



Department of Planning and Development

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MINUTES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

Heman Park Community Center

975 Pennsylvania Avenue, University City, MO 63130

6:30 pm; Thursday February 6, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM.

1. Roll Call

Commission Members Present

Absent

Bill Chilton

Sandy Jacobson

Donna Marin

Donna Leach

Christine Mackey-Ross

Robert Klahr

Council Liaison Tim Cusick

Staff Present

City Attorney John Mulligan

Cliff Cross, Director of Planning and Development

Adam Brown, Planner

There was a quorum present.

Mr. Chilton moved to amend the agenda to include discussion regarding Commissioners' terms, term expiration, and attendance.

Ms. Mackey-Ross seconded the motion.

Mr. Cross recommended having this discussion at the regularly scheduled meeting on February 20. He said there would be more information available and this would be appropriate discussion for a regularly scheduled meeting.

Ms. Leach moved to withdraw Mr. Chilton's motion. Ms. Mackey-Ross seconded this motion. The motion to withdraw passed unanimously.

1. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Jacobson asked if changes could be tracked in future minutes. Mr. Cross said staff would redline changes to the minutes in the future

Ms. Mackey-Ross moved to approve the minutes of January 20 as presented. Mr. Klahr seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Old Business

a. File Number: 19-00711

Address: 711 Kingsland Avenue, University City, MO

Applicant: Tristar Companies LLC

Property Owner: Tristar Companies LLC

Request: Demolition Permit Review & Design Review

Thomas Douglas from Tristar presented a new set of proposed designs for the proposed hotel. Toby Headinghaus from Grey Design Group reviewed the new drawings. He said the new designs responded to comments from the last meeting that the building appeared too vertical, incorporated too many elements of the Tru brand, and lacked details in the windows. The applicants had not received the approval of Hilton for these designs. Mr. Heddinghaus presented three design options. The past elevations had much more color than the new designs.

Mr. Heddinghaus explained that the new proposed designs eliminated variations in the building height. The consistent roof elevation expressed horizontality. The intermediate cornice between the 4th and 5th Floor increased horizontality. The window design on the top floor included an arch-top window design. The first-floor windows were made taller. The blue and yellow area on the entrance was gone, giving a more classical look. There would also be new, unique masonry details not visible from these renderings.

The second option incorporated two colors of brick, with the base of the building being a buff, light color of brick with soldier coursing over the windows of this color. The applicants did research and pricing on hotel windows. Given the P-Tech (HVAC) units of the hotel by the window, they determined they would still be able to add additional

mullions in the window. They found that divided light windows would be possible – in this version these windows were added on the first floor.

Ms. Leach asked if the footprint had changed. Mr. Heddinghaus said the only changes were in the elevation details. Ms. Leach asked if there were more details for the landscaping plan. Mr. Heddinghaus said these drawings did not include the full proposed landscape plans.

Mr. Chilton asked about the materials on the windows. Mr. Heddinghaus said they were aluminum (bronze colored). Mr. Chilton asked if the vertical divided light is an implied mullion, Mr. Heddinghaus said these were real mullions. He said the P-Tech unit would be a louvred face. The width of the window frame would be less than 2”

Ms. Marin asked for elevations of the rear of the building. Mr. Heddinghaus said it would look virtually the same as the front of the building, with the same materials.

Ms. Jacobson asked for an elevation showing the surrounding buildings. Mr. Heddinghaus displayed a rendering in the context of the Civic Plaza. Mr. Klahr asked if the darker shaded vertical lines were shadows. Mr. Heddinghaus said yes, that the middle section of the building was recessed. Mr. Chilton asked if the glass was clear, insulated glass, and whether it would have a green tint to it. Mr. Heddinghaus said it would. Ms. Leach asked about the light brick at the base of the building and whether it would match the brick of the Harvard building. Mr. Heddinghaus said yes, they would pull samples of brick on site, and the intention would be to match the brick selection to surrounding buildings.

Mr. Chilton asked if the difference between the height of the proposed building and the existing building was about 8'. Mr. Heddinghaus agreed that it would be about 8' taller than the existing building. He reiterated that it would not be possible to make this a four-story building and maintain the needed room count. Mr. Chilton asked if trees were going across the front of the building. Mr. Heddinghaus said this picture did not show the landscaping plan for the project. He said they would leave some of the trees in the front, and that there would be a generous landscape island at the entrance from the drive-in. Mr. Chilton clarified that the façade in this drawing would be blocked to some degree by mature trees. Mr. Heddinghaus confirmed this. He also pointed out that the rendering included parked cars in front of the hotel.

Ms. Jacobson asked for more description of the detail that was left out of this drawing that would make a significant difference to the look of the building. Mr. Heddinghaus said masonry details up close would make visual difference only from close to the building.

Mr. Klahr asked if they want some direction from the commission as to the designs that were presented. Mr. Heddinghaus said the biggest decision was between one color of brick or two color of bricks. Mr Heddinghaus felt the two colors could help accentuate some of the details in the masonry. Mr. Klahr felt that option two matched the look of the Delmar building in the two colors of brick. Mr. Heddinghaus also noted they were trying to bring the architecture closer to the library, and this design was a happy medium.

Mr. Douglass said the Delmar building had a red brick base with buff brick above and the Harvard building had a stone base with the buff yellow brick above.

Ms. Mackey-Ross said this was a massive improvement over the last design and expressed her appreciation to the applicants.

Ms. Leach said if the color of the bricks could be within the shades of the library and the Harvard building, that would be desirable.

Ms. Jacobson asked if there was a photo of the existing building available. The applicant showed photos of the existing building and of the earlier design proposal. Ms. Leach said she felt the new building compliments the surrounding buildings and does not overshadow City Hall. The color of the window frames remained the same. The Tru Sign had remained the same. Mr. Heddinghaus explained that the sign was an applied sign, not a structural element. Ms. Leach asked if the sign would be lit. Mr. Heddinghaus said it would be.

Ms. Leach asked Mr. Chilton if he was OK with the height of the proposed design.

Mr. Chilton said this new design was much more in keeping with the adjacent buildings and did not compete with City Hall.

Ms. Leach asked if there was any equipment on the roof that would add to the height.

Mr. Heddinghaus said for a hotel there would be very little rooftop equipment at all. There would be a small make-up unit which they would take care to conceal this. Mr. Cross explained that outside of the HPC guidelines, the zoning would not allow mechanical elements to be concealed, so this would be addressed at the administrative level as well.

Ms. Leach opened the discussion to public comments.

Kevin Kirwin, 14 Princeton, felt that these were both handsome schemes. He had some questions for the commissions to ponder. He said if looking at hotels that are built these days, most have a cornice which is used by companies to distinguish the building. He felt the cornice looked more post-modern as in an application of "stuff to architecture". In this design the horizontal band continuing straight across was more subtle. He noted

the base, middle, and top are basic architectural units. He felt the smaller entrance was less appealing and recommended a transom and lights to highlight the entrance more. He also said where the drive-in part of the building was, he felt the line of the cornice should continue across the top to make it more pronounced. He said it would be nice to have brown or tan brick as opposed to red. He asked the commission not to feel compelled to use two colors of brick.

Ellen Hartz, 7450 Washington Avenue asked for a summary of the parking and how many spaces would be in the front and the back. She was concerned about the nature of the neighborhood with parking in front, and also how many spots they would have.

Mr. Heddinghaus showed an aerial view of the proposed site with the parking layout. The parking would be in front on Kingsland and to the side on the north of the building. The wall on Kingsland would be preserved other than where the drive entered.

Ms. Marin asked for the use of the Harvard. Mr. Heddinghaus responded that the use proposed was office and that office and hotel uses would offset each other in terms of parking. Mr. Cross explained that the shared parking zoning ordinance was adopted in May and that these uses are two of the best shared uses. He also said that parking would be factored in the Planned Development process with the Plan Commission.

Ms. Leach clarified that the Harvard building would be offices and no residences.

Don Fitz, 720 Harvard, asked if the hotel were not be viable in a few years, would the use be possible to change to an off-campus dorm for Washington University. Mr. Heddinghaus said that he expected the hotel to be successful. Mr. Cross explained that the Planned Development would lock the use in on this building. Any significant change of that use would require a zoning change.

Mr. Towerman introduced Dave Parmley, Tristar's project partner, who developed the top-rated DoubleTree in the nation in terms of service. He noted that the applicants plan to operate a successful hotel.

Barbara Chiceria, 720 Harvard, thanked the architects. She felt this hotel design was so much better than the earlier version. She agreed with Mr. Kirwin that the single color of brick was preferable.

Jen Jenson, 706 Pennsylvania, was greatly relieved at the improvements in the design. She was still upset to see the oldest school in University City demolished. She was on HPC years ago and felt the commissioners' job was to preserve buildings. She asked were there second, third, fourth opinions on the condition of the building. She asked if the City inspected it and condemned it. She noted the Hawthorne School development and other schools that had been repurposed in the City of St. Louis. She still felt the

Delmar Building could be saved. She felt the tone of the meeting was when this was torn down versus IF it would be torn down. She noted that she was assured the tile murals would be saved and repurposed. She was also glad to see that the walkway up to the school had been incorporated. She asked the commission to reconsider whether it would be taken down.

Ms. Leach asked if the City has any other reports other than from the architect. Mr. Cross explained the owner has the right to request a demolition permit, but the HPC recommendation would be sought. If the City was to condemn the building, the owner would have the responsibility to demonstrate that the building would be able to remain and be functional and safe. Ms. Leach asked if there would be a structural engineer from the City. Mr. Cross explained that if the City condemned a building the owner would probably be required to provide an engineering report on the building proving that it would not need to be demolished.

Mr. Chilton noted a description in the Standards of Review For a Permit To Demolish (Section 400.1670) stated that the Commission may require the applicant to submit documentation to determine whether the property could be rehabilitated with reasonable economic return.

Mr. Cross noted that at the last meeting the Commission had decided not to require any further documentation because the applicant had demonstrated that it would be economically infeasible to rehabilitate the Delmar Building. He said the recommendation of the Commission was to tentatively recommend demolition based on the approval of the design concept.

Mr. Klahr stated that his motion from the last meeting had approved demolition conditionally on the approval of the design. This had been based on the identified challenges of the building including subterranean level of the floor, aging mechanical equipment, alterations blocking natural light, limited ADA accessibility, and lack of usable space due to the placement of the corridors.

Mr. Chilton noted that there are other school buildings in the City in healthy neighborhoods that had been renovated successfully. He felt the Loop in University City was a healthy environment for the conversion of the building. He questioned whether the economic infeasibility had been demonstrated. Mr. Cross restated his understanding that the demolition had been preliminarily approved at the last meeting contingent upon an approved design.

Mr. Klahr noted that although the commission could ask for whatever information they wanted, they had not asked and had taken a vote on the motion with the information provided over the previous two meetings.

Ms. Mackey-Ross noted that the estimated cost per square foot of an office in this building would have had prohibitive cost (over \$40 per square foot). She also noted that the developer owned this building, and the commission's purview did not include determining the use of the building. She said the commission had voted in favor of this at the last building. She felt that if there was another developer who would have developed this in the last ten years they would have already come forward. She felt that this end of the Loop would benefit from a pedestrian-centered hotel at this end of the Loop which would help the businesses in the area.

Mr. Klahr also added that this decision was also about saving the Harvard Building. He felt that this project created a pathway for the Harvard building to be redeveloped.

Mr. Chilton added that this was not just about the building, but about the district as well. He quoted the commission's charge to determine whether this would be "detrimental to the historic district." He said as of now the historic district was intact and questioned whether this modern building would negatively impact the district.

Mr. Klahr asked if the historic district included the annexes behind City Hall, and whether this was newer construction. Mr. Cross said it was part of the district. Mr. Klahr asked for clarity on whether the annex post-dated the library. A member of the audience said the annex did not post-date the library. Mr. Klahr said the annex buildings had a different character from the surrounding buildings.

Ms. Leach asked if there were limits on the uses in the Civic Complex. Mr. Cross explained this would be handled as part of the Planned Development zoning action. This would allow for these uses on that site. The use would be locked in by a Planned Development zoning district. Mr. Klahr cited the Section 400.1630, which laid out the design elements to be considered by the Commission in Review of a Building Permit Application. Mr. Klahr said that at the last meeting the Commission had voted (not unanimously) that the criteria for demolition had been met by the applicant. He reiterated that the two buildings had sat vacant for nearly a decade, and that the design of the new building would meet the standards of compatibility with the district.

Ms. Jacobson said she was concerned by the conditional approval from last meeting for demolition, and the Commission did not have certainty of approval by the Hilton brand of this design, that this project would be completed, or that should this project fail there would be another viable use for the building. She did not want to tear down the building. She quoted Section 400.1670 which lists considerations of the historic value of the building which the Commission should account for in demolition requests. She felt that there has not been enough information to make a good decision in order to determine that demolition was necessary.

Ms. Leach asked if Ms. Jacobson was asking for a certified structural engineer's report before proceeding. Ms. Jacobson said that would be a critical piece of information.

Ms. Marin also asked for assurance from the Tru Hotel chain that this design would be accepted.

Ms. Leach stated that before issuing the demolition permit, the commission would need the assurance of the hotel brand that this design would be accepted. Mr. Chilton noted that the commission had not toured the building, that it was important for the district that there was a lot of history in University City emphasizing education. He felt education was important to the design.

Ms. Mackey-Ross stated that she agreed with these remarks but stated that deteriorating building would not contribute to the district. Ms. Leach said she asked for a structural engineered report weeks before, and the commission did not have one.

Mr. Douglass explained that the structural engineering was not the primary concern, but that the impracticality of the usable space within the building was the primary challenge to the feasibility of development.

Mr. Cross noted that any action of the Commission was on a time clock according to section 400.1680 allowed for 30 days for the Commission to reach a decision on demolition. He also noted the section pertaining to building permits in section 400.1640 which allowed 45 days for a decision to be made. He noted that the 45 days were coming to an end, and that was the reason for the timing of this meeting as well as the possible meeting for community engagement the following week, and another meeting on February 20, 2020 by which time the commission would be obligated to make a recommendation.

Mr. Klahr stated that the vote of three weeks ago, although with disagreement, was voted by majority to allow for demolition contingent on the design criteria being met. He felt that the design presented this evening had come a long way to address some of the Commission's earlier concerns, and that the public response was positive overall, with a few suggestions for improvement that the applicant could take under consideration.

Ms. Jacobson asked if the decision made at the last meeting about the demolition was reversible. Mr. Chilton stated that the Commission had to abide by the criteria set forth in the code.

Mr. Cross noted that the time frame is up on the demolition permit technically, and Mr. Cross has held off on issuing the demolition permit but would be obligated to issue the permit.

Mr. Mulligan stated that the commission is governed by what the ordinance set out as its authority. The application was for both demolition and design, but sought a demolition permit, which is governed by code section 400.1680; “within 30 days of receiving a copy of from the Zoning Administrator”. This clock started in December. He stated that in the event that the commission does not act, the Zoning Administrator must accept the approval of the Commission. If the commission did not make their decision within 30 days, the application was considered approved. If the Commission recommended disapproval, they must submit a written report with evidence for the disapproval based on the criteria standards of the Commission.

Mr. Chilton stated at the December meeting, this was up for design and review. He said Mr. Cross stated that this was a preliminary review. Mr. Cross stated that at the December meeting, the Commission requested to make the demolition contingent on the design review.

Mr. Klahr noted that by majority of the Commission (with a 4-2 vote), the demolition was recommended contingent on the design element.

Mr. Chilton felt the commission was negligent by allowing demolition without a walk-through. Ms. Leach asked if there was any way to schedule a walk-through prior to the meeting on Feb 20. Ms. Jacobson asked if the commission might appeal to the developers – if they are open to revisiting the use. She felt this has not been thoroughly vetted.

Mr. Towerman asked if the ordinance could be varied by agreement. He stated that they had demonstrated their flexibility and reasonableness. He said they filed their application on November 26, and they would have been glad to walk people through the building in the meantime. They had done 19 iterations of the design, which costed money. Since the last meeting, they had put energy into the design of the new building. Their preference was for the commission to give some deference to the applicant that they knew what they were doing. Mr. Towerman also noted that they agreed to an unusual public engagement meeting. Mr Cross clarified that if it came up tonight, the public engagement event would be about the design. Mr. Towerman requested that the commission stand by its decision.

Ms. Leach said she felt it was hard to take down an old building. She wished they had a structural engineers report.

Mr. Klahr made a motion recommending approval of the design as submitted with discussion on the specifics as to which option of the design would be chosen with consideration of the public comments. Ms. Mackey-Ross seconded the motion.

Ms. Marin asked for a guarantee from Hilton chain that these submitted designs would be approved.

Mr. Heddinghaus said if that was made as a condition of approval, then they could bring back approval from Hilton.

Mr. Cross recommended that the Plan Commission at the Planned Development would be able to lock in the design.

Mr. Klahr stated that the monochromatic version seemed to be favored by the public. He would like clarity from the commissioners as to their preference, as well as Mr. Kirwin's recommendations in terms of the structural elements and the color of the brick. Ms. Jacobson said she appreciated the discussion by Mr. Kirwin, and agreed that the color of the brick selected would be important. Mr. Klahr summarized Mr. Kirwin's input; an affinity for the monochrome option, a larger entrance with transom lights, the continuation of the first-level cornice, and the brown/tan brick versus red. Mr. Kirwin said the architect was a good architect and to let them do the work.

Mr. Heddinghaus said he liked the suggestion of the glass transom above the automatic door at the lobby entrance. He also noted that the lighting and the canopy on the entrance would further highlight the entrance. Ms. Leach asked about the lighting of the building. Mr. Heddinghaus described the lighting plan. He said they could continue the lower cornice over the drive-in entrance.

Mr. Klahr pointed out again the district standards from the Commission's purview. Mr. Chilton felt that some of the items in the standards of the Commission had been met, but several had not been met; arrangement of openings, rhythm of elements, and architectural details.

Ms. Leach asked if according to the guidelines if they could hold off on design approval until the meeting on February 20. This would not affect the demolition. Mr. Cross clarified that the action on the demolition permit was a moot point at this point due to the timeline of the demolition process. Ms. Leach said she did not know there was a 45-day timeline on the process before this meeting.

Mr. Klahr revised his motion to recommend the approval of the design based on option one with the comment that the applicant give some thought to height and lighting of the entrance and extension of the cornice across the drive through, and the color of the brick in relation to the surrounding buildings in the district, and that in recommending option one with those additional comments, that the design is compatible with other structures in the district and open spaces to which it may be visually related. Ms. Mackey-Ross seconded the motion.

Mr. Klahr and Ms. Mackey-Ross voted in favor of the motion.

The motion failed by a vote of 4-2.

Mr. Cross explained that the design was not approved. He noted that staff would issue the letter to the applicant noting the decision.

Mr. Mulligan explained that a written report by the Commission approved by motion as to why the application was denied would be needed within a reasonable period of time. Mr. Cross recommended it be presented to the applicant at the meeting on the 20th. Mr. Mulligan noted as an aside that in the event of significant changes in design for a building permit application, the applicant would have to come back to the commission. The Plan Development process could include commissions, and the building permit would also be brought back to the HPC if there was a significant change to the plan submitted.

Mr. Cross explained that prior to issuing a building permit in a historic district, staff would need HPC recommendation. The final plan approval would be granted for the development at the Plan Development process with Plan Commission, which would be a requirement before a building permit was issued. The HPC's comments could be built into the conditions as part of this process. The demolition permit, once issued, could not be stopped. The next step would be to go before the Plan Commission with comments from the HPC.

Ms. Leach suggested that Mr. Klahr, Ms. Leach, Mr. Chilton should meet and create a report. Mr. Klahr declined the option to contribute to the report. The report would be submitted to Mr. Cross.

Mr. Cusick had a few comments about the development. He said Craft Alliance is leaving the Loop, and that the West End will have another vacancy. With the future of the trolley in jeopardy, the perception is that the west end of the Loop is now in decline. The Delmar Building had sat vacant for nine years. He stated the building would stay on the tax rolls with this development. He felt the hotel would be a good brand and this would add to the neighborhood. He said the City needed the economic development in the Delmar Loop and the hotel would bring more business in the Loop. He felt the City needed this development for the Loop.

Ms. Leach asked if there is other business interest in the Loop and whether there were other applications for hotels businesses, etc. to help improve the Loop. Mr. Cusick said that the property in the City's garage was being marketed as one property with one tenant. The Commerce Bank building was bought and may be developed. Mr. Cross

said there are not any other developments within the Loop , but other areas of the City have other applications such as the development at 170 and Delmar. Libbey Tucker, Director of Economic Development, was conducting a hotel feasibility study and had identified this site as a good location.

Ms. Leach asked about the Police Station. Mr. Cusick said they are waiting for a space needs study for the police department which would determine whether the police station would be moved into the Annex.

Ms. Leach thanked Ms. Marin for her service as chair on the commission.

Mr. Cross noted that Mr. Hamilton had been replaced by William Andrews at the last City Council meeting and he would be brought in as soon as Feb 20.

Mr. Cross noted that a new Zoning Administrator was being hired and new documents would be worked on.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:41PM

Prepared by Adam Brown