

**CITY OF SAVANNAH
HISTORIC DISTRICT BOARD OF REVIEW
REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PETITIONER: Gunn Meyerhoff Shay Architects
12 East Bay Street
Savannah, GA 31401

FILE NUMBER: 15-001384-COA

ADDRESS: 600 East Bay Street

PIN: 2-0005-02-006

ZONING: B-B

STAFF REVIEWER: Leah G. Michalak

DATE: November 8, 2017

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The petitioner is requesting approval for amendments to New Construction Part 1: Height and Mass and New Construction Part II: Design Details of a six to eight story hotel on the property located at 600 East Bay Street. The building will be located between Bay and River Streets with a rain garden area between this building and the adjacent new hotel building to the east. The petitioner has expressed their intention is to receive LEED Platinum level certification. All exterior lighting and signage indicated in the submittal packet are not a part of this review.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The subject property was historically the site of Novelty Iron Works of Rourke and Sons which was established between 1884 and 1888. The site evolved to contain a number of wood and masonry buildings of varying heights through 1960. The buildings were demolished in circa 1960 for the headquarters for Savannah Electric Power Company (SEPCO). The SEPCO building was built in 1962 by Stone & Webster and was designed by Emory Ireland.

The property is located outside the National Historic Landmark District, but within the local Savannah Historic District. There are few contributing buildings within the immediate context, except across Bay Street in the Trustees Garden area.

PROJECT CONTEXT:

On April 8, 2015, the HDBR denied the request for demolition of the SEPCO building “because the building meets the criteria for historic status and the information provided regarding asbestos abatement does not justify the demolition.”

On May 28, 2015, the petitioner appealed the decision of the HDBR to the Zoning Board of Appeals [File No. 15-002278-COA]. The ZBA reversed the HDBR’s decision stating that the

Board “abused its discretion in denying the demolition permit to the petitioners solely on the unrealized historic potential of the SEPCO building.”

After the denial of the demolition at the April HDBR meeting, the petitioner requested a continuance for New Construction Part I: Height and Mass for the proposed new hotel. Staff recommended several revisions to the Part I design. One item still needs to be addressed with this Part II review: *Add a transparent fence along the rain garden adjacent to East Bay Street to better form a wall of continuity.* An existing (proposed to be restored) building canopy that remains from the SEPCO building’s demolition is located between the two buildings. However, the canopy doesn’t span the full width.

At the December 9, 2015, HDBR Meeting Part I: Height and Mass was approved with conditions as follows (*petitioner comments are italicized*):

1. Staff recommends that, at a minimum, incorporate windows on the east façade, minimally within the architectural bays at the corners which will be highly visible from Bay and River Street.

We have added windows at each corner on the east façade.

2. Ensure that the vertical dividers between the balconies are transparent above each balcony railing.

The vertical dividers are powder coated metal frames and clear glass as shown in note “21” on the elevations.

3. Incorporate additional solids on the ground level between the two supporting columns to better form a wall of continuity at the valet parking area along River Street.

We have shown a solid header between the columns (below the canopy) and then utilized the Louver system to further create a wall of continuity in this area. This is also detailed in section 2/A301.

4. Revise the 11 foot tall solid wall along the urban garden area on the River Street façade to be more transparent so that the passage between the two buildings is further accentuated.

We have revised the stair to run down the middle of the urban garden and end in a central plaza. This stair will be open to the public. There is a low-walled rain garden along River Street that does not obstruct the view between the two buildings as you can see in the North East Rendering and on detail 6/A051.

5. Restudy the angled structural members at the second floor above the first floor valet area; staff recommends that they be a shape that is more compatible with other structural members on the building.

These have been restudied to no longer angle and terminate at the canopy.

6. Ensure that the parapet wall has a string course and coping.

There is string course and coping as shown on 2/A202. We have chosen not to show a string course on the wood siding parapet because it does not meet the contemporary aesthetic of the wood siding.

7. Reinstate the tree lawns along Bay Street.

This has been shown on the site plan.

8. Electrical vaults, meter boxes, and communications devices shall be located on secondary and rear facades and shall be minimally visible from view.

These are on secondary and rear facades and shall be minimally visible from view.

9. Provide mechanical screening details if any of the roof equipment will be visible from any public right-of-way.

See detail 2/A311. There is no other visible equipment from any public right of way.

10. Revise the window rhythm on the north and south facades. The symmetrical pattern, with the largest window radiating from the center, is not compatible with the other contemporary elements proposed on the building.

We studied various window patterns and the one shown is most in keeping with the contemporary elements of the building. The window pattern relates on all sides. In order to accommodate this condition, we revised the floorplan to move the larger width accessible room. This allowed us to have a repeating window rhythm of the same window type. This in turn caused the pilaster and ground level storefront pattern on the South, North, West, and Courtyard Elevations to respond to this revision.

11. Restudy the Bay Street (south) façade to be more prominent as a “primary” façade.

We have restudied this façade to make the corner entry element a prominent feature. It carries the language of the façade elements, but this is the only wood siding element that rises above the angled canopy/roof. It forms a wooden corner visually anchoring the façade to the ground and creating a clear entry. The wood siding continues wrapping the corner utilizing fixed louvers over the guest room windows. This is best viewed in the South West renderings. These louvers then became part of the language of the façade materials and are utilized in secondary methods on other elevations of the building.

12. Restudy ground floor door locations throughout the building to ensure that piers do not terminate over doors on the floors above.

No piers terminate over doors.

Also at the December meeting, the Board recommended approval to the ZBA for a variance from the following window standard:

The distance between windows shall be not less than for adjacent historic buildings, nor more than two times the width of the windows. Paired or grouped windows are permitted, provided the individual sashes have a vertical to horizontal ratio of not less than 5:3.

In order to maintain the proposed areas of “white” space on the north, east, and west facades. The ZBA granted the variance on February 25, 2016 [File No. 16-000577-ZBA].

Furthermore, the applicant provided a list of changes to the proposal that effect Part I: Height and Mass as follows:

1. Valet entry - The vestibule and the entry shape changed to reduce number of turns. Two columns were added to support the structure above.

2. A separate entry and elevator was added through the urban garden for public access to the roof top Food & Beverage. This necessitated a canopy to provide protection from the weather.
3. Bay Street Entries changed for functional reasons.
4. Each guestroom will be utilizing a Vertical Package Air Condition System (VTACs). These require vents on the exterior. These aluminum vents will be painted to match their associated façade material. We have incorporated these into the architecture in various ways throughout the building:
 - a. North = incorporated into the pilasters
 - b. West = incorporated into the pilasters and centered between windows.
 - c. South = incorporated into the pilasters and where the previous tall skinny window was located on the wood entry area.
 - d. East = in the recesses
 - e. Courtyard Elevations (South and North Only) = incorporated into the pilasters and where the previous tall skinny window was located.
5. East Elevation glazing in recesses replaced with wood louver system or vents.
6. Reduced storefront height at some locations on top level to be more in keeping with adjacent windows.

FINDINGS:

The following Part I standards from the Historic District Section (8-3030) of the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance apply to the conditions and changes from the Part I approval:

Visual compatibility factors. *New construction and existing buildings and structures and appurtenances thereof in the historic district which are moved, reconstructed, materially altered, repaired or changed in color shall be visually compatible with structures, squares and places to which they are visually related. The following factors shall be considered in determining the visual compatibility of such a building, structure or appurtenance. These factors shall not be the basis for appeal of an adverse decision. Greater weight shall be given to adjacent historic structures.*

Rhythm of solids to voids in front facades. *The relationship of solids to voids in the facades visible from the public right-of-way of a structure shall be visually compatible with the contributing structures to which the structure is Visually Related.*

Staff recommends that more voids be added to the full width of the end architectural bays on the east facade. This façade will be highly visible from both River and Bay Streets and the lack of fenestration is not compatible.

Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projection. *The relationship of entrances, porch projections, and walkways to structures shall be visually compatible with the contributing structures to which they are Visually Related.*

Restudy the Bay Street (south) façade to be more prominent as a “primary” façade. The applicant states: “We have restudied this façade to make the corner entry element a prominent feature... It

forms a wooden corner visually anchoring the façade to the ground and creating a clear entry.” Staff does not feel that these changes make this façade more prominent as a primary façade. The interior uses proposed on this façade will not be used from the exterior by guests or the public and staff does not feel that the lobby on this façade is prominent enough as it still does not face Bay Street and has gotten even smaller. It is not likely that this entrance will be used as it enters directly into a guest corridor.

Walls of continuity. *Appurtenances of a structure such as walls, wrought iron, fences shall form consistent walls of enclosure along a street.*

Incorporate additional solids on the ground level between the two supporting columns to better form a wall of continuity at the valet parking area along River Street. A header and a louver system have been added since the Part I approval. Staff does not feel that this adequately addresses the recommendation to strengthen the wall of continuity as the valet area will still be highly visible through the louvers.

The monumental stair between the buildings has been revised to run down the middle and end in a central plaza. This stair will be open to the public. A partial width 6 foot high fence (2 foot masonry base and metal above) is proposed along River Street; staff recommends extending the fence to create a wall of continuity.

An existing (proposed to be restored) building canopy that remains from the SEPCO building’s demolition is located between the two buildings. However, the canopy doesn’t span the full width; therefore, staff recommends extending a fence to create a wall of continuity along Bay Street.

Design standards. *The following design standards shall apply to new construction, additions, and alterations to historic and non-historic buildings and structures. Though certain building materials are prescribed herein, the Board may approve alternative materials that are not listed as prohibited upon a showing by the applicant that the material or product is visually compatible with historic building materials and has performed satisfactorily in the local climate.*

Height. *The number of stories as shown on the Historic District Height Map (illustrated in Figure 3) shall be permitted. Provided, however:*

Buildings throughout the Historic District, which front a street, shall be at least two stories, except in the Beach Institute Character Area or for accessory buildings which front a lane.

Non-habitable rooftop structures such as church spires; cupolas; chimneys; tanks and supports; parapet walls not over 4 feet high; and Mechanical or Access Structures [see Definitions (a)] shall not be considered a story.

Habitable space within a roof or structures above a roof used other than to enclose stairways or elevator machinery shall be considered a story.

The standards are met. The building is six to eight stories in height and no habitable space is proposed above the 8th stories. Elevator overruns, stair overruns, solar PV arrays, and mechanical equipment are proposed above the roof line.

The distance between windows shall be not less than for adjacent historic buildings, nor more than two times the width of the windows. Paired or grouped windows are permitted, provided the individual sashes have a vertical to horizontal ratio of not less than 5:3.

The standard is not met on the east façade; staff recommends that more voids be added to the full width of the end architectural bays. This façade will be highly visible from both River and Bay Streets and the lack of fenestration is not compatible.

Roofs. *Roofs shall comply with the following:*

Parapets shall have a string course and a coping.

The building has a coping throughout but not a string course. The applicant states that they “have chosen not to show a string course on the wood siding parapet because it does not meet the contemporary aesthetic of the wood siding.” However, staff does not feel the wood siding is visually compatible nor is the lack of a string course.

Service Areas, Utilities and Mechanical Systems. *Service Areas, Utilities and Mechanical Systems shall comply with the following:*

Through-the-wall air conditioners may be installed in new construction when they are incorporated into the design of the window system and screened by a decorative grate.

The standard is not met. The VTAC vents are not proposed within the design of the window system and do not appear to be screened by a decorative grate.

Electrical vaults, meter boxes, and communications devices shall be located on secondary and rear facades and shall be minimally visible from view.

This information was not provided on the drawings; add locations to the site plan.

Character Areas.

Factors Walk. *The boundaries of the Factors Walk Character Area are the Savannah River on the north; the centerline of Bay Street on the South; the centerline of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard on the West and the centerline of Randolph Street extended on the East. Development within the Factors Walk Character Area shall comply with the following:*

... a building or buildings that meet the definition for Large- Scale Development are eligible for a maximum of one additional story above the Historic District Height Map provided that one or more of the following criteria in section [(n)(16)e.(ii)2.] are met.

All Mechanical or Access structures shall be contained within the additional story.

This standard is not met. Elevator and stair overruns as well as enclosed mechanical equipment is proposed on the roof. Per the applicant's submittal packet, there will be "...public access to the roof top Food & Beverage." Access to the roof other than for maintenance does not meet the intent of this standard.

Multiple ground floor active uses permitted in the base zoning district (including but not limited to retail, office, lobby, restaurant) span the length of the façade on all street fronting elevations (not including lanes) and maintain individual primary exterior entrances.

The petitioner has selected this standard. The uses have changed since the previous approval and the Bay Street lobby no longer fronts the street; it appears that a storage room or another non-public space now fronts the street; the standard is no longer met. The ground floor active uses proposed that maintain individual primary exterior entrances are:

River Street: vestibule/lobby/reception (three entrances), gathering (lobby-type area, one entrance), and library/media salons (two entrances).

Bay Street: entry/lobby (one entrance), event space (four entrances), and health (one entrance). The fire stair exit does not apply nor does the unidentified space to the west of the stair that does not have an exit to the exterior.

New construction on Factors Walk is exempt from commercial and large-scale development standards.

The following Part II standards from the Historic District Section (8-3030) of the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance revised apply:

Visual compatibility factors. *New construction and existing buildings and structures and appurtenances thereof in the historic district which are moved, reconstructed, materially altered, repaired or changed in color shall be visually compatible with structures, squares and places to which they are visually related. The following factors shall be considered in determining the visual compatibility of such a building, structure or appurtenance. These factors shall not be the basis for appeal of an adverse decision. Greater weight shall be given to adjacent historic structures.*

Relationship of materials, texture and color. *The relationship of materials, texture and color of the facade of a structure shall be visually compatible with the predominate materials, textures, and colors used on contributing structures to which the structure is Visually Related.*

The materials proposed for this building are: stucco walls, phenolic wall panels (faux wood), zinc wall tiles, faux wood canopies. Faux wood louver system, exposed concrete balcony decks, glass railings and balcony dividers, and cement plaster soffits. Staff does not feel that these materials are visually compatible with the industrial character of the area.

Design standards. *The following design standards shall apply to new construction, additions, and alterations to historic and non-historic buildings and structures. Though certain building materials are prescribed herein, the Board may approve alternative materials that are not listed as prohibited upon a showing by the applicant that the material or product is visually compatible with historic building materials and has performed satisfactorily in the local climate.*

Entrances. *Building entrance locations shall comply with the following:*

Placement. *Door frames shall be inset not less than three (3) inches from the exterior surface of the façade of a building, excluding façades with wood siding.*

The standard is met.

Materials.

Permitted: Doors shall be made of wood, clad wood, glass, or steel. For commercial storefronts see Section (n)(7).

Prohibited: Vinyl doors; steel-pressed doors simulating wood grain; half-moon, semi-circular, diamond or similar glass insets in doors; boarded-up doors or entrance ways.

It appears that all doors are aluminum storefront.

Windows and Commercial Storefronts. *The following standards shall apply to all development.*

Windows.

Windows facing a street shall be double or triple hung, awning, casement or Palladian.

The standard is not met. Fixed picture windows are proposed.

Double glazed (simulated divided light) windows are permitted on nonhistoric facades and on new construction, provided, however, that the windows meet the following standards: the muntin shall be no wider than 7/8 inch; the muntin profile shall simulate traditional putty glazing; the lower sash shall be wider than the meeting and top rails; extrusions shall be covered with appropriate molding.

In new construction windows shall be constructed of wood or wood clad or metal. Solid vinyl windows shall be prohibited.

Staff requests additional information. Pella 450 window is proposed but no other information was provided and this window has not been submitted for review by the Board in the past. A full-sized sample and detailed specifications are requested.

"Snap-in" or between-the-glass muntins shall not be used.

It does not appear that any muntins are proposed.

Window sashes shall be inset not less than three inches from the exterior facade of a building, excluding exterior surfaces with wood siding.

The standard is met. Windows are proposed to be inset 3 inches.

Awnings. *Awnings shall comply with the following:*

Non-residential awnings shall be constructed of canvas, other equivalent cloth, metal, or glass.

The standard is not met for some of the awnings which appears to be partially constructed of wood louvers.

Roofs. *Roofs shall comply with the following:*

Roofs shall be covered with standing seam metal, slate, tile or asphalt shingles.

The intent of the standard is met as the roof material is not visible due to the parapet walls.

Balconies, stairs, stoops, porticos, and porches. *Balconies, stairs, stoops, porticos, and porches shall be subject to the following criteria:*

Balusters shall be placed between upper and lower rails, and the distances between balusters shall not exceed four inches. For one and two family dwellings the height of the railing shall not exceed 36”.

The railings are 42 inches high. Provide additional information regarding balusters and railings.

Balconies, stoops, stairs (including basement stairs), porticos and porches within the public right-of-way shall be required to obtain an encroachment license from the City of Savannah.

Ensure that an encroachment license is obtained for any of these items within the public right-of-way.

Fences, Trellises and Walls. *Fences, trellises and walls shall comply with the following:*

Walls and fences facing a public street shall be constructed of the material and color of the primary building; provided, however, iron fencing may be used with a masonry structure.

A masonry base shall be used with iron fencing.

Trellises shall be wood, metal or wire.

Barbed wire, razor wire, chain link, vinyl, and PVC fencing are prohibited.

Ensure that all fences and walls meet the standards.

Character Areas.

Factors Walk. *The boundaries of the Factors Walk Character Area are the Savannah River on the north; the centerline of Bay Street on the South; the centerline of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard on the West and the centerline of*

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Randolph Street extended on the East. Development within the Factors Walk Character Area shall comply with the following:

Buildings shall be made of brick, ballast stone or wood;

The standard is not met. The exterior wall materials proposed are: stucco, phenolic wall panels (faux wood), and zinc wall tiles. Although the Board may approve alternative materials that are not listed as prohibited upon a showing by the applicant that the material or product is visually compatible with historic building materials and has performed satisfactorily in the local climate, staff does not feel that these materials are visually compatible. The building should be constructed from masonry to reflect the industrial character of the area.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the request for amendments for New Construction Part I: Height and Mass of a six to eight story hotel on the property located at 600 East Bay Street with the following conditions to be resubmitted with Part II: Design Details:

1. Add more voids to the full width of each end architectural bay on the east façade.
2. Restudy the Bay Street (south) façade to be more prominent as a “primary” façade.
3. Incorporate additional solids on the ground level between the two supporting columns to better form a wall of continuity at the valet parking area along River Street.
4. Extend the River Street fence between the buildings to create a more consistent wall of continuity.
5. In addition to the remaining SEPCO building canopy, extend a fence along Bay Street between the buildings to create a more consistent wall of continuity.
6. Incorporate a string course on all roof parapet walls.
7. Incorporate the VTAC vents within the design of the window system.
8. Indicate electrical meter/equipment locations on the site plan.
9. Redesign to ensure that all mechanical and access structures are contained within the bonus story.
10. Redesign to ensure that the Bay Street façade has active uses with individual entrances along the entire width of the street (not including the exit stairs).

Continue the request for New Construction Part II: Design Details of a six to eight story hotel on the property located at 600 East Bay Street in order for the applicant to consider the following:

1. Redesign all exterior building materials to be visually compatible with the industrial character of the area and to be masonry to meet the Character Area material standard.
2. Redesign all windows to be an operable type as permitted in the standards. Provide a full-sized sample and detailed specifications for the proposed Pella 450 window as this window has not been submitted for review by the Board in the past.
3. Redesign the storefront systems to extend from the sill or from an 18 to 24 inch tall base of contrasting material and to be inset a minimum of 4 inches from the face of the building to the glazing.
4. Redesign the wood louver awnings to be constructed of canvas, other equivalent cloth, metal, or glass.
5. Provide additional information regarding balusters and railings.
6. Ensure that all fences and walls meet the standards.

EIH: lgm