



**Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB) Meeting
Hybrid Virtual / In-Person Meeting**

Thursday, April 11, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Board Members (BMs) Present: L. Ott (Vice Chair/Acting Chair); G. Monahan (Secretary); J. Berling (virtual); E. Davis; C. Dawson; F. Jones; T. Lee; and J. Loretta

Board Members Excused: M. Brockelman

DIA Staff Present: Susan Kelly, Redevelopment Coordinator; Guy Parola, Director of Operations; and Ava Hill, Administrative Assistant

Office of General Counsel: Carla Lopera, Esq.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Ott called the meeting to order at **2:01 p.m.** She noted that Board Member Berling would be participating via Zoom.

II. ACTION ITEMS

A. APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 8, 2024 DDRB REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

The Chair asked for a motion regarding the February 8th meeting minutes. Board Member Monahan made a motion to move the meeting minutes, and Board Member Davis seconded the motion.

The February 8, 2024, meeting minutes were approved, 8-0.

B. DDRB APPLICATION 2024-004: VYSTAR GARAGE COMPREHENSIVE SIGN PLAN, SPECIAL SIGN EXCEPTION

Chair Ott opened the public hearing and asked Board Members for any ex parte declarations. No ex parte was disclosed.

Susan Kelly with the DIA provided the staff report, noting that the Laura Street and Main Street frontages of the garage are significantly shorter than the Forsyth Street frontage and yet the same maximum of 150 square feet of signage applies. The applicant is requesting a total of 261.54 square feet of signage with sign size, location, and type provided on the submittal documentation. Ms. Kelly stated that staff recommends approval with two (2) conditions of DDRB Application 2024-004.

Staff's recommended conditions:

1. *The square footage, number and location of signs on the parking garage at 28 West Forsyth Street, Forsyth Street frontage, shall be substantially similar to the comprehensive sign plan dated February 26, 2024.*
2. *Signage on the Laura Street and Main Street frontages of the parking garage at 28 West Forsyth Street shall be consistent with code, at a maximum of 150 square feet per street frontage.*

Chair Ott asked the Board if they had any questions for staff. Board Member Loretta asked how much square footage was being used on the Main Street elevation, and if the applicant could possibly need more square footage along that frontage. The applicant, Natalie Brown with VyStar, provided the response, saying that no additional signage was anticipated for that frontage.

Seeing no additional questions from the Board and no public comment, the Chair closed the public hearing and asked for a motion.

Board Member Monahan moved to approve DDRB Application 2024-004, with staff conditions. Board Member Jones provided a second. No discussion was had by the Board.

DDRB Application 2024-004 was approved unanimously with staff conditions, with a vote of 8-0.

C. DDRB APPLICATION 2023-018: MARINA SUPPORT BUILDING, FINAL APPROVAL

Chair Ott opened the public hearing and asked Board Members for any ex parte declarations. No ex parte was disclosed.

Ms. Kelly provided the staff report, noting that this item was approved for Conceptual at the September 2023 DDRB meeting. She reviewed the location of the subject site, as well as the proposed design of the structure, and gave an overview of the proposal's consistency with the Downtown Zoning Overlay. Ms. Kelly stated that staff recommends approval with two (2) conditions.

Staff's recommended conditions:

1. *Exposed solid wall areas on the north elevation of the Marina Support Building that remain after tenant signage is installed, shall not exceed 20 feet in width.*
2. *All site furnishings, hardscaping, and landscaping used on the Riverwalk shall be consistent with the Riverwalk Design Criteria.*

Chair Ott asked the Board if they had any questions for staff. Seeing none, she invited the applicant to make their presentation.

Cyndy Trimmer, representing the applicant, presented the application, noting the changes that had been made since the Conceptual review. The applicant also passed around a material board. Following the presentation, the Chair asked if Board Members had any questions for the applicant. Board Member Loretta asked about the height of the bulkhead. Guy Parola, Director of Operations with the DIA, responded that the bulkhead was being constructed at seven (7) feet per resilience guidelines, and would be designed to accommodate two (2) additional feet. Board Member Monahan asked if the applicant had some ideas for the signage wall if treatments were needed. Ms. Trimmer stated that they did not anticipate any additional treatments and do not want to clutter the building but would be prepared to meet the condition if necessary.

The Chair opened the floor for public comment. Public comment is summarized below.

One member of the public commented that this project was located on a gateway to the Eastside and local artists should be engaged.

Seeing no additional public comment, the Chair closed the public hearing and asked for a motion.

Board Member Monahan moved to approve DDRB Application 2023-018, with staff conditions. Board Member Loretta provided a second.

The Chair asked for a Board discussion. Board Member Lee appreciated the screening on the equipment enclosure. Board Member Jones asked about the parking spaces along the service drive and whether the cul-de-sac at the end included pavers or was mountable in some way. Mr. Parola responded that he would need to review the Redevelopment Agreement with regards to the parking, and the applicant's landscape architect commented that pavers were proposed for the interior of the cul-de-sac so that delivery trucks can easily maneuver. Board Member Davis noted an acknowledgement of the public comment.

Seeing no further discussion, the Chair called for a vote.

DDRB Application 2023-018 was approved unanimously with staff conditions, with a vote of 8-0.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Ott moved general public comment up in order to accommodate scheduling conflicts.

One member of the public commented made comments in opposition to DDRB Application 2024-003, Lofts at Southbank. The person noted that a better façade was needed, and that the self-storage use should be hidden.

IV. ACTION ITEMS, continued

D. DDRB APPLICATION 2024-003: LOFTS AT SOUTHBANK, CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Chair Ott opened the public hearing and asked Board Members for any ex parte declarations. Each Board Member had ex parte to declare; declarations are on file with the Downtown Investment Authority.

Ms. Kelly explained the design review process versus the rezoning process since the item is companion to a PUD rezoning application (Ordinance 2024-0152). She then provided the staff report, with findings that included that the project was not consistent with the BID Plan, CRA Plan, or Comprehensive Plan, and that the design is not consistent with several portions of the Form and Use Regulations. Ms. Kelly stated that staff recommends denial. In light of the DDRB's vote on Tuesday, April 9th regarding the companion rezoning ordinance, Ms. Kelly shared feedback for the Board's consideration:

- *Any approvals contingent upon the adoption of Ord. 2024-0152*
- *Provide gradual transition of height*
- *Create a more prominent ground floor*
- *Need to elevate the architecture – provide façade differentiation and character defining features that respond to the immediate context*

Chair Ott asked the Board if they had any questions for staff. Seeing none, she invited the applicant to make their presentation.

Dorina Bakiri, from Group 4 Design, gave the presentation, as architect on the project. Ms. Bakiri discussed the design inspiration, the screening of unoccupied spaces, as well as additional design details of the site and proposed structure.

Following the presentation, the Chair asked if Board Members had any questions for the applicant.

- Board Member Davis asked if there was a particular architectural style that the architect was utilizing. Ms. Bakiri responded that the design was influenced by varying styles currently existing in the Downtown.
- Board Member Monahan asked about the materials. The architect stated that the materials will likely be metal louvers, concrete, and stucco, but specifics are still in-progress.
- Board Member Loretta how trash would move in and out of the structure. Ms. Bakiri noted that the trash is located at the interior intersection point of the “L”-shaped building and that it would either be rolled out to Hendricks Avenue or to Home Street. Mr. Loretta requested more specifics at the final submittal. Board Chair Ott echoed Mr. Loretta's concern, citing the historic significance of the neighboring building at 1030 Hendricks Avenue.
- Board Member Davis asked about the specific layout of the self-storage floors, noting that the layout of the units on those floors could influence the massing of the structure.

The architect stated that the developer uses a different architect for the self-storage layout. Specific layout information was not available.

- Board Member Monahan seconded Mr. Davis's comment, expressing his interest at the interior layout of those floors. Cyndy Trimmer, also representing the applicant, stated that the interior would look like a traditional CubeSmart product.
- Board Member Dawson asked if the self-storage units were air-conditioned. Ms. Trimmer replied that they would be climate controlled.
- Board Member Monahan requested that the material of the planter boxes be more consistent with the surroundings.
- Board Chair Ott confirmed with the architect that the square footage of commercial uses on the ground floor has not yet been updated to reflect the conditions placed on the rezoning from Tuesday, April 9th.

Seeing no additional Board questions, the Chair opened the floor for public comment. Public comment is summarized below.

Five (5) members of the public expressed concerns about the design of the project, requesting that the applicant consider reorganizing the uses so that the self-storage floors are hidden and discreet; changing the materiality of the project; and utilizing spandrel glass to break up the facades. Members of the public also requested that the Board consider issues related to sanitation, public safety, and nuisances, and, in general, they urged a redesign.

Seeing no additional public comment, the Chair closed the public hearing and asked for a motion.

Board Member Monahan attempted to move the item. **The motion was seconded by Board Member Davis.**

The Chair asked for a Board discussion.

- Board Member Lee noted that the design was sharp and brutal and that not enough relief is provided by the vertical elements. He said that a creative solution needs to be applied so that the structure does not look like a 10-story CubeSmart.
- Board Member Jones stated that, while he is in favor of the mixed-use concept using self-storage, the architecture is lacking. He expressed uncertainty about the façade screening material as well as the design of the windows on the residential portion.
- Board Member Davis felt that the design of the structure was out of context and that opportunities exist to change the scale, address the surrounding context, provide more transparency, and break down the massing with more horizontal treatments. He stated that a lot more work needs to be done on the design of the project and cited a CubeSmart in Brickell that has corners wrapped with glazing.
- Board Member Monahan agreed with previous Board Members, noting that a re-work is needed and that the screening and colors miss the mark.
- Board Member Dawson agreed that something more creative needs to be presented.
- Board Member Loretta disagreed with comments made by other Board Members, stating that he doesn't think it is out of context and suggesting that a workshop may be in order.

- Board Member Berling agreed with the staff summary and Board Member Lee's comments. She stated that the project looks good as sculpture but that it is not ready for conceptual approval. Further, she felt that the project had massing issues and did not respond to the context.
- Board Member Ott agreed with the majority opinion of the Board and added that the overall form of the structure needs to be addressed before finishes.

Ms. Trimmer appeared before the Board, requesting a deferral since it was clear that a vote to deny was imminent. Further, she requested that the architectural team work with staff on the design, rather than immediately scheduling a Board workshop. Chair Ott granted the deferral.

DDRB Application 2024-013 was deferred.

V. OLD BUSINESS

None.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Kelly provided the Board with a hard copy of the Riverwalk Continuity document, explaining that the document was a compilation of existing Riverwalk design criteria and regulations and not new guidance.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Acting Chair Ott adjourned the meeting at approximately **3:56 p.m.**

The written minutes for this meeting are only an overview of what was discussed. For verbatim comments for this meeting, a recording or transcript is available upon request. Please contact Susan Kelly at 904-255-5307 or ksusan@coj.net.