



SAVANNAH HISTORIC DISTRICT
BOARD OF REVIEW

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
July 22, 2015 1:00 p.m.
Meeting Minutes

JULY 22, 2015 HISTORIC DISTRICT BOARD OF REVIEW SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

HDRB Members Present: Keith Howington, Chair
Ebony Simpson, Vice-Chair
Debra Caldwell
Dr. Nicholas Henry
Andy McGarrity
Dr. Robin Williams

HDRB Member Not Present: Zena McClain, Esq., Parliamentarian
Justin Gunther
Stephen Merriman, Jr.
Marjorie Weibe-Reed
Tess Scheer

MPC Staff Present: Ellen Harris, Director of Urban Planning and Preservation
Leah G. Michalak, Historic Preservation Planner
Sara Farr, Historic Preservation Planner
Mary E. Mitchell, Administrative Assistant

I. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

1. [Call to Order and Welcome](#)

Mr. Howington called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. He outlined the purpose and role of the Historic District Board of Review and laid out the ground rules for the hearing of the petition. Normally, after the staff makes its presentation the petitioner and public have ten minutes each to present their positions. But, today he is asking the Board to extend the petitioner's and public comments to 15 minutes each.

II. SIGN POSTING

III. CONSENT AGENDA

IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

VI. ITEM(S) REQUESTED TO BE REMOVED FROM THE FINAL AGENDA

VII. CONTINUED AGENDA

VIII. REGULAR AGENDA

2. [Petition of Patrick Shay for Gunn Meyerhoff Shay, PA | 14-001846-COA | 201 Montgomery Street | Amendment to New Construction: Part 1 Height and Mass](#)

Attachment: [14-001846-COA Staff Report July 22, 2015.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Submittal Packet- drawings.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Context - Sanborn Maps.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Elbert Ward.pdf](#)

Attachment: [PREVIOUS Submittal Packet- Drawings.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Submittal Packet- elevations without accessory building.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Submittal Packet- Updated Model Images.pdf](#)

Mr. Patrick Shay was present on behalf of the petition.

Ms. Ellen Harris gave the staff report. The petitioner is requesting amendments to Part I Height and Mass approval of the City of Savannah's Cultural Art Center as follows:

1. The overall footprint of the building has been reduced from 34,428 square feet to 27,383. This reduction occurs primarily on the western portion of the building;
2. The reduction in square footage allows for a 4500 foot, 75 x 60 foot wide parcel along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Oglethorpe Lane to be subdivided from the larger tract of land and released by the City of Savannah for private development;
3. Along Oglethorpe Avenue, the curved semi-circle element with vertical fins has been retained but the number of bays reduced from seven to six and reduced in height from two stories and 30 feet tall to one story and 20 feet tall. Additionally, the fenestration pattern has been revised;
4. Along Montgomery Street, the main entrance is in the same location at the former Oglethorpe Lane, but the configuration has been revised. The tower element has been reduced from 28 feet to 30 feet and the fenestration pattern revised;
5. Along Hull/Turner Street, the fenestration pattern has been revised and the height of the building has been reduced from 30 feet to 28 feet;

6. The height of the theater has also been reduced in height from 56 feet, six inches to 41 feet eight inches, and reduced in mass as well; and
7. Along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, the building features a blank wall along the "new" property line. A glass entrance is retained at Oglethorpe Lane, although the piazza area with staircase has been eliminated.

Ms. Harris stated that the Review Board at its meeting of May 14, 2014, reviewed the project and approved the alterations to the existing building on the site with the following conditions to be submitted to staff for review and approval:

1. Provide additional information on mortar composition and analysis, replacement brick and cleaning techniques.
2. Conduct a repointing test patch as described for staff review and approval.

Ms. Harris said that no changes are proposed to the existing building beyond what has been approved. Additionally, the Board approved Part I Height and Mass with the following conditions to be submitted with Part II Design Details:

1. Restudy ways to activate the street along MLK Jr. Blvd;
2. Restudy the tower height;
3. Restudy the walls of continuity at the northwest corner of the site;
4. Provide additional and more consistent and regular openings or other architectural features along Turner Boulevard;
5. Center the south entry on Turner Boulevard within the bay.

Ms. Harris stated that on May 13, 2015, the Board granted a one-year extension. She reported that staff recommends approval of the amendments to Part I Height and Mass of the Cultural Arts Center at 201 Montgomery Street with the following conditions to be submitted with Part II Designs Details:

1. Additional height to the curved façade along Oglethorpe Avenue to have the appearance of at least a two story structure;
2. Incorporate an iconic element in the skyline above the main entrance. This could include the restoration of the tower element or another design;
3. Revise the rhythm of solids to voids on the Montgomery Street to be more consistent and eliminate the green screen;
4. Incorporate a green screen or other architectural element along the blank Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard façade to provide visual interest; and
5. Revise the northern entrance wall to the entrance along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard be better integrated into the design of the building.

Because the project is otherwise visually compatible and meets the standards.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Shay thanked the Board for having the Special Called Meeting today. He also thanked his staff who were present with him. He said that they have worked closely with every department within the City of Savannah to come up with the design. Mr. Shay also thanked Savannah City Council for voting to add additional funding to the project. They have been working with the City's construction manager and program manager to ensure that what they present to the Review Board is feasible.

Mr. Shay addressed the staff's recommendations as follows:

1. Add additional heights to the curve façade along Oglethorpe Avenue to have the appearance of at least a two story structure.

Mr. Shay explained that the height at 20 feet is very tall. It is not as tall as before with 30 feet, but they think it is appropriate. Clearly, it is not a single-story space. They modeled the studios that are behind it with the beautiful north light that can handle having that much glass. They think the architectural volume is as high as they can make it. If it is absolutely necessary, they can extend the parapet but he does not want to do anything that is deceiving.

2. Incorporate an iconic element in the skyline above the main entrance. This could include the restoration of the tower element or another design.

Mr. Shay stated that they feel they have done this. From the model, the Board can see that it rises. They will show the Board today that they also plan to do something similar on the other side in the other direction.

3. Revise the rhythm of solids to voids on the Montgomery Street to be more consistent and eliminate the green screen.

Mr. Shay said they believe the green screen is appropriate here when they view the model from the corner rather than straight on the elevation.

4. Incorporate a green screen or other architectural element along the blank Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard façade to provide visual interest.

Mr. Shay stated that hopefully the façade will get covered up relatively soon with another building; however, they believe this is a good suggestion and they will explore this further for design development.

5. Revise the northern entrance wall to the entrance along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to be better integrated into the design of the building.

Mr. Shay showed the Review Board an illustration that he feels is better than the illustration provided in their packets. He said as the Review Board can see, the corner element at 46 feet is iconic. It may not be a tower such as the one on the SCAD museum, but as you come across town or come to the site, you will not miss it. A special place will be set aside for the events that are upcoming; will be displayed; used on these and incorporated into the architecture. He explained that they are not yet committed to these as a color scheme, but the idea of using lighter and darker masonry to further accent the iconic element, including the white space that is behind where they think the sculpture garden will be so that there can be a prominent piece of public art on this corner.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Danielle Meunier of the Historic Savannah Foundation (HSF) stated they

feel this proposed design as compared to the previous design has lost a bit of its monumentality to the reduction of height and mass. The HSF suggested that the proportions be restudied so that some of the elements could be brought back into the design as the building is being proposed as a monumental building. Particularly, when looking at the elevation it has a squat appearance. Ms. Meunier said along Montgomery Street and the curve façade along Oglethorpe Ave, they prefer to see more height here. The building could use a more grander appearance as opposed to the utilitarian nature of the roundhouse use for the curb façade on Oglethorpe Avenue, which they believe would be more appropriate.

Ms. Meunier said the HSF agrees with the staff's recommendation regarding adding height to the curb façade on Oglethorpe Avenue so that it will have the appearance of a two-story structure. Initially, it read better as a two-story structure. The building appears flat and shorter. The HSF also agrees with incorporating an iconic element in the skyline above the main entrance. They believe that the curved displayed walls are moving in a good direction, but they believe that overall the façade could have some more height and be dynamic. The HSF also agrees with adding more solids to voids on Montgomery Street to be more consistent. They believe that the Turner façade has been improved in terms of the solids to voids. Regarding the green screens and incorporation of architectural element, the HSF prefers to see some type of architectural articulation over green screening. They believe an opportunity is here to provide some type of precast stone decoration or some relief of alternating material as the building will represent the arts. Something can be done different.

Ms. Meunier said with the design details, the HSF suggests incorporating a relief in the façade and incorporate differentiated materials. She stated that has they have seen in the renderings, they are in favor of having differentiating colors to create more visual interest.

Mr. Daniel Carey of the Historic Savannah Foundation (HSF) said he believes that the architect has done an outstanding job given the resources that he and his team have been given. Mr. Carey said the team has been handcuffed by a budget. He understands this has he, too, has operated a non-profit agency. However, as they all agree, this is a monumental opportunity, it is a monumental building, and they are about to make a monumental mistake. A mistake will be made if they do not give this building every resource that it deserves in terms of executing something that we all will be proud of for decades.

Mr. Carey said the Jepson Center is a beloved building and it went through literally years of review to come up with the excellent product that we have. He believes that they all are proud of this product. The SCAD Art Museum is a beloved building which waited for the right opportunity, had the right resources behind it, and an outstanding building was executed. Mr. Carey stated that he fears another Civic Center will be built, which is not beloved but much derided. This is because they are defaulting or settling. The message to City Council and City leadership is that they should not settle and that they should have the political courage to find and allocate the resources in the right direction. Put things on hold long enough to come up with something that is excellent and not something that is just good enough. This is literally a once in a lifetime opportunity to build a cultural arts center for this city at the literal gateway to our city. This is like the first impression. Therefore, what should we have for our first impression. Should it be good or great?

Mr. Carey said again that he believes this needs to be put on hold. If the Review Board has

to request that the petitioner continue this, then this what they need to do as this is not ready. The architect has done an excellent job with what he had to work with. They have already seen a compromised product from last time. Now, what will really happen when they get further into this? What will be executed? He explained that it is rare for the HSF to be arguing for height, but this building needs to be taller. Green screens are basically apologies. This building should never apologize. They need an inspirational building because it will host inspirational things. Therefore, it should be place that we flock to and not a place that we just go to.

Mr. Carey stated that maybe the City representatives are here as a courtesy, but if this is their opportunity to comment, then they are using it to say that this does not just needs to go back to the drawing board as it is not a critique of what is in front of them, but a critique of why they are in this position.

Dr. Henry said the Review Board does not control the budget.

Ms. Lisa Grove, Director and CEO of the Telfair Museum, stated that she appreciates the kind words about the Jepson Center. They are extremely proud to use this building as a real culture center for the community. The Telfair Arts Museum has been serving this community for almost 130 years. She, too, believes that this is an incredible opportunity for the community. However, she agrees with Mr. Carey that they take this opportunity to do the building the right way. They need to look at how they can make this a fantastic resource for the city and not something that is a compromise. They need to look at will it serve the grand mission and grand vision that was behind the original intent when the taxpayers voted to build this building. Ms. Grove believes the building has become much less than what it could be. She said they care deeply concerned about the role that arts can play in the community and they see the opportunity to have this literally in their backyard as a way to create more access to the arts; a more organic connection to the Telfair Museum and to the Jepson Center. As the Board saw from this drawings, this is really a connector between the Telfair Square all the way to the other art organizations on the MLK corridor. But, it will be a missed opportunity if they don't really take the time to think about this and ensure that it fulfill its role. This should not be a building that is within the limited budget, but a building that actually achieves its mission that provides for the community.

Ms. Grove suggested that the dialogue continue. They want to be a part of the dialogue of helping and ensuring that the connections are made as a part of a larger vision of the role of visual performing arts in our community. She said they are very interested in this project and are watching this very carefully. They support the HSF's recommendation for the City leadership to take another look at this project. They, too, encourage the Historic District Board of Review to do what they can to put pause on the project and allow for further discussion.

Mr. Howington explained that an opportunity is here to created a grand monumental building and Mr. Shay is bound by budget. But he wanted to remind the public that the Board cannot vote on something because of the budget. They have to look at things related to the ordinance. Some things maybe better and some things maybe worse, but the Board is not bound by budget restraints.

Mr. Shay said the comments that were made were directed to the specific architecture. He

believes they have stated that they will take a look at some of the elements. However, they want to do this in Part II where they begin to talk about the materiality so that they can talk about what a green screen is or is not. As far as the height and mass, they are comfortable with what they presented today. It is not something that is just going to be acceptable or settling, but something that is going to be excellent. They want to have the opportunity to prove this to the Board in Part II. If the Board votes today and is inclined to make a vote that is condition upon certain elements be explored further, then obviously they will take that to heart. The City representatives are present today as more than a courtesy because they want to hear from the Board. He believes the Board heard from the HSF and the Telfair group. He said they are good listeners, but at this point he is not prepared to make a rebuttal on behalf of the City of what their resources are nor what are their intentions. Mr. Shay said he believes that everybody wants this to be an excellent building.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Dr. Henry said he agrees with the staff's recommendations. He likes the old design.

Dr. Williams said he feels strong about the entrance. He agrees with curving the roundhouse element.

Ms. Simpson said she agrees that the project has missed the gateway. When she looks at this project, she believes it is reminiscence of the Civic Center. She agrees that the new design has a squat appearance.

Mr. McGarrity agrees with the comments regarding the green screening.

Mr. Howington asked the staff to comment on the petitioner's response regarding revising the northern entrance wall to the entrance along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to be better integrated into the design of the building.

Ms. Harris stated that believes the petitioner's response addresses the staff's concern.

Mr. Howington said he finds some of the elements of this building more exciting than the previous building. With the other building he liked the tower element and the cut-through. He has some concerns with the solids and voids along Montgomery Street.

Dr. Henry said this is a monumental building.

Ms. Caldwell believes the building needs to be restudied.

Board Action:

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review does hereby approve the amendments to the New Construction Part 1 Height and Mass for the Cultural Arts Center at 201 Montgomery Street with the following conditions to be submitted with Part II Design Details:

1. Add additional height to the curved facade along Oglethorpe Avenue to have the appearance of either a two story structure or other design solution to achieve greater height.
2. Incorporate an iconic element in the skyline above the main entrance such as increasing the height of the curved walls and providing greater symmetry;
3. Revise the rhythm of solids to voids on the Montgomery Street and Turner Boulevard to be more consistent and eliminate the green screens;
4. Incorporate a green screen or other architectural - PASS element along the blank Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. façade to provide visual interest;
5. Revise the northern entrance wall to the entrance along Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., be better integrated into the design of the building (as illustrated in the petitioner's presentation).
6. Design the service yard walls along MLK and Turner Boulevard to allow for future development above;
7. Explore all opportunities to increase the overall height of the building; and
8. To the extent possible, expose the foundations of the Wetter House and incorporate into the garden design.

Because the project is otherwise visually compatible and meets the standards.

Vote Results

Motion: Robin Williams

Second: Andy McGarrity

Debra Caldwell	- Nay
Nicholas Henry	- Aye
Keith Howington	- Abstain
Andy McGarrity	- Aye
Ebony Simpson	- Nay
Robin Williams	- Aye

IX. REQUEST FOR EXTENSION

X. APPROVED STAFF REVIEWS

XI. WORK PERFORMED WITHOUT A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

XII. REPORT ON ITEMS DEFERRED TO STAFF

XIII. NOTICES, PROCLAMATIONS, and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Notices

3. [Next Regular Meeting - Wednesday, August 12, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. in the Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room, MPC, 112 E. State Street](#)

XIV. OTHER BUSINESS

XV. ADJOURNMENT

4. [Adjournment](#)

There being no further business to come before the Review Board, Mr. Howington adjourned the meeting at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Ellen I. Harris
Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation

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