

Meeting Minutes of the Design Review Board (DRB)
Tuesday, December 5, 2023, at 5:30 PM
City Council Chambers

The Design Review Board (DRB) on Tuesday, December 5, 2023, at 5:30pm. The following Board Members were in attendance: **Lauren Rogers, Tori Wallace-Babcock, Lucy Lynch, Alexander Newman, and Lukas Hauser**. Representing the City of Spartanburg's Planning Department was **Martin Livingston, Community Development Director; Nan Zhou, Planner II; and Tia Keitt, Planner II**.

Roll Call:

Ms. Rogers: Lauren Rogers

Ms. Babcock: Tori Wallace-Babcock

Mr. Newman: Alexander Newman

Ms. Lynch: Lucy Lynch

Mr. Hauser: Lukas Hauser

Ms. Lynch: Per the Freedom of Information Act, public notice of this meeting has been published, posted and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the requirements of the City of Spartanburg Zoning Ordinance. We have one item on the agenda for new business and no old business.

Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Ms. Rogers and second by Mr. Newman, the agenda was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

Ms. Rogers: Motion to approve.

Mr. Newman: Second

Ms. Lynch: All in favor of approving the amended agenda say aye?

Attendees: Aye.

Ms. Lynch: Okay so the amended agenda is approved. Minutes from October 3rd meeting?

Approval of Meeting Minutes for November 7, 2023

On a motion by Ms. Rogers and second by Mr. Hauser, the minutes was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

Ms. Rogers: Motion to approve minutes from November 7, meeting.

Ms. Rogers: Second

Ms. Lynch: All in favor of approving the minutes of the November meeting?

Attendees: Aye.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

DRB-23-020-00008 – The Design Review Board (DRB) has received a request for Full and Final Approval for the proposed Spartanburg County Public Library – Headquarters Expansion and Planetarium located in the DT Zone (Civic District) at 151 S. Church Street (Tax Map Sheet: 7-12-21-074.00). Owner: Spartanburg County Library / Applicant: Adam Flynn and Sarah Stevens, McMillan Pazdan Smith.

GENERAL PROJECT OVERVIEW

The proposed civic building expansion project is on a 4.99 acre parcel at the corner of Broad Street and South Church Street.

AUTHORITY

This project is zoned Civic. Formal design review and approval by the Design Review Board is required.

Because of the unique characteristics of the Civic/Landmark Building, it shall be subject to Design Review in accordance with Section 2.4. As part of this review process, the applicant may request modifications from the applicable district standards. However, all such modifications shall otherwise conform to the general principles for Civic/Landmark buildings below:

- If indicated on the Downtown Master Plan, they must comply with the recommendations therein.
- They should be sited to terminate a street vista whenever possible and must incorporate appropriate prominent features, designs, and entrances to celebrate a visual termination.
- They should incorporate detailing and materials that are authentic to the intended style.
- A pedestrian plaza, courtyard, or similar landscaped area may be substituted for a required building frontage and minimum setback line.
- Building entrances for civic buildings may be raised above the street elevation and accessed via a monumental stair.
- They should respect the character of the fronting streets through the provision of a pedestrian-friendly orientation including clear entrances from the street and permeable street walls with adequate windows (no blank walls).

Preliminary Review was issued on August 1, 2023 with the following conditions:

- Resolution of the streetscape along Broad Street
- Presentation of design suggestions to mitigate the blank wall condition along Broad Street

DETERMINATION OF COMPLETENESS

- Application complete

EXCEPTIONS

- 3.3.2.a Front Building Setback – Maximum setback of 6 ft – *Setbacks range from 7 ft 9 in to 35 ft*
 - *Approval Granted Previously*

- 6.4.4.a Minimize Blank Walls – Expanses of blank walls may not exceed 20 feet in length – *Proposed blank wall along Broad Street is 28 ft*
 - *Conditional Approval Granted Previously Subject to Design Alternatives – See Commentary*
- 6.4.4.c Transparency Zone – Glazing (transparent windows or doors) must extend at least 60% of the total façade width – *Proposed glazing along Broad Street is less than 60% (primarily due to the 28 ft blank wall)*
 - *Approval Previously Granted*
- 8.1 Streetscape – Minimum 12 ft zone with trees in wells / preferred 16 ft zone
 - *Modification Requested*

CODE REVIEW

A. Use Standards: The proposed use is permitted by right.

B. District Standards:

- **3.3.1 Lot Configuration:** *Compliant*
- **3.3.2 Primary Building Standards:** *Maximum setback of 6 ft is proposed to be exceeded*
- **3.3.4 Building Height:** *Compliant*
- **3.3.5 Permitted Parking Location:** *Not applicable*
- **3.3.6 Building Frontage:** *Shopfront - permitted*

C. General Standards:

- **4.1 Civic/Landmark Buildings:**
 - If indicated on the Downtown Master Plan, they must comply with the recommendations therein. – ***Compliant***
 - They should be sited to terminate a street vista whenever possible and must incorporate appropriate prominent features, designs, and entrances to celebrate a visual termination. – ***Compliant***
 - They should incorporate detailing and materials that are authentic to the intended style. – ***Compliant***
 - A pedestrian plaza, courtyard, or similar landscaped area may be substituted for a required building frontage and minimum setback line. – ***Compliant***
 - Building entrances for civic buildings may be raised above the street elevation and accessed via a monumental stair. – ***Compliant***
 - They should respect the character of the fronting streets through the provision of a pedestrian-friendly orientation including clear entrances from the street and permeable street walls with adequate windows (no blank walls). – ***Conditional Exception Granted***

D. Lot/Site Standards:

- **5.1.1 Lot Frontage:** All lots must front on a street, square, or common open space. ***Compliant***

- **5.1.2 Corner Lots:** Buildings located at street intersections must place the main building, or part of the building, at the corner. ***Compliant***
- **5.1.3 Pedestrian Entries from Frontage Line:** Buildings must have their principal pedestrian entrances on a frontage line. ***Compliant***

E. Utilities and Trash Containment:

- **5.2.1 Underground Utilities:** Compliance presumed
- **5.2.2 Solid Waste Storage Areas:** Compliance presumed
- **5.2.3 Mechanical and Utility Equipment:** Compliant

F. Building Standards:

- **6.1.1 General Design Principles - Connectivity:** Exception Conditionally Granted
- **6.1.1 General Design Principles - Downtown Should be Urban:** Compliant
- **6.1.5 General Design Principles - Put People First:** Streetscapes should be composed of wide sidewalks for walking, seating, public art, and landscaping. ***Exception required - see additional comments***
- **6.2 Required Building Design Standards:**
 - **6.2.1 Architectural Style:** *Compliant*
 - **6.2.2 Compatibility:** *Compliant*
 - **6.2.3 Proportions:** *Compliant*
 - **6.2.4 Wall Materials:** *Compliant*
 - **6.2.5 Façade Treatment:** *Compliant*
 - **6.2.6 Building Entrances:** *Compliant*
- **6.4 Specific Building Design Standards for Mixed-Use and Commercial Buildings in D-T5**
 - **6.4.1 Roof and Eaves:** *Compliant*
 - **6.4.2 Canopies/Awnings:** *Compliant*
 - **6.4.3 Encroachments:** *Compliant*
 - **6.4.4 Ground Level Detailing**
 - **a. Minimize Blank Walls:** Expanses of blank walls may not exceed 20 feet in length. (A “blank wall” is a facade that does not contain transparent windows or doors.) - ***Exception required - see additional comments***
 - **c. Transparency Zone:** Glazing must extend from the corner of the front facade for a depth equal to 60% of the length of the building ***Exception granted***
 - **6.4.5 Materials:** *Compliant*

G. Parking:

- **Not Applicable**

H. Streetscape and Site Landscaping:

- **8.1 Required Streetscape:** 16 ft streetscape zone with a minimum 16 ft sidewalk and trees planted in wells consistent with downtown standards (40 ft on-center).
Exception required - see additional comments

I. Signage: Not applicable.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR BOARD CONSIDERATION

- **Blank Wall Condition along Broad Street:** The proposed 25-foot-wide blank wall along Broad Street contains a stairwell for emergency egress. At their previous meeting, the DRB expressed concern for the proposed condition and requested that the design team consider a treatment to mitigate this condition that could consider the following treatments, or others as appropriate:
 - Windows in the stairwell (presumably fire-rated) – an irregular pattern combined with LED backlighting could make for a very interesting public art element
 - Signage structure on which banners advertising library or community events can be hung
 - A vegetative element such as a green screen (vines trained to grow up the wall) or some foundation plantings
 - A public art component (e.g., applied sculpture, lighting, mural, video wall)

The proposed treatment appears to depict a modular brick pattern that breaks the smoothness of the wall but still utilizes the same brick type and color. We have been told by the applicant that lighting would also be included but as of this writing were awaiting the details. In our view, this is a bit too subtle a treatment, at least what we've seen thus far, relative to other blank wall conditions that have been approved by the DRB.

We recommend that the DRB provide further guidance to the applicant and request that they come back at a later date to review the final design proposal.

- **Substandard Streetscape along Broad Street and Church Street:** The Broad Street area is rapidly changing and there is a need to improve the streetscape conditions to accommodate the future activities along that corridor. The DT-6 calls for a 16-foot-wide streetscape zone and a 12-foot-wide streetscape zone in DT-5, consistent with the other frontages along Broad Street. Given how many people we expect to be walking along Broad Street, specifically to approach the Library expansion, we do believe that the ideally configuration warrants the DT-6 standard streetscape. However, we do recognize the existing conditions and believe that the 12 foot streetscape section is the bare minimum condition with a goal of trying to retrofit as close to the 16 foot-wide streetscape as possible.

The proposed streetscape condition remains substandard and actually takes a step backward by removing some of the existing trees that provide a buffer between the

sidewalk and the roadway. In addition, the proposed hardscape seems to duplicate pathways and inserts retaining walls in the streetscape that unnecessarily segments the overall dimension to create two substandard pathways.

We recommend that this area be reconsidered to consolidate the public sidewalk and private ramp area along Broad Street. Because this is a public infrastructure partnership with the City, we recommend the DRB defer finalization of this requirement to the City staff to achieve a minimum of a consistent 12 foot streetscape. If an exception is still required, staff would bring it back to the DRB.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend final approval of the building and Church Street site elements conditioned on a future approval by the DRB of the final proposed treatment of the Broad Street blank wall condition. We further recommend that approval of the Broad Street site elements be deferred to the staff for final resolution.

Applicant:

Todd Stevens, Spartanburg County Public Library
Adam Flynn, McMillan Pazdan Smith
Sarah Stevens, McMillan Pazdan Smith
David McCutcheon, McCutcheon Engineering

Public Comments: None.

Discussion:

The primary concern for the Design Review Board was the blank wall. Several recommendations were made about lighting for the blank wall which did not appear on the plans and possible other possible lighting, windows, and banner designs that could be a feature of the wall. The street landscaping and sidewalk was a tough issue to address. There did not appear to be a lot of options to address the sidewalk and landscaping on Broad Street.

A motion was made by Ms. Wallace-Babcock, seconded Mr. Newman for Full and Final Approval with an exception for the sidewalk and landscaping by a vote of 5-0. The blank wall would return to the DRB for review and approval.

Staff Announcements:

DRB Meeting location beginning January 2024 will be in the Spartanburg County Council Chambers. The alternative meeting location if there are conflicts with Council Chambers will be at the Dr. T.K. Gregg Recreation Center.

Adjourn meeting at 6:39 PM



Lucy Lynch, Chairperson