

A meeting of the Design Review Board was held on **December 8, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.** in the City Hall Planning Conference Room, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Jerry Ashmore, David Karlyk, Eric Brown, and City Historic Preservation Planner Donna Alley. Chairman Donald Starkey and John Dickerson were absent.

In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80(d) as amended, all local media were duly notified of the time, date, place, and agenda of this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Mr. Ashmore called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

MINUTES

The minutes of the November 10, 2011 meeting were presented to the board for review. **Mr. Karlyk made a motion, second by Mr. Brown, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.**

PUBLIC HEARING

717 & 721 Ribaut Road - Requesting a Lot Width Development Design Exception in order to reconfigure three lots to two large lots

Applicant: Walden's Place at Ribaut Road, LLC. (DE11-01).

Libby Anderson said owing to the new ordinance adopted by council, the process for reviewing and approving requests for a waiver or an exception has changed. Design exceptions now go to the design review boards. This is the first application to be heard under this new ordinance. The process involves a public hearing, which has been advertised, posted, and had courtesy letters sent, as with a variance. Ms. Anderson went on to explain the procedure: the staff gives its "take" on the application, applicant statements are taken, there's a period of public comment, and then regular discussion follows among the members of the DRB, after which a motion will be made.

This application is for three parcels: a vacant parcel (806), 596, and 596 A. The property owner is proposing to combine 596 and 596A into one lot, and to move the property line between 806 and 596 12' south. Parcel 806 is non-conforming for its lot width. It is approximately 50' wide. 596 is conforming, Moving the lot line will make 806 more conforming, but 100' is required and it will be just 88' wide.

The applicant had applied for a variance in March, Ms. Anderson said, but before the application was heard by the ZBOA, it was withdrawn. She went on to discuss the notice letters that had been sent. Two public comments were received and included in the DRB packets. Ms. Anderson read the comments aloud.

The development design exception ordinance sets out 3 criteria for the board to consider, Ms. Anderson said:

1. **Basic compatibility with surrounding properties** - The proposed application is appropriate for its location, staff feels, and won't reduce property values, Ms. Anderson said. This design exception won't permit an increase in density. It will take it from three lots to two lots, though they'll be different sizes. This will allow a wider structure to be built, which will be more in keeping with development on Ribaut Road.
2. **Potential adverse effect of the design on the neighborhood** - There are no site plans at this time, but it won't change the required side yard setbacks. Theoretically, there could be a building built on the lot today with a 15' setback, so this will not make an impact, Ms. Anderson said, even today. Additional docks could have a negative effect, and the DRB could approve the application with conditions, such as no additional docks.
3. **Consistency with adopted plans** - Staff feels it will be in conformity with the CP and other plans, Ms. Anderson said, as it encourages infill development and makes development of the lot a little easier because it will be wider.

In sum, Ms. Anderson said, there will be no significant impact with approval if there were a condition made that no additional docks allowed.

Mr. Karlyk asked the width of the lots to the south of the property. Ms. Anderson said she would guess they are about 100' wide. Mr. Brown said there are few conforming lots there right now. Ms. Anderson said it's a variety of lot sizes. Mr. Karlyk asked if, with three lots, it is guaranteed to allow a primary and an accessory dwelling unit. Ms. Anderson said on every platted property in general, one can build a primary residence and an accessory dwelling unit, but one must have sewer for the accessory dwelling unit. The property has to have access to the street unless they apply for a hardship variance. Mr. Karlyk said there was a structure on 596A years before, and that person had access at that time. Ms. Anderson said she can't speak to how the lots came to be. Staff knows now that there are three platted parcels, but not how they got that way.

Bill Jones, the applicant, said the idea of the dock was to have an easement for the property owner. There are no plans to build another dock. With the waterfront, there are 152' on the water side. If it's divided into 2 lots of 76' per lot, this wouldn't have a negative impact on anyone in the area. The structure that was there had a garage that sat on the property line with Ms. Flint, one of the public commenters. Mr. Jones said that they have worked with her also on tree cutting, etc. The Gossetts, who also commented publically, have talked to Mr. Jones's contractor about updating their home. Mr. Jones would like to build two new structures that will enhance all the properties in the general area, and add to their value. They don't intend to do it presently, but would like the flexibility to do so. They don't like the idea of building a 20' building on a 50' lot.

Mr. Brown asked Mr. Jones if they have any definitive plans for the lots, and Mr. Jones replied no. At one point they did have plans for a single home, but in the current real estate market, they don't feel it's practical to build a 5000 square foot spec house. Mr. Brown asked if they feel that the two parcels are something they could market better, and Mr. Jones said yes. Lowcountry Realty has been trying to sell it as one parcel for three years, Mr. Jones said; about 20-25 people have looked at it in the last year, but they have had no offers, just lookers.

Ms. Anderson said the properties are zoned R-1, which requires a minimum lot width of 100'. **Rebecca Trask**, 741 Ribaut Road, said she doesn't find the houses on Ribaut Road "dated." They would prefer that the property "stay zoned as it is for the protection of the neighborhood." Mr. Ashmore asked what she meant by "protection," since staff has stated that it feels the application will not have an adverse affect on the neighborhood. Ms. Trask said the absence of adverse impact is others' opinion, and she and her husband would prefer that the neighborhood stay the way it is, particularly with less traffic in the area.

Dr. Gary Robinson, 731 Ribaut Road, asked if there would be one driveway for this place. He's not clear about whether it would be 1.5 lots with 3 houses on them. Only one curb cut is proposed, **Edward Dukes** said. Ms. Anderson said that could be an appropriate condition to place on the approval. Mr. Brown said a single curb cut is not in the submittal.

Mr. Brown said he agrees with staff that two parcels will fit in with what's going on on Ribaut Road, and he feels sure the houses will be nice. He said this application seems to make sense. He questioned "doing something based on cleaning up lots"; the ordinance allows giving exceptions based on design, but in this case, no design has been done yet. He feels the applicant should show more of what he has planned for the lots. He cited the question of the curb cuts as something by which the DRB could judge the design. He said he'd ask staff to consider creating a list of things that should be considered when an exception is asked for, e.g., where outbuildings and a proposed house or houses would go on the lots.

Mr. Dukes said the setbacks will be the same as they would be on a 50' or a wider lot. That will be the city's standard. Mr. Brown said that for this project, which is less complex than some that may come to the DRB, they might need to ask for a bigger setback to conform with the neighbors, "who are well set back." He would like to see more information.

Mr. Ashmore asked why the application was withdrawn in the past. Mr. Jones said they decided to continue marketing it as one parcel. They hadn't discussed it with their neighbors; they wanted to give it more thought. Ms. Anderson said the public input at that time was similar to what staff and the DRB heard this time. The previous application and this one are separate, however, Ms. Anderson said. She said shared access could be a condition to be addressed now. The setback from the water could also be a condition. It's currently 30' from the critical line. A more generous setback is within the board's purview.

Mr. Brown asked Ms. Anderson to estimate the adjacent houses' setbacks. There was general discussion to "guesstimate" the setback based on the map. If they need more information to make the decision, Ms. Anderson said, the DRB members could table the application. Mr. Brown said he'd approve it if they understood the questions of access and compatibility with the average setback along the water. He said he'd like clarification on some design elements, in this case setback. Mr. Ashmore said, in his opinion, the application should come back with the information to answer the questions Mr. Brown has raised so that the DRB will know what it is that they are approving. Mr. Karlyk said it seems clear-cut, but he, too, sees the need for additional information.

Mr. Brown made a motion, second by Mr. Karlyk, to table the application and to provide additional information on the access issue, and on the placement of the homes along the river and on the location of the applicant's immediate neighbors. The motion passed unanimously.

1105 Rodgers Street, South Carolina Bank & Trust (SCB&T) New Building.
Applicant: Alliance Consulting Engineers, Inc., Conceptual Review (11-12 DRB.1)

Ms. Alley said the site is the current location of the Beaufort boatyard / Sea Island Marine. The site is 1.2 acres. The current zoning permits banks and drive-throughs. A ZBOA application has been submitted for variances from setback and minimum parking requirements. A conceptual plan for signs has been submitted, but that is a separate application for architecture. The signs submitted don't have accurate sizes, so DRB can look at them or not at this time, Ms. Alley said.

Mr. Ashmore said there's currently an SCB&T about a block from this location. Ms. Anderson said this property is at Boundary and Rodgers Streets. This is "an important corner and a great way to redevelop the property," Ms. Anderson said. The Sector One Master Plan calls for a road diet for Boundary Street to return it to two lanes with on-street parking like Bay Street's. The development standards for this area are already a bit like Bay Street's, Ms. Anderson said. Staff feels this bank would be a great kick-off for the Boundary Street project. Staff has been working with the applicant because the site plan is critical; a new one was submitted the day before, and the Office of Civic Investment needs to weigh in on it and may tweak the site plan. Ms. Anderson said they may be able to reach a consensus and come back to the DRB in January. Today's discussion will largely be about architecture.

Ms. Anderson said the most important element of this application is the site plan, and it hasn't been investigated enough, so that's why discussion is limited to the architecture at this time. **Ryan Slattery**, Alliance Consulting Engineers, asked the DRB to allow them to discuss the site plan and said the applicant has a timeline on purchasing the property, and needs to know that certain matters have been addressed before that. Mr. Ashmore said the applicants had been informed by staff that this meeting would be only an architectural discussion, and that's all that this meeting would entail.

Gretchen Lambert, Studio 2LR Architects, showed a graphic of the plans for the development and discussed it. The drive-through is at the back of the property, she said. There are minimal entrances to the building for security reasons. She showed the 2-D elevations of the front and back of the building, described the architectural elements, and showed some of the materials to be used.

Ms. Lambert also showed 3-D perspectives of the building. She said the ATM is in the last bay of the drive-through. There is no walk-up ATM. Mr. Ashmore said there are a lot of windows in the front but not the back and asked why that is; Ms. Lambert said the most secure locations inside are located at the back so that's why there are fewer windows at the furthest point away from Boundary Street.

Mr. Brown asked her if the balustrade could be run back into the roof. Ms. Lambert said they could look at doing that. Mr. Brown said it's a nice building. He asked if the windows could be articulated without the transom and the heavy horizontal bar. Ms. Lambert said they could study that. The ordinance discusses having greater height than width, she said; Mr. Brown said he meant keeping the same opening but taking the transom off, thus making the window "taller." Mr. Brown noted that the end bay of the drive-through has an overhanging, unsupported canopy; Ms. Lambert said they can look at it, but there is a certain amount of coverage over the car they are looking for for customers in poor weather. Mr. Brown asked if she'd consider stopping the main roof in the more traditional spot and bringing part of it "cantilevered out to limit it a little, like a bay window" would be done. Ms. Lambert said she would look at that.

Ms. Alley said there had been "a comment from the consultant" about wanting to see the cupola removed. Ms. Lambert said that's part of the SCB&T brand, and they would like to see it remain. **Josh Martin** asked if it were functional, and Ms. Lambert said it's not. Ms. Lambert said a cupola study of the Lowcountry was done "by the person who did the drawings." Mr. Ashmore said the board sees people coming in with elements that represent their brand, but the building "doesn't have the feel of the town of Beaufort." Mr. Ashmore said the bank sits next to the National Cemetery and looks like it belongs in Columbia. He has concerns about the other SCB&T building a block away being empty when this new one is built.

Mr. Brown said brick is not a material that is used much in the Lowcountry, but he can see it being appropriate for an institutional building like this. Ms. Alley said the cupola is "somewhat contrived," and the National Cemetery adjacent to the building is "a treasure." The building seems handsome and at an appropriate scale. She has concerns about the vista as well. Ms. Lambert said saving the live oak on the property will mean the view from the east will be maintained. She added that the brick of the wall would be more visible if they didn't have the build-to issue.

Mr. Slattery said the site plan in the packet shows the anticipated location of the building. It's now shifted further to the west to help hide the façade of the building from the National Cemetery. Ms. Alley reiterated that the vista is extremely important, and she thinks the tree helps that. Ms. Anderson asked the applicant to mark out where the 27' setback will be for the ZBOA and the DRB both.

Mr. Slattery asked if it's possible to work with staff next week on a site plan so that they can understand staff's position, and Ms. Anderson said they can and will as soon as possible. Mr. Slattery said the variances are very important; guidance on the site and parking plans is also very important. Mr. Ashmore said different people they will encounter will have different areas of expertise to share with them. He explained the role of the DRB in ensuring that development is done well.

DISCUSSION

Chuck Rushing, a new DRB member who is taking the place of Don Starkey, spoke of his background. He said his background is in geo-technical engineering and he has done some storm damage-related forensics work. He has offices in Savannah, Charleston, and Bluffton and lives in Beaufort.

There was discussion about the need for some standards to be created regarding "the Lowcountry look."

Mr. Brown asked if they could define a "minimum submission." Mr. Martin said they could have a checklist for submission requirements but not necessarily one for approval. There was simultaneous general discussion of Mr. Jones's application and the SCB&T application. Mr. Martin said the intent of the ordinance was to understand the build-out scenario. He agreed that there's not enough information to understand what Mr. Jones wants to do.

The DRB members went on to introduce themselves to Mr. Rushing.

There being no further business, Mr. Brown made a motion to adjourn, second by Mr. Karlyk, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.