



BEAUFORT COUNTY
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD (DRB) MINUTES
June 6, 2024, Grace Coastal Church, 15 Williams Drive, Okatie, SC

Members Present: James Atkins, J. Michael Brock, Peter Brower, Kris Feldmann, Roger Jadown and Eric Walsnovich

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Nancy Moss, Beaufort County Community Development Department
Mary Brantley, Beaufort County Community Development Department

Guests:

Moss Creek – Seven Brew Thoroughfare Buffer Improvements: Will Glisson, East Coast Construction; and Keilen Richardson, 7 Venture

Okatie Center – The “H” Building: Mike Vaccaro, Vaccaro Architecture; Jose Hurtado, J & G Concrete; Kathleen Duncan, J. K. Tiller Associates; and Steve Richbourg, May River Contracting

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Atkins called the meeting to order at 2:34 p.m.
2. **FOIA:** Chairman Atkins said that “public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act”.
3. **MINUTES:** Chairman Atkins asked if there were comments on the April 4, 2024, meeting minutes. Mr. Jadown motioned to approve the meeting minutes and Mr. Atkins seconded to approve. Mr. Feldmann and Mr. Walsnovich abstained from voting. Motion carried.
4. **MINUTES:** Chairman Atkins asked if there were comments on the May 2, 2024, meeting minutes. Mr. Walsnovich motioned to approve the meeting minutes and Mr. Jadown seconded to approve. Mr. Brock abstained from voting. Motion carried.
5. **PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS:** There was no public comment.
6. **NEW BUSINESS:**
 - A. **Moss Creek Commercial Seven Brew Thoroughfare Buffer Improvements – Bluffton – Final:**
Ms. Moss gave the project background. Mr. Atkins asked for public comment, but no comments were made. Will Glisson, the agent for the Developer, stated that the proposed work would not involve any soil disturbance or grubbing work. He said that they would keep most of the existing native plants but would remove the tallows and sweet gums 8” in caliper and under. Mr. Glisson said that supplemental native shrubs would be selectively placed in the open buffer areas after the buffer clean-out work was performed and that the buffer landscape plan was schematic, and the locations of the plantings may change.

Mr. Walsnovich stated that an As Built of the buffer plantings should be done as part of the close-out of this project. He said that gum and pine sapling removal size should be reduced to 4” versus 8” and that the tallows and other invasive trees can be removed. Mr. Walsnovich asked if there would be irrigation in the thoroughfare buffer. Mr. Glisson said that the buffer would not be irrigated but that the native shrubs are drought tolerant and that sporadic rain events would help them survive. Mr. Walsnovich concluded by stating that the supplemental buffer planting sizes should be increased to a 7-gallon container size for the evergreen shrubs and a 15-gallon container size for the saw palmettos.

Mr. Brock agreed that an As Built of the buffer plantings should be done, and said that when the plantings are inspected prior to this project receiving a CO, if there is a hole or holes in the buffer, the Developer would be required to install additional plantings. Mr. Brock said that the vine removal would be a two-tier schedule and that the contractor would have to first remove what they can and then have to come back months later to remove the remaining dead vines so this area must be managed.

Mr. Atkins, Mr. Feldmann and Mr. Jadown made no comments.

Mr. Brock made a motion to approve this project with the following conditions:

- Change the supplemental buffer plantings container sizes from 3-gallon to 7-gallon for the evergreen shrubs and 15-gallon for the saw palmettos.
- Provide an as-built landscape plan of the thoroughfare buffer prior to the CO of the building.
- If there are any buffer holes found at the final planting inspection, the Developer will be required to plant additional shrubs per the discretion of the DRB.
- The allowed size of pine & gum sapling removals can be no larger than 4” caliper.
- All invasives are approved to be removed.

Mr. Walsnovich seconded the motion.

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Okatie Center – Lot S-15 – The “H” Building, 211 Okatie Village Drive – Bluffton – Conceptual:

Ms. Moss gave the project background. Mr. Atkins asked for public comment, but no comments were made. Mr. Brower arrived at the meeting. Mike Vaccaro, the Architect for project, introduced himself and the project team to the Board. He stated that the Developer, Jose Hurtado, owns a concrete factory and the building was basically a concrete bomb shell with poured concrete slab floors and concrete walls, clad with brick and stucco. Mr. Vaccaro said that it is a straightforward building with a 30’ grid system and traditional detailing. He stated that they were excited about this project and yielded to the Board for questioning.

Mr. Feldmann asked Mr. Vaccaro what the driving design decisions were for this building. Mr. Vaccaro explained that Mr. Hurtado’s personal offices would be located on the second floor and that the restaurant and retail units would be on the first floor. He said that they wanted to bring the building close to the street to provide a pedestrian connection to the Food Lion shopping center development across the street. He said that the building was initially designed as a drive through

but became a pedestrian walk through. He said that the building would be class A with a restaurant, retail and office space, and that the 2nd floor conference room sits above the breezeway. He said that it was a traditionally proportioned building with parapets but that the half arches are unique to this building and would offer shade to the retail entrances and maximized the 2nd floor office space. Mr. Feldmann stated that it was a strong architectural design, but the design of the rooftop stair runs and penthouses were taken into less consideration and possibly detracted from the overall building design and that the shed roofs stand out. He said that there was still an opportunity to rework the shed roofs on the penthouses, or to possibly consolidate the roof access points or to move the stair runs back from the parapet or to determine if both stairways are needed. Mr. Vaccaro said that the main parapet was well thought out and that he tried to minimize the penthouse design by using the shed roofs because they were the more functional versus aesthetic portion of the building. He said that the penthouses originally had hipped roofs and would probably tie in better with the center breezeway and agreed that they could use some additional detailing on the cornice to tie it in better.

Mr. Jadown said in general he liked the building but that the concrete haunches seemed a little heavy and the building lacked Lowcountry design. He stated that the central conference curtain wall looked like it was not part of the building and that the north and south ends could use more articulation. Mr. Jadown said that more detailing was needed on the breezeway walls. He asked Mr. Vaccaro to consider adding a door on the breezeway wall for access to the restaurant. Mr. Jadown asked where the kitchen hood would be located. Mr. Vaccaro said there was a space for a 16' hood with a vertical chase located next to the stair tower. Mr. Jadown asked what treatment was proposed on the breezeway floor. Mr. Vaccaro said it hasn't been determined but would either be concrete or pavers.

Mr. Brock said that the units on top of the roof looked out of place and overall, the building doesn't look to scale with Lowcountry architecture. He stated that the columns and arches looked bulky. He stated that the landscape plan must have enough plantings for adequate screening within the buffers, particularly from highway 278. Mr. Brock said that because a pedestrian sidewalk was not required at the Okatie Retail Center, there would be a dead-end sidewalk and he did not think it should be required for this project. Mr. Vaccaro said that the width of the sidewalk perpendicular to the building would be reduced from 13' to 5'.

Mr. Brower said his first reaction to the design was that the stairway covers would look better if they had hip roofs to help tie into the center area. He said that it was nice to see an applicant want to spend the money to build something at great expense. He said that on the front elevation the members that come out seem relatively heavy and not Lowcountry and suggested changing them out to columns with brackets attached to extend it out further, and adding a shallow shed roof or a trellis to help soften the building a little.

Mr. Walsnovich said that he liked the boldness of the building. He would like to see more detailing on the central tower structure curtain walls seem a bit large. He stated that he did not have an issue with reducing the perpendicular sidewalk width, but the width should match the walk on the parking lot side of the building. Mr. Walsnovich said that an Arborist report would be beneficial for the multi-trunk live oak and to make an assessment on whether the other saved trees are worthy.

Mr. Atkins said he liked the overall concept of the building with the split ground level and the pedestrian connection so there was a lot of design merit. He said he appreciated the uniqueness of the design but struggled with the overall design, vertical/horizontal, with the roof structures popping up without being thought through in the overall massing fluid with no expressionary integration with the overall design. Mr. Atkins stated that the arches, with glued-on brick accents on the corners, were not very authentic for a traditional arch. He said on the left side there was a sense that the arches were supporting the upper masses, but on the right side it is bisected with the horizontal plane and appeared that the enormous arches were supporting a small metal roof. Mr. Atkins stated that the primary pedestrian thoroughfare being created is backed up to solid structures with no fenestration and felt like a tunnel versus a pedestrian arcade, which was a missed opportunity. He said the building has two sections on the ends and the element in the middle but there is no expression how the middle piece is supported and how it integrates with the rest of the overall design. Mr. Atkins said that this lot is part of a PUD with specific language about Lowcountry architecture and although the building has unique architectural expression it lacks Lowcountry character. He stated he was not convinced that the execution of the details and expression of the forms were there yet, but he liked the idea.

Mr. Vaccaro stated that the comments were valid and helpful. He said that this is a masonry building that is heavy and bold and that the thickness of the columns is needed to support the second floor. He said there are 24"x24" poured concrete columns with 36' spans between the floors, and 8" post tension concrete slab floors with 8' cantilevers. Mr. Vaccaro stated once the design is cleaned up, it will be more in-scale and be a handsome building.

Mr. Feldmann said that the arches appear to be truncated and, traditionally in the Lowcountry, there is a bracket supporting a cantilever but the way the arch comes up and continues past the floor line makes it feel like it is supporting the columns above versus the floor above. Mr. Feldman said that the pass-through is a missed opportunity to be a collector and arrival point and encouraged them to relocate the restaurant entrance off the breezeway. Mr. Vaccaro stated that they could address the issues between the interior wall on the breezeway between the restaurant space. Mr. Feldmann said he liked the boldness and the quality materials. He said that concrete can cantilever & do some things that can't be done with some of the more common methods and to consider using concrete on the arches to showcase what a solid structure is.

Mr. Brower said the building had a Vizenor or Flagler look and a bit of a train station look too and some of that architecture could play into this architecture if it's softened.

Mr. Vaccaro said he would massage the design to make sure the details are right.

Mr. Feldmann made a motion to table this project to allow the applicant time to investigate the Board's suggestions and come back for review.

Mr. Brock seconded the motion.

Motion carried unanimously.

7. OLD BUSINESS: None

8. **OTHER BUSINESS:** Mr. Atkins stated that the next scheduled meeting would be held at 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 11, 2024, at Grace Coastal Church, 15 Williams Drive, Okatie, SC 29909.
9. **ADJOURNMENT:** Mr. Walsnovich made a motion to close the meeting and Mr. Brower seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.