had been provided in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the City of Spartanburg Zoning Ordinance. General meeting procedures and public comment rules were reviewed.

Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Ms. Crowther and seconded by Mr. Balon, the agenda was approved by a vote of 4-0.

Approval of Meeting Minutes (January 6, 2026)

On a motion by Ms. Crowther and seconded by Mr. Sanders, the meeting minutes from January 6, 2026 were approved by a vote of 4-0.

Old Business

None.

New Business

DRB-25-020-00012 – Railyards Development – Preliminary Conceptual Approval

The Design Review Board received a request for Preliminary Conceptual Approval of the proposed development, Railyards Apartments, located at the intersections of West St. John Street & Wofford Street (Tax Map Sheet: 7-12-09-347.00, 7-12-09-328.00, 7-12-09-329.00), zoned D-T5 (Downtown Urban Center).

- **Owner:** Wakefield Buick
- **Applicant:** Fitch Irick
- **Agent:** Site Design, Inc.

Applicant Presentation

Paul Mills and Zed Heydenburg of Site Design, Inc., along with Mike Osman of Steele Group Architects, presented the proposed Railyards Apartments project. The development consists of approximately 177 multifamily residential units across three buildings on a former mill site. The project includes surface parking, amenity areas, a pool, dumpster enclosure, and associated infrastructure improvements.

The applicant explained that the site presents several constraints, including:

- A stream bisecting the property requiring buffer protection
- A railroad corridor along the eastern edge
- An existing deep sewer trunk line that cannot be relocated
- South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) access limitations on West St. John Street

Due to these constraints, multiple ordinance exceptions were requested, including reduced setbacks, frontage buildout limitations, parking location within a side yard, driveway width, and streetscape standards.

Architectural materials include brick veneer at the base, fiber cement board-and-batten and lap siding above, and articulated massing intended to reference the site's railroad history. The primary building fronting West St. John Street includes resident amenity and leasing spaces intended to activate the street frontage.

Board Discussion

The Board engaged in extensive discussion focused on the following major topics:

Site Access & Traffic

- Board members expressed significant concern about ingress and egress limitations, noting that the site allows multiple entry points but limited exit movements due to SCDOT constraints.
- The Board discussed the potential for driver confusion, improper movements, and congestion, particularly during peak hours.

Planning Department

- Members emphasized the importance of the forthcoming traffic study and encouraged further exploration of alternative access configurations, including possible connections to Brawley Street or consolidation of access points.

Parking & Screening

- The Board focused on six parking spaces located near the primary driveway entrance, noting concerns about visibility from West St. John Street and potential conflicts with vehicle stacking.
- Members requested additional visual documentation, including renderings or sections, to demonstrate how parking would be effectively screened from the public right-of-way.
- Tree preservation along West St. John Street was strongly encouraged, with confirmation requested that only one or two trees would be removed if absolutely necessary.

Pedestrian Connectivity & Downtown Integration

- Multiple members stressed that, given the site's proximity to downtown, the project should better support pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.
- Concerns were raised that the development currently functions more as an isolated, vehicle-oriented site rather than an extension of downtown.
- The Board encouraged clearer, more direct pedestrian routes from the building to the sidewalk, downtown, and nearby bicycle infrastructure.

Architecture & Building Design

- The Board generally supported the architectural direction and material palette.
- Several members suggested enhancing the corner element along West St. John Street to further emphasize it as a focal point, potentially through roofline articulation, projections, or additional detailing.
- Window materials and detailing were discussed, with suggestions to explore darker window frames or alternatives that better complement the storefront glazing and overall design.
- Members emphasized proper detailing and flashing at vertical siding transitions to avoid long-term water issues.

Amenities & Site Features

- The Board requested clarification regarding fencing and buffering around the pool area.
- Lighting placement and spillover mitigation were discussed, with staff noting that a photometric plan would be required at final review.
- The Board encouraged consideration of EV charging infrastructure, at minimum through future-ready conduit installation.

Staff Comments

Fredalyn Frasier, Planning Director, reiterated staff's primary concerns regarding:

- Activation of the West St. John Street frontage
- Improved pedestrian and multimodal connectivity to downtown

Planning Department

- Traffic safety related to limited access points and turning movements
- Effective screening of parking areas, noting prior city experience where shrub-only screening had proven insufficient

Staff encouraged continued coordination with SCDOT and further refinement of access and circulation prior to final approval.

Public Comments:

No members of the public spoke in favor or opposition. On a motion by Ms. Crowther and seconded by Mr. Balon, the public comment period was closed unanimously.

Board Action

After deliberation, the Board determined that the project had merit and that the applicant had demonstrated a strong understanding of the site's constraints. The Board elected to grant Preliminary Conceptual Approval with Conditions, allowing the project to advance while addressing key concerns.

Motion

On a motion by Mr. Hauser and seconded by Mr. Balon, the Design Review Board granted Preliminary Conceptual Approval for the Rail Yards Apartments project, with the following conditions:

Approved Exceptions

- Front setback
- Interior side setback (railroad and sewer constraints)
- Frontage buildout measured at the building line
- Driveway width as required by SCDOT

Conditions for Further Review

- Additional visual documentation demonstrating effective screening of side-yard parking, particularly near the primary driveway
- Continued preservation of existing mature trees along West St. John Street to the greatest extent feasible
- Further exploration of site ingress and egress, informed by the required traffic study, including potential refinement of driveway locations, stacking distances, and circulation patterns. This includes exploration of potential access points along Brawley Street and coordination with SCDOT to evaluate additional traffic control measures along West St. John Street, if warranted.
- Enhanced pedestrian connectivity to West St. John Street, downtown, and nearby bicycle infrastructure
- Architectural refinement of the primary corner element along West St. John Street
- Consideration of EV charging infrastructure (current or future-ready)
- Bicycle parking to be addressed at final approval

The motion passed unanimously (5–0).

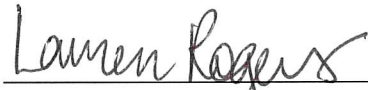
Staff Announcements

Staff provided an update on proposed revisions to the DRB bylaws, including the addition of virtual meeting procedures and standardized meeting scripts. Board members were asked to review and provide comments prior to formal adoption.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Sanders and seconded by Mr. Balon, the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Adjourned meeting at 6:55 P.M.



Lauren Rogers, Chair