

Meeting Minutes of the Design Review Board (DRB)
Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 5:30 PM
Dr. TK Gregg Recreation Center

The Design Review Board (DRB) on Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 5:30pm. The following Board Members were in attendance: **Jean Crowther, Alexander Newman, Lauren Rogers and Tori Babcock**. Representing the City of Spartanburg's Planning Department was **Fredalyn Frasier, Planning Director, and Nan Zhou, Planner II**.

Roll Call:

Mr. Newman: Alexander Newman

Ms. Crowther: Jean Crowther

Ms. Rogers: Lauren Rogers

Ms. Babcock: Tori Babcock

Ms. Rogers: With the Freedom of Information Act Compliance, public notification of the Design Review Board 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.

Amend the Agenda:

On a motion by Ms. Babcock to approve and seconded by Mr. Newman the case has been moved to the top of the agenda list by a vote of 4 to 0.

Approval of Meeting Minutes for May 6, 2025.

On a motion by Mr. Newman to approve and seconded by Mr. Hauser, the amended minutes were approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

Old Business:

DRB-25-020-00005 – The Design Review Board (DRB) has received a request for Full and Final Approval for the proposed building, First Baptist Church of Spartanburg, located at 250 E Main Street (Tax Map Sheet: 7-12-11-006.00) with a zoning designation of DT-5 Zone (Downtown Urban District). Owner: Chad McAllister / Agent: Burgess Metcalf, LS3P.

GENERAL PROJECT OVERVIEW

The application is for various renovations, selective demolition, and expansions to the ~6.4 acre main campus of the First Baptist Church. This is the first review for Preliminary Approval.

AUTHORITY & APPLICABILITY

This project is zoned D-T5 and is subject to the Civic/Landmark Building standards in Section 4.1. Formal design review and approval by the Design Review Board is required.

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:

1. If indicated on the Downtown Master Plan, they must comply with the recommendations therein.
2. 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.

3. They should incorporate detailing and materials that are authentic to the intended style.
4. A pedestrian plaza, courtyard, or similar landscaped area may be substituted for a required building frontage and minimum setback line.
5. Building entrances for civic buildings may be raised above the street elevation and accessed via a monumental stair.
6. 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).

DETERMINATION OF COMPLETENESS

- Application is complete.

EXCEPTIONS REQUIRED & PREVIOUSLY APPROVED

The current proposal requires two Exceptions from the D-T Code:

1. **6.4.4.a Minimize Blank Walls & 6.4.4.c.2 Transparency Zone:** To permit in excess of 20 feet of building that lacks transparent windows or doors not exceeding maximum four (4) feet in height above the sidewalk grade along North Dean Street and to have less than 60% of total frontage in ground-level transparent glazing.
2. **8.1 Required Streetscape:** To permit a portion of Dean Street to remain unimproved to the required standard of 12 feet in total width with an 8 foot sidewalk.

CODE REVIEW

Deficiencies noted, or exceptions or deviations required, are noted in *blue italics*

- A. **Use Standards:** The proposed use (office) is permitted by right in D-T5.
- B. **District Standards:**
 - **3.3.1 Lot Configuration:** Frontage Build-Out: 60% except in Side Yard Parking Overlay – Compliant
 - **3.3.2 Primary Building Standards:** Compliant
 - **3.3.4.a Building Height:** Compliant
 - **3.3.5 Permitted Parking Location:** Compliant
 - **3.3.6 Building Frontage:** Shopfront – Permitted
- C. **General Standards:**
 - **4.1. Civic/Landmark Buildings:** *Compliant except (f) below*
 - a. If indicated on the Downtown Master Plan, they must comply with the recommendations therein. Compliant
 - b. 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
 - c. They should incorporate detailing and materials that are authentic to the intended style. Compliant
 - d. A pedestrian plaza, courtyard, or similar landscaped area may be substituted for a required building frontage and minimum setback line. Compliant
 - e. Building entrances for civic buildings may be raised above the street elevation and accessed via a monumental stair. Compliant

- f. 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). *See note regarding exception to Section 6.4.4*

D. Lot/Site Standards:

- **5.1.1 Lot Frontage:** All lots must front on a street, square, or common open space - Compliant
- **5.1.3 Pedestrian Entries from Frontage Line:** Buildings must have their principal pedestrian entrances on a frontage line. - Compliant
- **5.1.4 Setbacks:** Front and side setbacks must be consistent with surrounding buildings. - Compliant
- **5.1.5 Adjacent Lots:** Grading between lots to be sensitively considered. – Compliant

E. Utilities and Trash Containment:

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

F. Building Standards:

- **6.1.1 General Design Principles - Connectivity:** *See note regarding façade transparency.*
- **6.1.2 General Design Principles - Housing:** Not applicable
- **6.1.3 General Design Principles – Mixed-Use Infill & Redevelopment:** Compliant
- **6.1.1 General Design Principles - Downtown Should be Urban:** Compliant
- **6.1.5 General Design Principles - Put People First:** Compliant
- **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 all D-T5 Mixed-Use and Commercial Buildings**
 - **6.4.1 Roof and Eaves:** Compliant
 - **6.4.2 Canopies/Awnings:** Compliant
 - **6.4.3 Encroachments:** Compliant
 - **6.4.4 Ground Level Detailing:** 60% Glazing in Transparency. *Exception required*
 - **6.4.5 Materials:** Compliant

G. Parking:

- **7.1 Parking Area Access:** Parking must be accessed from a rear alley or a secondary frontage unless approved as a Discretionary Review. (D-T5 & D-T6) – Compliant
- **7.2 Bicycle Parking:** *Compliance to be confirmed with Final approval*

H. Streetscape and Site Landscaping:

- **8.1 Required Streetscape:**
 - **D-T5: 12 ft zone with 8 ft wide sidewalk and trees in wells:** *Exception required*

- **8.2 Parking Area Landscaping:** Not applicable

I. Signage: Staff level approval

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR BOARD CONSIDERATION

Ground Level Detailing of Transept along Dean Street Façade: There is a portion of the new transept along North Dean Street that does not have any windows or doors in excess of 60 feet. This condition is caused by a higher finished floor inside the church building relative to the sidewalk in that area and the desire to align the proposed windows along the same datum line as the existing windows. As a result, there is an area that appears to be at least 8 feet in height below the lowest point of the windows – hence the blank wall condition. While the window treatment is architecturally consistent with the main building, we do not have any specific design suggestions to resolve that condition, particularly because the sidewalk is already substandard and there is no room for ground level landscaping that would otherwise soften the transition.

Ground Level Detailing of Entry Vestibule along Dean Street Façade: The proposed new entry vestibule along North Dean Street is also considered a blank wall condition because it does not have any windows or doors for a span of approximately 30 feet.

There is a portion of the new transept along North Dean Street that does not have any windows or doors in excess of 60 feet. At present, there are three openings shown. The one to the left appears to go into spaces that is at the same finished floor level as the church. The middle one appears to be an elevator shaft. The one to the right (north) in the image below appears to open into space at the finished floor of the church as well as the entry vestibule. It appears to be possible to insert an asymmetrical pattern of windows that can extend to the sidewalk level and satisfy the transparency requirement (see suggestion below). We recommend a similar treatment on the other side of the entry as well. There are, of course, other options that could be considered for windows at the ground level.

Required Streetscape along North Dean Street Frontage: The existing streetscape conditions consist of an approximately 6-7 foot-wide sidewalk at the back of curb and no street trees. The proposed improvements from Main Street to the southern edge of the transept expansion would insert two trees in wells with compliant, 12 foot streetscape section. The segment across the frontage of the transept and entry vestibule remains non-compliant. The remaining sidewalk is proposed to be improved slightly to widen from 6-7 feet to 8 feet in total width.

ACTION FOR BOARD CONSIDERATION

A Preliminary Approval by the DRB will require the following exceptions:

- **6.4.4.a Minimize Blank Walls & 6.4.4.c.2 Transparency Zone:** To permit in excess of 20 feet of building wall that lacks transparent windows or doors not exceeding maximum four (4) feet in height above the sidewalk grade along North Dean Street and to have less than 60% of total frontage in ground-level transparent glazing. [Note the alternative for the entry vestibule wall]
- **8.1 Required Streetscape:** To permit a portion of Dean Street to remain non-compliant with only an 8 foot sidewalk (no street trees).

Applicant:
Spencer Dixon.

Public Comments: None.

Discussion:

The Board acknowledged that the applicant has been responsive in addressing previous architectural feedback and noted that the revised design is progressing well. Remaining variances were left open for continued discussion at final review, specifically regarding the sidewalk alignment along Dean Street, the omission of a tree at Dean Street, and transepts providing less than 60% transparency near the building entrance.

The primary concern focused on the entry area, specifically the recessed space between the transept extension and entrance, which creates an unnecessary hyphen or gap. The board noted that this recessed, shadowed nook may raise safety concerns due to its closed-in appearance. A recommendation was made to consider a low street screen or fence similar to the one used near the playground to better define and secure the space. The applicant confirmed the dimensions as approximately 6' by 8'. While the architectural reasoning was understood, the board emphasized improving the street-level experience. It was noted that simple fencing, consistent with existing site features, could resolve this issue, particularly if paired with emergency lighting and interior light for visibility.

The board was pleased with the addition of the canopy, which was seen as a direct response to earlier feedback. This also mitigates the lack of a shade tree in that location, supporting their prior sidewalk and streetscape discussions. The two main exceptions under consideration for final are:

1. **Glazing and transparency** falling below the required 60%, and
2. **The 12' streetscape zone**, which includes an 8' sidewalk and appropriate entries and tree wells.

A motion was made by Ms. Babcock, seconded by Mr. Newman, to grant Full & Final Approval with variances for the blank wall and the 8' sidewalk along Dean Street. The motion passed by a vote of 4-0.

New Business:

DRB-24-020-00021 – The Design Review Board (DRB) has received a request for Preliminary Conceptual Approval for the proposed town-homes, Townes on Howard, located at 535 Howard Street (Tax Map Sheet: 7-12-05-113.00, 7-12-05-113.02) with a zoning designation of DT-4 Zone (Downtown Urban District). Owner: GVL Property Group, LLC / Agent: Jenny Reyes, VanRock Holdings, LLC.

A motion was made by Ms. Babcock, seconded by Mr. Newman, to defer the case 24-020-00021 from GVL Property LLC and VanRock Holdings with a vote of 4-0.

Staff Announcements:

Introducing Lennon Murphy the summer Intern. Tori Babcock's last day, as she has served on Design Review Board for some time.

Adjourned meeting at 6:58 P.M.


Lauren Rogers, Chair *Pro Temp.*
Lukas Hayser