

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Historic Architectural Review Board Special Meeting August 11, 2022

The Historic Architectural Review Board met in formal session at 1:04 P.M., Thursday, August 11, 2022, in the Alcazar Room at City Hall, St. Augustine, Florida. Catherine Duncan, Chairperson, called the Special meeting to order, and the following were present:

1. ROLL CALL:

Catherine Duncan, Chairperson
Gaere MacDonald, Vice-Chairperson
Jon Benoit
Paul Weaver, III
Brad Beach

City Staff:

Julie Courtney, Historic Preservation Officer
Amy Skinner, Director, Planning and Building Dept.
Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney
Elyse Wiemann, Recording Secretary

2. General Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda

(None)

3. Opinion of Appropriateness

3. (a) HP2022-0039 (Continued at June 16 and July 21, 2022 Regular HARB meetings)- Troy Blevins– Applicant Kasam Hospitality, Inc– Owner 22-24 Cathedral Place

To construct three-story commercial buildings on the west side of Charlotte Street and south side of Treasury Street to flank a new parking garage on the existing parking lot and to modify 22 Cathedral Place with an elevated roof structure with columns all related to an adaptive use project on the existing buildings.

Ms. Courtney read the staff report and said based on a review of the AGHP and without the support of evidence to the contrary, staff finds that the board can CONTINUE an OPINION OF APPROPRIATENESS at 24 Cathedral Place to allow time for the applicant to respond to recommended changes to the design provided by the HARB and provide additional details as requested.

Troy Blevins, Ellen Avery-Smith and Mike Koppenhafer reviewed the application.

Board discussion:

- Asked if the first building past Tradewinds was two or three stories
- Thought two stories would be potentially better than three
- Questioned if all the parking was being eliminated in front of the building
- No street parking would be in front of the building
- Questioned if the buildings on Charlotte Street would be above or seen from the vista
- Questioned the height of the buildings
- Questioned the heights of surrounding buildings in the area to know exactly how much of the proposed buildings would be seen
- Questioned the distance from the first floor to the sidewalk

Applicant response:

- The first building was three stories tall
- After speaking with Public Works would have to replace the eleven parking spaces that were in front

- Thought parking would resemble Hypolita and Treasury Streets
- Height of the buildings from the street to the top were provided in the original application packet
- Thought there would be very little observed from the Bayfront
- Harry's Seafood restaurant was thirty-two feet tall
- Roof line of the proposed building was at thirty-two feet with parapets, which will vary in heights to help break it up
- Thought the Board's previous opinion was to break it up depending on the elevations
- The distance was between eighteen and twenty-four inches with a nine-foot elevation with seven at the street

Mr. Blevins said they were wanting to work as a team. He said any recommendation would be helpful.

Ellen Avery-Smith informed the Board she was involved with drafting the Planned Unit Development (PUD). She noted the compactor for the area restaurants, the Charlotte Street landscaping, parking and some public parking would be addressed in the PUD. She said they were not in HARB's purview but wanted to note the PUD would include architectural renderings, the landscape plan, and the requirements for the City's PUD Ordinance.

Ms. Duncan asked if there was a height limit on the current PUD in place.

Ms. Avery-Smith said it was the existing building, which was 130 feet to the peak, and at the level of occupancy, it was 112 feet high.

Mr. Belvin said height was not addressed other than the main building.

Ms. Duncan asked how the Board was to measure the height when there was a height limitation.

Ms. Skinner said it started at the flood plain. She said it was one foot above base flood elevation to the highest point or the peak of the roof or the top of the parapet.

Ms. Duncan said the first floor would be a total of nine foot.

Ms. Avery Smith said they would respect the height of the existing buildings as those would not be modified and would need to respect the FEMA flood regulations and City Code.

Mr. Blevins said they were at nine feet with the existing building and the new one would be even with it.

Ms. Duncan asked if there was a survey that showed that information and asked to have that for the next meeting.

Mr. Weaver pointed out the Hilton Garden Inn had to be raised and the windows were at different elevations and felt that the difference in fenestration was noticeable.

Mr. Koppenhafer discussed the application and said the desire was to hide the parking garage and felt it was a nod to the Vail Block drawing from 1878. He said he wanted the space to feel like it had always been there. He was in favor of softening the space by adding landscaping with vertical and horizontal elements. He said the two-dimensional renderings showed the different heights of the buildings. He said the intent was to break the space up and the desire was to demonstrate what it would look like by providing the streetscape images.

Ms. Duncan asked how tall the coquina wall was at Harry's Seafood as it looked exaggerated.

Mr. Koffenhafer said the parking garage entry would be standard at seven foot and the coquina wall was about eight or nine feet tall.

Ms. Duncan asked how the buildings were being constructed and the types of materials that would be used and the thickness.

Mr. Koffenhafer said it was ten feet on center, floor to floor with block and plank (Concrete Masonry Unit) with a hollow board plank on top. He said as long as there were an eight and half to nine-foot ceiling heights the rest would be taken up with the structure. He said their building would be smaller with a floor-to-floor ten-foot height except for the lobby which was an open two-story space. He said each structure was historic to the property and could be a nod to those styles.

The Board provided ex parte communication during individual testimony.

Public hearing was opened.

Leslee Keys provided documentation for the Board to review¹. She felt the applicant was eradicating the last 100 years of the City's Historic Preservations history and creating a Victorian era that was noted to not be the important timeframe in St. Augustine especially for the Town Plan National Historic District, which was Spanish Colonial. She said the skyline was in multiple national publications, and the one skyscraper should be left as the only skyscraper and should be protected. She said the Plaza de la Constitution was the center of the town and very important. She said the infill construction in this location was very important and should be done carefully. She said the Victorian era had been done outside the historic district and it did not need to be done in the National Historic Landmark District.

Judith Fagan spoke in opposition to the application and said there was no longer a place for residents, and it had begun to resemble a historical Disneyland. She said if we do not learn from history we are doomed to fail. She said she was not opposed to change but residents should be considered.

She said adding a parking garage in the middle of the City would be devastating to the already congested downtown area. She encouraged the Board to help find a solution to the problem.

BJ Kalaidi stated she was very concerned with the Boards decision related to the application and referred to page four in the staff report. She agreed the Plaza was the most important location within the City and thought the surrounding buildings should complement it and not distract from it. She was unsure as to why a parking garage was needed. She encouraged the Board to be very careful and to make sure it fit with the City's history.

Public hearing was closed.

Board Discussion:

- Appreciated the testimony and comments by the public
- Spanish Town Plan was thought to be an abstract as the National Historic Landmark
- Rocque map identified a hierarchical town with the tallest in the center and then decreased in scale and mass
- Project did not need to be Spanish Colonial; however, should keep in character of the Town Plan and the Spanish Colonial architecture
- Map identified buildings were set on the property line and was densely developed
- Victorian era hotels and 20th Century buildings were out of scale with the Colonial buildings
- City had reduced the scale of the buildings to a Colonial scale
- Felt it should be kept in the Mediterranean style in association with the Exchange Bank Building
- Exteriors of Spanish Colonial buildings were masonry, stucco, three to five bays wide

¹ Documents attached to the packet.

- Main concern was Victorian scale was wider and taller
- Would be supportive if it kept with the Colonial architecture with a Mediterranean theme and if it kept with the Town Plan
- Felt rooftop appurtenances should be eliminated
- Questioned how the buildings would impact the Exchange Bank building as it was historic
- Should discuss the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines and archeology
- Concerned with how much was going in such a small space
- Had minor changes to the front elevations on the main road since last meeting
- Felt the proposed design was forced and did not respond to the surrounding context of today
- Design should not look back to past history but look forward to the City's future
- Trying to conceal the three-level parking garage by adding another three-story element
- Parking garages in town were below grade; asked if the proposed parking garage be dropped down reducing the scale
- Should have a common thread throughout all the buildings
- Felt this was a zoning change and asked why a rezoning was being done
- Asked if they were held to the height restrictions in the HP 2 District

Ms. Avery-Smith said there was an existing PUD that would be modified; however, that was permitted under the City's Land Development Code.

Mr. Benoit said the zoning managed the scale. He asked if they were held in the PUD to the scale and density as defined by the HP 2 District.

Ms. Skinner advised they were not. She said a PUD was to encourage creativity and as

long as it was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Land Use for the area, which was Historic Preservation Land Use and encouraged a mixed-use district.

Mr. Benoit said it was not referring to the HP 2 District around it, which was restricted of total lot coverage by 70%, 50% main structure, 2 ½ stories, maximum of thirty-five feet, and the other 20% was accessory building up to 1 ½ stories. He said looking at the cubic or square footage of space throughout HP 2, there was a certain managed yield; however, the proposal had 95% lot coverage or more and almost everywhere had three stories. He questioned the benefit to the City.

Board discussion continued:

- Exceeded the thirty-five-foot height limit
- Proposed drawing had a parapet at forty-two feet and an even higher appurtenance
- Had an outdoor entertainment space
- Used past historic photos to draw from but eliminated the setbacks and was now three stories
- Thought it was difficult to maintain the character with setbacks and height
- Asked applicant to soften the street on Charlotte
- Parking had been eliminated and landscape was added
- Every corner had been maximized and surpassed almost everything in the existing zoning
- Felt it would be difficult to make 65,000 square feet look Spanish Colonial
- To obtain more Board support should change the scale
- Felt the applicant was asking for a huge increase in the useable space

Applicant response:

- City Code allowed thirty-five feet plus additional footage for mechanical equipment and architectural features

- Felt the Board should focus on the AGHP guidelines
- Details of the PUD was not in the purview of the Board
- PUD would be modified in the future
- Wanted to discuss the vision of the property
- Idea was to provide parking for the hotel and the public; however, parking was not in the purview of the Board

Ms. Duncan asked if there was a thirty-five-foot height limit on the property and would it have to be approved before it could be higher. She asked if HARB was able to have input on the modification to the PUD.

Ms. Skinner said HARB's input related to the design elements of the project. She said it was a PUD and was allowed to be creative and other elements were allowed to be introduced to the project. She said the PUD Ordinance stated, "a streetscape for the block the project was on and the facing block should be included for the HP areas". She said what needed to be reviewed was streetscape, demonstrating compatibility, proportions, form and rhythm with the surrounding area, also details of colors, materials and design themes could also be required.

Mr. Benoit felt the proposal was far outside what would normally be allowed. He said there was a one story next to the proposed and then a two story across from it. He said if they felt three-story building was compatible, he disagreed.

Board discussion continued:

- Buildings should be in the spirit of the Colonial scale
- Would be beneficial to have infill but thought the massing was over the top
- The town was busy because it replicated the Spanish Colonial City
- Original gems in the City were underneath the proposed project

- Questioned if it needed to be Spanish or British Colonial and asked if new construction had to be built in that style
- Felt there might be flexibility as there were other styles in the area but Victorian did not fit
- Questioned if building was at ten feet since hurricane Matthew flooded at nine feet
- Flood maps had been reset with a new base flood at eight feet and a freeboard at nine feet
- Thought removal of parking on Charlotte Street was good as it was difficult to maneuver the street
- Parking for the public was moved to the garage but asked how the public would be able to use those

Applicant Response:

- 22 and 44 Cathedral Place was at nine foot six inches
- Building did not flood during the hurricane
- Most of the Vail block existing buildings flooded

Ms. Lopez said she thought the parking details would be included in the PUD.

Board discussion continued:

- Felt it could be an opportunity for British or Spanish Colonial style to anchor the corner in HP 2
- The town was more in the Colonial style and was successful
- Felt it was impossible to have a garage in the Colonial style, but could develop a parking area with setbacks to get it away from Charlotte Street
- Was noted two months ago project was very intensive and expected to see the input from the Board
- Unsure why a Courthouse was being used to design a new hotel
- All documentation provided showed the buildings fronting the Plaza and not a

side street and the proposed buildings were for a side street

- Expected high performance for the City as this was a real functional town
- Buildings should not compete with the real history
- Streetscapes coming over the Bridge of Lions was most important
- Wanted the drawings larger in order to clearly read the elevations and understand the concept
- Questioned how the buildings were designed with the guidelines in mind

Applicant response:

- Buildings designs were based on buildings that in history, had been on the block prior to being burnt down
- Trying to create something that worked within the vocabulary of this part of the City
- Felt from past meetings what had been presented was acceptable but was willing to design what was requested
- Using the courthouse because it previously had been on that property
- Most successful project would be one that worked for the owner and that HARB agreed with, and was special for residents and tourist
- AGHP showed three-story Spanish Colonial buildings
- Off-site parking was not required in this zoning category; however, felt the parking garage would be beneficial
- Wanted to have a consensus on the style direction
- Wanted to shield the mechanical units to not be seen from the street

Ms. Duncan said the concern with the height was because the Vail Block rendering was fronting the Plaza and the proposed was fronting the side street.

Mr. Blevins said they wanted to do work and do what was best for the City but also wanted it to be functional. He said they were willing to work with what was functional and wanted

it to be something to be proud of for generations.

Mr. Benoit said the issue was they were trying to use all the square feet they could. He said he did not want to be locked into a style but wanted to focus on the guidelines. He said the guidelines indicated 40% of the main structure could be on the main property line; however, the structures were 100% on both property lines. He questioned how this was compatible in both scale and form when none of the compatible measuring tools in the guidelines had not been followed. He stated this was a rezoning and there were only two reason for a rezoning: opportunity or hardship.

Ms. Avery-Smith said she understood the concerns with the mass, density, and scale but the PUD modification was not being discussed. She said PUD would be a separate application that would be heard by the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB). She felt the style of the building needed to be narrowed down and asked if that was British or Spanish Colonial. She said once an architectural style was determined the rest could be answered.

Mr. MacDonald apologized that the style was not determined at previous meetings and thought a style could have been determined.

Mr. Benoit said he did not feel a style should be determined as the scale was not compatible and that should be the main focus.

Mr. MacDonald said the applicants wanted to work with them to find a solution that worked for the City. He said mass was clearly noted and thought the Board should provide what could be acceptable in styles in order to provide a better proposal. He asked if Mediterranean Revival, British or Spanish Colonial was better.

Mr. Weaver said the benchmark for the project was 24 Cathedral Place which style was Mediterranean Revival. He said he

provided a list of the different buildings around it that were in the same style. He said the City had moved past the Victorian style and with the PUD they could be creative. He said Mediterranean Revival's roots were in Spanish Colonial and it could be a compromise. He said he thought the scale, setbacks, rhythm of opening were important but questioned if lot coverage was a huge concern.

Mr. Beach felt a massing study would be beneficial and help determine the direction moving forward. He said the primary element that needed to be reviewed was the volume.

Ms. Duncan said the applicants should provide the elevations and heights of the other buildings from the corner down Charlotte Street. She advised them to look at different residential buildings as that was similar to a hotel. She advised starting with the guidelines which stated it needed to be Spanish Colonial was a starting point.

Mr. Weaver said he thought they were beyond the Spanish Colonial style.

Mr. Blevins said if he had understood that was what was asked for, he would have brought a new proposal. He said they were willing to do whatever was needed and what was good for the City.

Mr. MacDonald agreed that the mass and style were related and thought Spanish Revival or Mediterranean Revival could fit.

Mr. Blevins said the only building that was close to what was suggested was the one to the left in the rendering, which was more of the Moorish style than Mediterranean.

Mr. Weaver suggested the middle three buildings in the rendering were not in that style and should be revised. He said it should be more in the Mediterranean style which related back to Colonial period. He said the Victorian hotel on Treasury Street should also be revised to have a unified theme.

Mr. Blevins said the design came from the history they have had with the Board on other projects in the City. He said they were asking for a clearly defined direction in order to bring back a better proposal.

Ms. Duncan said it was the massing, rhythm, how the building turned the corner, and how the building ended, but did not want to designate a particular style. She asked if the east elevation walking down Treasury Street was provided.

Mr. Blevins said they had provided the heights and elevations in the first application.

Mr. MacDonald said thus far he thought Spanish Revival, Mediterranean Revival, and thought the Moorish style would also be compatible and a nice nod to the Ponce hotel.

Mr. Benoit noted they were asking for a tremendous increase in cubic footage which could be leased, rented or sold. He said a concession for him would be to eliminate courthouse building on the corner and having a pedestrian plaza. He said there would not be a bar/restaurant on the third floor. He said in terms of use, it was a large use on the Plaza. He recommended if scale and zoning would not be discussed, it should be under the thirty-five-foot height limit, which was in line with the Code.

Ms. Avery-Smith said the existing PUD included a building that was 135 feet tall. She said the PUD was not limited to thirty-five feet; however, they understood there was a lot of work that needed to be done. She said they were seeking a PUD modification which would include some benefits to the City, but also needed to be financially feasible to the owner.

Ms. Duncan said the drawings should indicate exactly what the buildings would look like and not block real historic buildings. She asked if there was a thirty-five-foot height limit or were they allowed to build as high as the bank building.

Ms. Lopez replied the PUD was specific to the existing building. She suggested moving away from historic buildings and focusing on the mass, scale, and compatibility based on the code and stay within the Moorish, Mediterranean leaning towards to the Spanish Colonial style.

Mr. Weaver said they were trying to provide measurables, which could help everyone.

Mr. Blevins showed a photo with the heights of the buildings and asked if they needed to expand.

Ms. Duncan said she wanted an entire streetscape as the photos were difficult to read as shown. She said it needed to be more of a continuous sheet.

Ms. Lopez said there were streetscapes that could be viewed if they needed a guide.

MOTION

Mr. Weaver MOVED to CONTINUE the application 2022-0039 22-24 Cathedral Place to the October 20, 2022 HARB meeting. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. MacDonald.

VOTE ON MOTION:

AYES: Weaver, MacDonald, Beach, Benoit, Duncan

NAYES: NONE

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Other Business

(None)

5. Next Scheduled Meeting Date

5. (a) Wednesday, August 17, 2022 at 1:00p.m. (Regular meeting date moved to accommodate a scheduling conflict)

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:37 P.M.²



Catherine Duncan, Chairperson

² Transcribed by Elyse Wiemann