

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

Attendance

Board Members Present

- Lauren Rogers, Chair (arrived at 5:45pm)
- Jean Crowther, Vice Chair
- Danny Balon
- Brian Sanders
- Lukas Hauser

Staff Present

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

Others Present

- Scott Johnston, Johnston Design Group
- Melanie Anderson, Johnston Design Group
- Zed Heydenburg, Site Design, Inc.
- Members of the public

Call to Order

Vice Chair Crowther 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 Mr. Hauser and seconded by Mr. Balon, the agenda was approved by a vote of 4-0.

Approval of Meeting Minutes (February 3, 2026)

On a motion by Mr. Balon 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-26-020-00001 – Converse Street Apartments – Preliminary Conceptual Approval

The Design Review Board received a request for Preliminary Conceptual Approval of the proposed development, Converse Street Apartments, located 120 E Kennedy St, zoned D-T6 (Downtown Urban Core).

- **Owner:** NHE
- **Applicant:** Johnston Design Group

Applicant Presentation

Scott Johnston of Johnston Design Group presented the proposed project on behalf of the development team. The project proposes a 48-unit affordable housing development on the corner of Converse Street and Kennedy Street in downtown Spartanburg.

The proposed building ranges from five to six stories, reflecting the slope of the site as Converse Street rises toward Main Street. The building would include residential units throughout, with ground-floor amenity spaces and a leasing office located near the corner to create an active street presence.

Key elements of the project include:

- Brick at the base of the building with fiber cement siding above
- A contextual architectural palette intended to match nearby downtown buildings
- An interior courtyard providing outdoor amenity space for residents
- Residential units along portions of the ground floor
- Leasing office and amenity spaces located at the Kennedy and Converse intersection to activate the corner
- Screening of rooftop mechanical equipment and ground-level waste facilities
- Parking to be provided through access to the adjacent municipal parking garage

The applicant highlighted several design considerations and requested ordinance exceptions related to:

- Ground-floor residential units within the DT-6 district
- A blank wall condition along portions of Converse Street
- Residential entrances located at grade along Kennedy Street
- Streetscape width requirements and landscape treatments along Kennedy and Converse Streets

The applicant noted that the design remains conceptual and will be further refined prior to final review.

Board Discussion

The Board discussed several elements of the proposal:

Streetscape and Sidewalk Design

Board members focused extensively on sidewalk widths and streetscape treatments, particularly at the corner of Kennedy and Converse Streets where grading changes and utility infrastructure create spatial constraints.

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Discussion included:

- The location of existing utility poles and their interaction with proposed landscaping and sidewalks
- The narrow sidewalk conditions at certain points along the corner
- Potential adjustments to landscaping zones to provide more pedestrian space

Board members expressed interest in exploring alternative landscaping treatments, including narrower planting strips, planters, or tree grates, to balance pedestrian comfort with streetscape design.

Ground Floor Residential Entrances

The Board discussed the two proposed residential entrances along Kennedy Street that would be located at grade rather than elevated above the sidewalk.

Members acknowledged that the site's topography limited the ability to provide traditional stoops or raised entries but encouraged refinements to improve privacy and residential character. Suggestions included:

- Using opaque or residential-style doors rather than commercial-style glazing
- Exploring design elements that provide visual separation between units and the sidewalk

Blank Wall Condition

The Board reviewed the request for a blank wall condition along a portion of the Converse Street frontage. Members discussed potential opportunities to add visual interest through brick detailing, patterning, or other architectural treatments.

While some members suggested exploring creative elements such as artwork or material variation, others noted that the grade change and adjacent windows already reduced the visual impact of the blank wall condition.

Landscaping and Tree Wells

Board members questioned the proposed four-by-six foot tree wells along Kennedy Street, noting that trees cannot be planted within the sight triangle at the intersection. The Board suggested reconsidering the planting configuration to maximize sidewalk space while maintaining adequate landscaping.

The applicant indicated a willingness to revisit the streetscape design and return with revised options at final review.

Parking Garage Connection

The Board also discussed the integration of the adjacent city parking garage stair access into the project and potential improvements to lighting, visibility, and security around that connection.

Staff Comments

Planning Director, Fredalyn Frasier noted that the applicant had addressed many of staff's initial comments but that additional refinement was still needed.

Staff requested further clarification and refinement regarding:

- Sidewalk widths and landscaping along Kennedy Street

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- Design solutions for the ground-floor residential entrances
- Treatment of the blank wall condition along Converse Street

Staff indicated they would continue working with the applicant prior to final review.

Public Comments:

No members of the public spoke in favor or opposition.

On a motion by Mr. Balon and seconded by Ms. Crowther, the public comment period was closed unanimously.

Board Action

Following deliberation, the Board determined that the project was appropriate to advance to the next stage of review with refinements.

Motion

On a motion by Mr. Balon and seconded by Ms. Crowther, the Design Review Board granted Preliminary Conceptual Approval for the Converse Street Apartments project with the following actions regarding requested exceptions:

Approved Exceptions

- General Design Principles – Housing: To permit ground-floor residential units in the DT-6 district
- Facade Treatment: To permit a blank wall condition along the Converse Street frontage
- Raised Entries: To permit two residential entrances along Kennedy Street that are located at grade, with the condition that revised renderings show more residential-style opaque doors

Not Approved / To Be Revised

- Required Streetscape Exception related to streetscape width and landscaping configuration along Kennedy Street

The Board requested that the applicant:

- Revisit landscaping options along Kennedy Street
- Reevaluate sidewalk widths at the corner of Kennedy and Converse Streets
- Show the location of existing utility poles and incorporate them into revised plans

The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Staff Announcements

Staff presented the updated 2026 Design Review Board Bylaws for consideration.

On a motion by Mr. Hauser and seconded by Mr. Balon, the updated bylaws were approved unanimously (5-0).

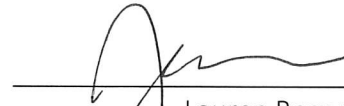
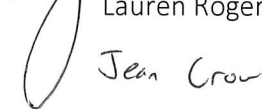
Adjournment

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

Adjourned meeting at 6:35 P.M.


Lauren Rogers, Chair

Jean Crowther, Vice Chair