CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Historic Architectural Review Board Special Meeting
January 22, 2025

The Historic Architectural Review Board met in formal session at 1:00 P.M., Thursday, January 22, 2025, in the Alcazar Room at City Hall, St. Augustine, Florida. Gaere MacDonald, Chairperson, called the regular meeting to order, and the following were present:

1. ROLL CALL:	Gaere MacDonald, Chairperson Brad Beach, Vice-Chairperson Paul Weaver, III Catherine Duncan Linda Potter
City Staff:	Julie Courtney, Historic Preservation Officer Candice Seymour, Historic Preservation Planner Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney Michele Fudo, Recording Secretary

2. General Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda

none

3. Review and Discussion of Application

3.(a) Opinion of appropriateness

HP2024-0055- Rogers Towers, P.A.- Applicant Kasa, Hospitality, Inc.- Owner 24 Cathedral Place/Charlotte Street
Continued from September 18, 2024

To construct three-story 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.

Main Objectives for Today's Discussion:

1. **Project history and overview**
2. **Discussion of architectural style for project**
3. **HARB consensus on architectural styles for project**
4. **Discussion of other architectural details**
5. **Discussion of other outstanding items**

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.

Freemont Latimer, Les Thomas, Mike Koppenhafer, and Kanti Patel were sworn in for the record.

Mr. Koppenhafer reviewed the history of the project, including the interaction with the HARB. He expressed the desire to bring everyone concerned onto the same page with the new design proposals. He presented revised drawings for the board to see and evaluate, highlighting the addition of courtyards and the change of the elevation to look more colonial style than mediterranean.

Les Thomas gave additional review of the revised plans saying that he used the same style that would be used for the HP-2 district on one side of the building. He felt that it provided a softer appearance for the building and was less imposing. He said that the front of the building, with the entrance to the parking garage, needed to stay mediterranean to be more cohesive.

Mr. MacDonald said that he was encouraged by the new designs. He explained the format that was to be used in this special meeting.

Ms. Avery-Smith reminded all, for the record, that this project was zoned PUD and HP-2 was not the zoning for the property.

The Board presented their Ex Parte Communication.

Public hearing was opened.

Melinda Rakoncay said that the PUD was in the heart of the National Register St. Augustine Town Plan district. She was concerned that the height of the building would block visibility of the Exchange Bank building from Charlotte Street. She felt that archeological property would be lost as well as the streetscape of Charlotte Street. She was concerned that the property, as previously presented, would create a canyon effect on the street and wanted to see more of the Spanish style courtyards. She thought that reducing the number of hotel rooms would open the project to less massing and scale.

Georgeanne Gillespie said she rented office space in the building prior to Mr. Patel purchasing the property and felt that he had made it difficult to maintain businesses in the building. She did not like the prospect of additional street traffic.

Sandra Parks spoke of her past service on the city commission. She explained that she was a part of the commission that had crafted the standards to maintain the historic value in the city. She said that the mass of the proposed building was not out of character with the tower that already existed on the property and she went on to say that there was no longer a need in the city for office buildings and rather than have a building that was underused, the proposed project would bring in new revenue for the city. She supported the project as a good compromise of ideas.

Terra Owens spoke in support of the project and said she appreciated the fact that the parking space would be masked.

Leslee Keys said that she had met with Kanti Patel regarding the project. She pointed out that the Anderson Circle had one of the two World War One memorials and wanted to keep it intact. She said that the lobby of the building would remain intact. She introduced the Ad Valorem Tax Exemption as a possibility for the project.

Ms. Courtney read into the record two emails that had been sent to the Historical Review department. She said the St. Augustine Archeological Association stated that the proposed hotel and garage was located within archeological zones that could have an adverse impact on the cities irreplaceable, non-renewable resources and asked the city to not approve the project until proper plans had been provided. She said the second email stated concerns with the scale of the project.

Public hearing was closed.

Mr. MacDonald advised that the underground parking had been removed from the plans and confirmed that there would be a plan presented for the archeological portion of the project. He gave some ideas for how to approach the proposed construction with care to mitigate any damage to older buildings in the area.

Mr. Koppenhafer provided his rebuttal.

Mr. MacDonald asked about the plan for the Anderson Circle and Ms. Duncan asked for a site plan.

Mr. Latimer reviewed the proposed streetscape for the board, saying that the Anderson Circle would be untouched.

Mr. Thomas explained that the building would be constructed one foot off the property line.

The Board discussed:

Ms. Potter asked for clarification of the plans for the hotel rooms. She confirmed the proposed design to showed two story and two- and one-half story buildings.

Mr. Beach thought the design was moving in the right direction and had a softer look. He liked the two and a half stories and said it was a better fit than three stories; however, the three story mediterranean style near the entrance to the garage was okay. He asked if the porches would be acceptable if the building was one foot off the sidewalk. He questioned how the pedestrian could be engaged on the sidewalk and wanted to know if there would be any opportunity to engage the public with perhaps a small café, or something for the public to use to activate the pedestrian streetscape.

Mr. Weaver mentioned the town plan and how the building was in the middle of that plan. He envisioned a mixed use to include commercial, religious and governmental. He pointed out that this was a densely developed area of the city and had been for many years; many of the buildings had a one hundred percent lot coverage. He said that the style of HP-2 was the topic of discussion, as well as trying to define that style for the developer. He highlighted the guidelines that dictated what should be considered when building in this area.

Mr. MacDonald said that previous renderings had too much mass and scale. He thought that the new drawings were an improvement.

Mr. Koppenhafer explained the mediterranean style of architecture and how it was historically a larger presentation.

Mr. Weaver continued and listed the issues that had come from the previous meeting such as the height of the building, no pergolas, and others.

Ms. Duncan thought the new design was very thoughtful of the style of what was part of the Plaza as well as what was part of Charlotte Street. She asked if the second and third floors above an alleyway would be left open so that there would be a view-scape through to the other side. She wanted to be sure that there would be features for the public to experience. She said courtyards in St Augustine were a defining feature and there were no gates to the courtyards. She liked the three story near the parking garage; however, she wanted to see the two and two and a half story section to be developed to give more depth to the structure.

Mr. Thomas advised that the walls around the gardens would have gates; however, they would be part of the hotel and pedestrians would not necessarily be able to utilize the space.

Mr. MacDonald said that the design fit well with the other buildings in the area. He commented on the fact that the trash receptacles on Charlotte Street would be gone with the addition of the trash compactor in the hotel.
Mr. Patel advised that with the current design, the hotel would be profitable.

Ms. Duncan asked where the reception area for guests was located.

Mr. Koppenhafer explained the entrances to the hotel reception for the guests.

Mr. MacDonald said that the mass of the project had been the problem but seemed to have been fixed. He advised the applicants that if the Ad Valorem Tax Exemption became the reality for the Exchange building, the inside of the building would be protected. He did not think that there would be any problem with the hanging balcony.

Mr. Weaver confirmed that any Ad Valorem would only apply to 24 Cathedral, not the new construction.

Ms. Avery-Smith advised the Board that they were seeking consensus regarding architectural design.

Mr. Koppenhafer added a few questions that he needed to have answered.

Mr. MacDonald polled the Board for consensus to accept the presented conceptual design and all the Board members agreed.

Ms. Potter added that the AGHP advised that any new construction should complement historic architecture.

Mr. Koppenhafer reviewed the points listed in the agenda and confirmed that they had been satisfactorily answered.

There was a brief discussion about the landscape plan to be sure that the Board approved of the Sylvester Palms on Charlotte Street.

MOTION

Mr. Weaver MOVED to CONTINUE application HP2024-0055 to a date uncertain. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Beach.

<u>VOTE ON MOTION:</u>
AYES: Weaver, Beach, Potter, Duncan, MacDonald
NAYES: NONE
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

<u>4. Other Business</u>

<u>5. Adjournment</u>

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:12 P.M.[1]

Brad Beach, Chairperson

[1] Transcribed by Michele Fudo