CITY OF JACKSONVILLE
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD MEETING

Proceedings held on Thursday, June 8, 2023,
commencing at 2:00 p.m., at the Jacksonville Public Library, 303 North Main Street, Multipurpose Room, Jacksonville, Florida, before Diane M. Tropia, FPR, a Notary Public in and for the State of Florida at Large.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
LINZEE OTT, Acting Chair.
GARY MONAHAN, Secretary.
JOANA BERLING, Board Member
WILLIAM J. SCHILLING, JR., Board Member. JOSEPH LORETTA, Board Member.

ALSO PRESENT:
SUSAN KELLY, Redevelopment Coordinator.
CARLA LOPERA, Office of General Counsel
JOVIAL HARPER, Administrative Assistant.

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 (904) 821-0300PROCEEDINGS
June 8, 2023
2:00 p.m.

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THE CHAIRWOMAN: All right. We'll be punctual and call the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. exactly. I believe I see a quorum established, so welcome, everyone.

I hereby call the June 8th meeting of the DDRB to order. Thanks for being here today.

Just a quick reminder, if you wish to speak and haven't already filled out the speaker card, please do so, and either get it to Ms. Harper or Ms. Kelly.

I'm Linzee today, filling in for our Chair, Matt Brockelman, so please bear with me.

Okay. First up is our May minutes. Has everyone had a chance to review the May minutes?

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: (Inaudible.)
BOARD MEMBER MONAHAN: Second.
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Great. I hear a motion by Mr. Loretta, a second by Mr. Monahan.

All in favor of supporting the approval of the May minutes, say aye.

BOARD MEMBERS: Aye.
THE CHAIRWOMAN: All opposed?
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BOARD MEMBERS: (No response.)
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Show the minutes adopted.
Thank you so much.
Our first item for consideration today is DDRB application 2023-013 for the First Baptist Church play area. We are going to open the public hearing on this item.

Staff, would you like to read the report?
MS. KELLY: Yes, ma'am.
Okay. DDRB application 2023-013 is requesting a deviation from the screening requirements to install a maximum 5 -foot solid masonry wall with a 4-foot metal, picket-style fence along the streetscape at 620 North Main Street. Located in the church district, the subject site occupies the southwest corner of North Main and West Beaver Street, and is part of the downtown campus of the First Baptist Church.

The church plans to build a play area and recreational field for church use. Due to the grade change on the site, it needs to be releveled to accommodate a level recreation field. As a result, a masonry retaining wall has been designed with a wrought-iron, metal,

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picket-style fence atop of the wall. These materials are consistent with the Downtown Overlay.

The heights of both the wall and the fence are subject to the deviation request. The Code states that for the -- for a -- a wall/fence combination for screening, that the masonry wall should not exceed 3 feet, and the fencing placed on top of the wall should be no taller than 3 feet. So, basically, that the total height of the barrier should not exceed a maximum of 6 feet.

The applicant is proposing a masonry wall that varies from 1-and-a-half feet, which would be mid-block on Beaver Street, to 3-foot-7, which would be at the corner of Beaver and Main, to 5 feet tall as you travel south on Main Street, and then a 4-foot fence on top of the retaining wall.

With regards to the general deviation criteria, staff finds that, as currently designed, the -- the height of the retaining wall and its lack of visual interest are not consistent with the objectives, policies, and intentions of the BID Plan.

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significant, terracing the site to accomplish the grade change with a stepped approach, or altering the layout or locations of play equipment or the rec fields.

I do want to reiterate that staff does not dispute the grade change at all. We see that there's a grade change. We just feel like we cannot approve of the 5-foot-high masonry wall; that there has to be, like, an alternate design solution.

So staff has further conditioned that the fence be limited to 4 feet as currently designed. The additional foot, which is over the 3 foot code requirement, it might be useful, given the proposed use of the site and also the materiality and the transparency of the fence would not detract from the aesthetic along the street.

With regards to the fence, I do want to point out that the applicant met with staff and they worked with us to revise their initial submittal to get closer to the code criteria.
So you can see how much they changed from it on your slide.

So, as conditioned, staff has reached a
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positive finding on each of the deviation criteria. Staff recommends approval with conditions. The conditions are in front of you, but I will briefly sum them up.

So the first one basically states -- says that approvals granted by the DDRB don't exempt the applicant from getting any other approvals that they might need from any other department.

The second one is the retaining wall, that it should be a maximum of 3-and-a-half feet and that -- just, you know, recommends that that southeast portion, that there's an alternate design solution that could happen there.

The third condition is that the height of the fence not exceed 4 feet, and that the fence needs to be that wrought-iron, metal-style, picket fence.

And the last one is about adding some sort of visual interest to the masonry wall along the street frontages.

And that concludes the staff report, and I'm happy to take any questions.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you.
Board members, any questions for staff?
BOARD MEMBERS: (No response.)
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THE CHAIRWOMAN: All right. Great.
BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: I'm pressing the wrong button. How about that?

Hey, so I swear I saw a site plan that showed the playground stuff. It's maybe not in our -- okay. So it's not in our 11-by-17 packet, it's just in the smaller packet; is that correct, I guess?

Okay. I just was -- I knew when I looked at this before coming here, I had seen a site plan, but -- no, it's not in the 11-by-17 packet. So that's fine. I just was trying to find it here.

MS. KELLY: Through the Chair, if Mr. Loretta wants, we do have the agenda packet on the screen. If you need us to pull that up at any time, we can always do that.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: All right. Is there a presentation from the applicant?
(Mr. Hoskins approaches the podium.)
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Just a reminder to state your name and address for the record.

MR. HOSKINS: Coty Hoskins. I serve as executive pastor at First Baptist Church. My home address -- do you need my home or business

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address?
THE CHAIRWOMAN: The church is good. MR. HOSKINS: Great.
125 West Ashley Street, Jacksonville, 32202.

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I want to start by actually just thanking the staff, Susan in particular, for their willingness to talk and work with us on this project.

And I thought it would be important that you -- before hearing more of the technical side of what we're talking to you about today from Mr. Sykes and Mr. Lopera here in a few moments, that it would be important for you to hear from me as the representative of the church. I want to try to help you guys understand what it is that we're doing with the playground.

And first, before getting into the details of the playground, I'll start more broadly and just say, as you know from working downtown, First Baptist Jacksonville has been downtown for a very long time, and one of the
commitments of myself and current leadership is
that we would actually be good participants in the development that's happening here in downtown Jacksonville. We have older buildings, and with all the exciting development that's happening, that you guys are even helping to influence, we are excited to be a part of growing and developing and being a part of what is happening here.

As we talk about the playground, I want to highlight just a few significant things. So first is we have over 2,000 families that come down every single week to First Baptist Jacksonville. Whether they're driving 5 minutes or walking 2 minutes or driving 50 minutes, our church is filled with families with tons of young children, and we are seeking to provide an incredible playground for families to spend time together and do things outside.

In addition to that, though, we also want to be a church that's very involved in the community, and we have desires to be able to utilize the space to engage the community. Every year, we do events where thousands of people from downtown and the surrounding area

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come to our campus, and it's very important that we have spaces like this where we can utilize those to engage the community, whether that's a trunk-or-treat, handing out candy, Easter egg hunts, et cetera.

Three goals, real fast, that we're trying to accomplish. First is safety. We have a commitment at our church that our children and families must be safe. And I have great concern with the size of the fence and the wall as it relates to this.

Just to give you a taste of what we've experienced in the past with the homelessness near our church, a few years ago, kids were playing on the playground, a homeless person jumped the fence and started running around. And as our security guard engaged that person and did a great job, the homeless person bit our security guard. And one of the things I just want to emphasize is that this playground has to be safe, has to protect the families of our church and the families of our community.

The second thing is we really do want it to be beautiful. We are seeking to invest money in it, high-quality products in it, and

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we're not just seeking to throw something out there quickly, but we want it to look really good, where, when people walk by and drive by, they feel like downtown really is growing and developing.

And then the third thing is I really would like to see the space fully utilized. Square footage in downtown is limited, right, unless you build up, and so we want to make sure we can maximize the full square footage of the facility and maximize it for those families.

So thank you so much for letting us speak with you today and engage with you, and we look forward to taking your questions, but I also look forward to you guys getting to hear from these gentlemen over here.
(Mr. Lopera approaches the podium.)
MR. LOPERA: Andres Lopera, 969 James Street, Jacksonville, Florida 32205.

Do I start?
Let's close our eyes for a moment and pretend we're flying over downtown Jacksonville. You might hear this over the intercom. "This is your captain speaking.
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1 booking your flights eight years in advance.
2 You have saved Jacksonville taxpayers 3 approximately $\$ 12$. If you look down to your

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1 subdivision and you look through towards the front of the house. Extending off to the side, you're going to see a little 3-foot-tall screen wall, and it's probably going to be made out of masonry.

Why is that screen wall there? It's there to do a lot of things. You know, you could hide yo' kids, hide yo' wife, hide yo' trash bins behind the screen wall. But that's not what we have. We have a structural retaining wall designed by a structural engineer, and so it's not a screen wall. So that section of the code actually cannot be used for this particular job.

And the next thing is regarding the height of the fence. The height of the fence they have conditioned at being 4 feet tall. But the height of our fence -- the applicant wants a 6-foot-tall fence. The goal here is to keep the children safe. Children need to feel safe. You want children to feel safe. What's going to happen when little Pinocchio kicks his little wooden ball over the dinky, little 4-foot-tall fence? But don't worry, he swears he's not going to run into oncoming traffic to

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go get his ball.
So with a 6-foot-tall fence, it's going to aid with children feeling safe. It's going to aid with people being able to easily jump over the fence. And the applicant is also going to make it 50 percent transparent. So in my eyes, you know, a 4-foot-tall fence versus a 50 percent transparent 6-foot-tall fence, I mean, we're not even going to see half the fence.

So that's what -- yeah, that's where I stand on this.

Do you have any questions?
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Mr. Loretta, you are recognized.

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: What's your role on the project?

MR. LOPERA: I'm the structural engineer of record.

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: Thank you.
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Board members, questions?
BOARD MEMBER BERLING: I just have a question. We are grading down, right? We're going to lower the grade in order to level out the -- am I not mistaken? Is that not

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discussed?
And so the portion of the wall that is actually a structural retaining wall is how much? I guess, can you just clarify that for me?

MR. LOPERA: So the point is -- so the grade -- the slope goes down away from the sidewalk. So if you're walking off the sidewalk and you step -- start stepping onto the ground, right now you're going to be traveling downwards. You don't want that. So what happens is that we bring in fill dirt so that everything is on one level, so that, you know, when little Pinocchio is standing on the sidewalk, he doesn't step off onto the playground and break his leg.

So when we grade it all out, we need a maximum -- we need a 5-and-a-half-foot-tall retaining wall. And the point that I was making is that it's not a screen wall, so that section of the code can't be used. The retaining wall is designed by me.

BOARD MEMBER BERLING: But if you look at the rendering, like, the big rendering here --

MR. LOPERA: Yes.
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on one side, there's air; on the other side,
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there's soil. So if you look at, you know, the wall right here, on this side it's all air (indicating).

Here's the sidewalk here (indicating). Up here is where the soil is. Up here is where you're walking. That's the structural retaining wall part of it. So that whole thing that you're seeing right in front of you, that is all structural retaining wall.

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: Sir, I think what she's getting at is, on the park side, you can see an 18-inch drop, so you're basically showing a planter on the internal park side. And when you remove that 18 -inch wall and you've made that flush with the top of the retaining wall, you wouldn't have a 5 feet section. That's what she's trying to ask you.

BOARD MEMBER BERLING: (Off microphone.)
Full disclosure, I know Pastor. Our firms have done work on this campus, so I'm intimately familiar with the campus. We're -we are not actively working on any project, unless I'm mistaken, and my studio does not actively work on faith-based projects, and so there is no conflict of interest. But I say

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that to say I'm really familiar with this campus. I've toured it, et cetera. And I am really familiar with what they are doing. And so I think Pastor stopped short of really how involved they are in the community and some of the community spaces that they do have within this facility. And so I just wanted to say that first.

So I know this facility really well and this area really well, and so I'm trying to help get to a solution because I do understand the concern with the kids and keeping them safe.

MR. LOPERA: Yes. Thank you.
I believe I understand what you're saying. You're saying that if we remove the section of the planter -- hold on a second.

MR. SYKES: (Off microphone.)
MR. LOPERA: Well, why don't you speak on that.

I'm going to give it over to him, then I will come back to answer that question. I'm going to let him speak for a moment, if that's all right.
(Mr. Sykes approaches the podium.)
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MR. SYKES: J. R. Sykes, 2951 Loretto Road, Suite 1, 32223.

I'm with HD Turf. We designed the project, and we'll be the contractor for the work as well.

With respect to the overall design, the design was to create a planter bed on the interior. In order to do that, the current topography that we have shows a drop from the top of curb at the building down to Main Street of roughly 5.5 feet.

So in order to level the playing field from the building to Main Street, requires the exterior perimeter wall, the structural wall, to hold that soil back. The secondary wall on the inside that creates the actual planter bed, which doubles as a seating area around the interior, was just part of the design for the park-like effect of the space.

So if you take away the interior perimeter wall, that creates -- you'd still need the exterior wall in order to level the playing field and install the playground, et cetera, et cetera.

So I don't know if that answers your --
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BOARD MEMBER BERLING: (Inaudible.)
MR. SYKES: No, ma'am. In order to -- if you're asking if we can lower the wall at Main Street, we can't do that and level the playing field from Main Street back to the building.

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: I think the answer is, if you look -- if you go to your cross-section, you can. So, I mean, I can't read your stuff because we don't have 11-by-17s, but you've got a cross-section that shows your small wall on your inside, which is defining your planter, your large wall on the outside.

And basically, as you stated, the small wall is probably an 18 -inch drop, because a 15-, 18-inch, that's a standard seat height, so on and so forth. So what my architect here to my left is stating, if we just basically got rid of that wall, you could basically make the outside wall 18 inches shorter.

MR. SYKES: So I don't have a copy of the page that you're referring to. Is that a cross-section of the structural engineering?

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: Yep.
MS. KELLY: Through the Chair, it's from
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your permit set.
MR. SYKES: Okay.
MS. KELLY: She's going to pull the packet and show it to you.

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: I guess while we're
talking -- you've got this exhibit right here and the prior sketch as well. What's interesting is your fence, actually, in the sketch probably measures closer to 4 feet high than 6 feet high. So, you know, not sure if you guys recognize that. That's a part of your sketch. You can see it much better on the straight-on portion.

MR. SYKES: Yes, sir.
When we had the meeting that Susan referred to, we did change the fence height from 6 to 4 . So it was a subsequent discussion internally that we went back to thinking about the 6-foot fence.

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: And, ma'am, whoever is using the PDF right now, if you scroll down, it's probably like the second- or third-to-last PDF of the set. Scroll up. It's right there. That one right there. Okay. That's the sketch.

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So the bottom line is, the playground and the open field is on the far left side of that.

Maybe you can zoom in to the top left corner for us or show the whole detail there?

But you can see, the play field is basically 18 inches below that cap elevation at the top left.

MR. LOPERA: May I speak on that?
So that's one part of it. If you look to the far right, the far right is the soil that we actually need to retain.

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: You only need to retain the soil to the right because you built the wall to the left at that height. This is what I do for a living. I mean, it's -- you know, I mean, I'm sorry, it's not necessary. I don't have a problem with kind of what you're talking about, but you're just not speaking correctly. It's just not correct.

MR. LOPERA: The change in topography from the -- at the bottom left corner of this section -- and we're talking about a 20 -foot section of a 5-and-a-half-foot-tall retaining wall, so we're not talking about a whole lot.

The thing is, it's like -- they have
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agreed to perhaps, you know, make a mural around this thing. So the difference between 3 -and-a-half and 5 -and-a-half foot tall, overall, it's not a, you know -- for us, it's, you know, not a huge difference. But the -the topography map that we used showed a 5-and-a-half-foot drop at that level, requiring, you know, 5 -and-a-half feet of retaining -- of soil that needs to be retained.

So as far as the -- what you're referring to as the little planter bed towards the left showing a, you know, 18 -inch drop, the soil on the right is what -- is the soil that we need to level out, that area.

MS. KELLY: Madam Chair, can I ask a question really quick?

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Please.
MS. KELLY: Just really quick, I just want to confirm our data, because you're saying a 5-and-a-half-foot wall, and I just want to confirm because the materials that I received show a 5 -foot wall. And I'm only saying that because I want to clarify for the Board, like, what would need to be conditioned and what information we gave them.

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So is it a max 5-foot wall or max 5-and-a-half feet?

MR. LOPERA: Okay. The structural design is, you know, 5-and-a-half feet -- I would go with whatever is on those plans saying 5 feet wall.

But my main point is what staff conditioned as being a maximum 3-foot-tall wall does not apply, because that is for a screen wall. This is a structural retaining wall.
And the sketch that staff used in
Section 656-point, you know, whatever, is -only applies for a screen wall.

So my issue is with that section being used to defend their report saying that, well, you can't have a retaining wall or a masonry wall that exceeds 3 feet tall, which is not true.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: So, Mr. Lopera, I think my understanding of your answer to staff's question just now was that it -- we're going to agree with what's in the materials, which is 5 feet?

MR. LOPERA: Yes. Yeah, 5 feet is fine.
Structurally, it will work to, you know,
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10 feet. But, yeah, whatever -- whatever is in the report or whatever is in the plans, that's what we can go by, is 5 feet.

My -- yeah. So my issue is with staff using this section of 656 referring to screen walls and not to retaining walls, that that can't be used for this particular -- for any retaining wall in this area.

BOARD MEMBER BERLING: Point of clarity, I was just trying to see which -- what my member also was trying to help get to was that -Mr. Loretta earlier -- you have created that problem. You have made it a screen. You have made it a screen wall at a certain point. And then --

So it is a retaining wall up and to a point, but it could also be just a retaining wall -- I mean, just a screen wall. So at a certain point, when you took it that 18 inches higher, you created that issue, and that's why I was trying to just get to that basic agreement so that we could further make suggestions that everybody is amenable to, and that was the only point.

MR. SYKES: Totally understand now, so --
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基 would argue that it's only a screen wall once
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you reach that 18 inches above -- right? So -so at that point, then we're really not talking about a wall that exceeds the code, assuming that it even is applicable to this scenario, we're not exceeding the height of the -- of the code in terms of the 3 feet, because we're only asking for another 18 inches.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Please, Mr. Loretta.
BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: Okay. I have a few more questions for you guys about the design.

Let's say the eastern side -- I can't -- I don't really see a grading plan anywhere and I don't -- I don't see a clean site plan, per se. One site plan shows one thing, another site plan shows a little bit more.

Is the wall abutting the sidewalk on Main Street, or is there, like, a 1-foot landscape area between the wall and the sidewalk on Main Street?

MR. SYKES: No, sir. It runs right up to Main Street, to the sidewalk on Main Street.

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: Thank you.
Do we have a grading plan anywhere to actually -- I mean, I think if we would have had a grading plan, then we could see the wall

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heights a little bit better throughout, because I don't know that we actually have anything that shows 3-and-a-half, 5 feet, anything.

Pretty impressive, Susan, you were able to figure this out, because I don't see anything to show that.

MS. KELLY: Okay. So, through the Chair, we looked -- well, that was part of the reason we went back and looked up ten-sets and we found a thing from 2009, and that's when we were, like, oh, we have some topo here. And then we looked at the City's -- you know, the City's maps for contours, and we pulled that up. And that was more recent, and it still showed a majority of the 3 foot change.

And then the applicant did provide -- it should be in the agenda packet. They provided a topo. It's going to be an 8-and-a-half-by-11 from your agenda packet, but Jovial can always pull it up too. It's --

MR. SYKES: Page 4 and 5 of your 11-by-17 handout.

MS. KELLY: There you go.
MR. SYKES: There's a complete topo on
Page 4, and then 5 is a zoom-in of the grade
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change from the building to Main Street.
BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: So we don't really, actually have a site plan or a grading plan provided at this point?

MR. SYKES: No, sir.
BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: It's tough to approve anything without a grading plan.

What's the -- we keep saying "masonry wall." A masonry wall is just a block wall. What's the -- like, the material on the wall?

MR. SYKES: It will be --
BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: Are we talking about white stucco? Are we talking -- I mean, what --

MR. SYKES: It will be a cream stucco to match the brick on the building.

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: Okay. So that
just -- first time we've heard that.
Thank you.
I think those are all my questions.
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Mr. Monahan, you're recognized.

BOARD MEMBER MONAHAN: Thank you, Madam
Chair.
Is the -- does the grade intensity
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increase from the building to the street or from the street to the building? Where does the most intensive grade change happen?

MR. SYKES: Yeah. It's in that southeast corner, right there in the -- what would be Page 5 in your 11-by-17 handout.

So it rises -- the grade rises as you move to Beaver and Main, the corner of Beaver and Main, but when you go towards Ashley, which would be the southern side of the border of the park, then that's where the grade changes the greatest. And it's just there.

As we run back up towards Beaver and Main, the slope is decreasing. And so the wall, obviously -- the last page gives you the cut-aways with the heights of the different corners, so -- so, yeah, you can see -- see how it changes from one side to the other, if that answers your question.

BOARD MEMBER MONAHAN: Yes. Thank you.
So would it be fair to say that the closer to the building you get, the more flat the ground is?

MR. SYKES: Absolutely. Yes, sir.
And so at that point, also, again, in
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keeping with the overall design of having the planter bed on the inside, the wall reduces to a minimum -- or a maximum of 18 inches, 18 or 22 inches, something like that.

BOARD MEMBER MONAHAN: Thank you.
Can one of the members of your team explain the placement for the playground, why it's right on the streetfront and not closer to the building where the ground is flat?

It's not located near any shade structure.
So if you're a parent or a caregiver or a staff member who is supervising these kids, you're going to be 30 yards away from the playground standing under the shade? There's no shade trees around the playground. I'm just quite confused as to why it's spaced where it's spaced. And if you're concerned about safety, I would move it away from the street.

MR. SYKES: Yes, sir. So -- great question.

If you look at Page 2, the -- I guess -yeah, the black-and-white rendering, you will see some shade structures that are up towards the building. We do -- the church does have plans to install some shade out at the

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playground, just not in this initial phase.
But the reason it's located where it is, is because the shade structures up at the front are designed for outdoor activities as well.
So if we have a family night, we put an inflatable movie screen up there, we can have outdoor events, things like that, and that places it closer to logistically bringing in food and services and things of that nature.

And so because of the placement of those structures up there, that's why we moved the playground out to the -- to the Main Street side, and then allowing as much open field as possible.

BOARD MEMBER MONAHAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Councilman. COUNCIL MEMBER FERRARO: Thank you.
I was going to wait until the Board
finished, but you touched on some issues that I wanted to bring up.

The shade is a really important thing. I know when we did the zoo and we put the playground in, a lot of times, some of the swing sets or the bars get so hot that the kids

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can't touch it. It's going to have a reflection at certain times of the morning and afternoon. It's going to ricochet off the windows of the building and come back, and then you also have the hot spots of the street itself.

So the City has programs of actually putting in trees, and I was just thinking if there's -- if there's any way that you could do some shade, I think that would be really important.

I do agree with Mr. Monahan about the playground next to the street. And going with your three issues of safety, beautification, and then the user space, I think what you got is really nice.

I am very concerned with the same concerns
that you all brought up as far as safety and
people coming off the street, but I'm also concerned with the heat, because as this development happens and other ones around the city, you're going to have less and less, probably, wind blowing through there. So it looks like it would be a little rotisserie for kids out here if they don't have some shade.

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So I'm really concerned about some type of shade for -- for not just the playground, but the other areas.

And as I look at the walkways and the sidewalks, it's just -- it's really barren. I think what you're doing is a great, great thing, but I would like to see some more shade, because I know when we originally put in some playgrounds in some parts of our district, when we didn't have the shade, kids couldn't use it at certain times of the year. It was just too hot. So we had to end up going back and doing it. And right now, if we -- if it was put in, it would certainly be the proper time, I think.

So just my comments. Thank you.
MR. SYKES: Absolutely. Thank you for that.

So just a quick reminder, what I said a minute ago, the church does have plans to put shading -- shade structures over the playground area. It's just not in this original or Phase I part of the -- of the development.

If you go back to what our original submission to the City for permitting was, we had a 6-foot-high fence that was completely
opaque. It was a vertical fence. And that was for security reasons.

And it was 6 feet because we recognized that at the southeast corner there at Ashley and Main, you're talking about a wall with no fence that's 5 feet off the ground, and so the planter bed is approximately 5 feet wide.

So from the standpoint of where the kids are playing, the perspective in the rendering doesn't really show the depth or distance from the play- -- between the playground, the edge of the playground and the exterior -- or the interior planter bed, much less the exterior wall. So you're talking about crossing that distance and then climbing 5 feet through a planter bed and then over a 6-foot fence, the way it was originally designed. So the changes that we've made that are reflected in the rendering on the screen come from the conversations that we had with staff. So, originally, we didn't have some of those considerations.

As far as the shade goes, blessing or curse, one of the nice things about being a designer as well as an installer of landscaping

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1 is that we get to see the practical impact of 2 what design is down the road. And so the planter beds were designed specifically to take a particular type of tree, in this case crepe myrtles, that will be roughly 14 to 16 feet at installation. I recognize it's a deciduous tree; however, when it gets colder in the months, we're not really caring about whether or not we have canopy to hide under, from that respect.

But also because when you're talking about building something as it's designed right now, a shade tree is going to require enough room to reach its full maturity and allow its root structure to grow without impeding that growth with an interior perimeter planter bed wall or an exterior perimeter wall which would be more important -- even more important in terms of structural safety and -- so of the shade trees that we could choose to put in there for a size that the playground is, my concern would be that, over time, something is going to be disrupted; either it's going to be the maturation of the tree itself or it's going to be potential damage to some of that structure

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by the roots of the trees.
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Questions, Board Members? Any --
BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: I was going to maybe bring up the trees after the fact, but if I could ask staff two more questions.

First question: I'm guessing, based on testimony, the likelihood is they ended up actually submitting something to the City of Jacksonville, maybe for a building permit, and that's what triggered your guys' review?

Thank you for that nod. So that's where a lot of this probably got screwed up.

And then -- oh, gosh. I just lost my second question. Yeah.

BOARD MEMBER BERLING: On the interest -in the interest of shade, I was kind of disappointed. I like crepe myrtle. I have a lot in my yard. But I was kind of hoping, like, this was Ligustrum or Podocarpus for the sake of screening the children better. So that's an interesting selection.

MR. SYKES: I'm sorry, could you repeat the --

BOARD MEMBER BERLING: I'm actually --
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when I looked at this image originally, I thought it was, like, a Podocarpus or, you know --

MR. SYKES: It is.
BOARD MEMBER BERLING: Okay. Okay. Good.
MR. SYKES: So the hedge inside --
BOARD MEMBER BERLING: So the other one
is -- and that's the shade?
MR. SYKES: Yes, ma'am.
BOARD MEMBER BERLING: Okay. Good.
Because that's a great screening.
MR. SYKES: Yes, ma'am. It is Podocarpus around the perimeter of the fencing on the inside.

BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: So my question for Ms. Kelly: Typically, we would require them to bring these -- you know, Beaver and Main Street, up to code. So somehow we're not really doing that, right? I mean, that's really where -- there's a little bit of an issue right there.

And, you know, to some extent -- I mean, candidly -- I mean, I understand -- again, back to your crepe myrtle root zone issue, that's because you've created that second wall. You

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know, maybe we can get to a Drake elm and get a little bit bigger of a tree than a crepe myrtle.

But, you know, really, we need trees on Main Street as well. I mean, if we're going to try to come away with any sort of justification, Beaver and Main Street should be meeting the tree canopy coverage criteria, which, really, the only way you would be able to do that within your current design, if we're not forcing you to improve the road rights-of-ways, which would be a great expense -- but that's really what's required by code downtown. I mean, I just think we need at least trees on Beaver and Main Street. And I would tend to think we should go a little bit bigger than a crepe myrtle.

MR. SYKES: We still have -- you can see it in the rendering there, we still have the existing parking lot. There are -- on the south side, on the Ashley Street side, there's still the canopy there from the existing oaks.

So oaks in the parking lot on the islands, those still exist. There's palms also on the southeast corner as you approach Ashley and

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Main that are in that -- all of that stuff still remains.

And I -- to your point, I mean, when -when we submitted our drawings and plans to the City for permitting, we went back and forth quite extensively with Ellen and her staff over the trees, what trees were going to go in, how many trees were going to go in, what size the trees were going to be, when would they go in, and -- and as it is, you know, there's a significant amount of mitigation involved here already.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Mr. Schilling, did you have a question?

BOARD MEMBER SCHILLING: I do. I've got a couple of questions, yeah. Thank you.

And through the Chair to the applicant, one of the questions I had when I looked at this is -- it looks like the area where the shade structures are going currently is like a drive aisle or a drop-off/pick-up zone. Is the intent to do -- take that asphalt away and do concrete in the area of the shade structures? That's question one.

And question two is, if that's the case,
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does that impact y'all's circulation, how y'all do drop-off/pick-up for church activities, et cetera?

MR. SYKES: Yeah. No, great question.
So, originally, that road was designed for a car line at the academy that was housed in that building at one time.

Now, there are bollards on the west -- on
the Beaver Street side and fencing -- or construction fencing at this point. So what we're actually doing in that space is we're raising it up. We're going to brick that area. We're not going to mill up the concrete or anything like that. So we have drainage, positive drainage, actually, in both directions, because there's a little bit of an apex right there in the center.

And the brick that we're putting down is going to match the brick on the building. We've matched that brick as well. So that will actually raise up. So it's a flat surface from the columns and the top of the curb at the building, again, all the way out to Main Street.

BOARD MEMBER SCHILLING: Okay. Great.
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Thank you.
And then the -- the second question I have, or maybe it's the third -- and this is going to be a repetitive question, but I'll share.

I'm a little confused, and I want to make sure that I understand -- is -- in the cross-section that we looked at earlier, the cross-section shows that the part of the wall above the sidewalk or above grade is -- I think it says 48 inches max. So I want to make sure that I understand that when we're talking about a 5-and-a-half-foot wall, that's not the total height including the portion that's -- that's underground or subsurface, but -- but do y'all -- do you believe you need 5-and-a-half feet above grade, above the surface of the sidewalk?

MR. LOPERA: Yes. That -- that's correct.
And to address a couple of the other things that they have addressed, the inside wall -- and to address Mr. Loretta's question also, the inside wall is to create space between where the children are playing and the fence, to have some sort of border, which I

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believe that the applicant talked about that section with the staff.

So when the children are playing, they've got to go through a planter to get to the fence, and then the fence is, hopefully, going to be 6 feet tall to create a pretty decent barrier for safety purposes, as I believe Mr. Ferraro had talked about.

And so that -- so that wall is -- so that -- you know, both of them are retaining walls. If a wall retains a foot of soil, it's a retaining wall. It is not a screen wall. Screen walls are only when there's air on both sides of it, where there's ground on one side, screen wall, ground on the other side, air.

So the planter is basically for -- not only for decoration, but it also adds a safety factor and, yes, you're correct, 5-and-a-half feet tall.

And regarding the shade structure, I actually told the applicant the same thing, that I like when my kids play in the shade.

BOARD MEMBER SCHILLING: Thank you.
All good. Thank you.
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Any more questions?
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BOARD MEMBERS: (No response.)
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Okay.
Staff, do we have any public comment cards or online?

MS. HARPER: We do have public comment from Coty Haskins.
(Discussion held off the record.)
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Great. Thank you.
All right. Board members, we're going to move into discussion.

Mr. Lee.
MS. LOPERA: One moment. Did you close the public hearing, Madam Chair?

THE CHAIRWOMAN: You are correct, I did not. Thank you so much.

The public hearing is now closed.
Thank you.
Mr. Lee, we'll start with any discussion.
BOARD MEMBER LEE: Thank you.
And thank you to the applicant for preparing these documents. A couple of comments. I find one of the more offensive things about the project not necessarily the height, but the fact that it appears to sort of turn its back on the city.

So when you see a long wall that's solid up to 5 feet and then a fence above that, it creates a very hard line for the public. So, you know, one option or one idea might be to break this up. Rather than having planters on the inside, do planters on the outside, allow shade trees to grow up and over the fencing, and then you could push that fencing back 5, 6, 7 feet, and it would be taller, but it would be less offensive to the streetscape and potentially get a taller fence than 4 feet above.

So, I mean, I think there are some ways -and that would also give you a chance to kind of undulate the wall and break up that long expanse and create some real interest and some real activity for the public, and create a safe environment without taking away necessarily a square foot from that actual playground area, because they've already got a (inaudible) on the other side.

So, I mean, I think there's a solution here that I could get behind, but as it stands right now, I don't think I can get behind it.

But the renderings, by the way, are really
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beautiful.
Thank you.
That's all, Madam Chair.
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Mr. Schilling.
BOARD MEMBER SCHILLING: Thank you.
And so -- so a couple of things, and I
think similar to what has been discussed, I --
I'm in the same spot. I -- thank you to staff for your thorough review.

And I guess where I'm at right now is that I would certainly be willing to support staff's recommendation, but certainly I'm -- I agree, I don't think the look of an up to 5-and-a-halffoot wall right up against the sidewalk is the vision of at least what I have for downtown, and would not be able to support that request of the applicant.

One other comment I did want to make, just because I happen to be working on a project that has a similar situation, I saw the cross-section shows that there's a toe on your foundation, on your wall, that would actually protrude out under the sidewalk. And I -- and if you aren't already doing it, I would
recommend that y'all start (audio failure) with
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the Public Works Department (audio failure). I think I'm losing my microphone.
As far as the toe on the wall, I'll just
share that y'all -- hopefully, you are
coordinating with the right-of-way -- Public
Works Department (audio failure). It sounds like I'm -- (audio failure).

THE CHAIRWOMAN: I got "coordinate with Public Works."

BOARD MEMBER SCHILLING: Thank you.
Okay. So I'll just, then, end real
quickly in that, as requested by the applicant, I can't support that right now.

Thank you.
BOARD MEMBER MONAHAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: (Off microphone.)
BOARD MEMBER MONAHAN: It is working?
There we go.
I would like to, you know, extend my
gratitude for the church's commitment to, you
know, being a partner in downtown and seeking
to be a partner in downtown and bringing people downtown, and (audio failure.)
(Brief pause in the proceedings.)
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BOARD MEMBER MONAHAN: I think -- there we go. I'll be brief.

Along with the comments of my colleagues who are technical experts, I would have liked to have seen a concept mural, if that is something proposed, in the rendering of what it might look like on these -- this exterior wall.

But, you know, I don't think what we've seen today gets me across the line to support this, for a few different reasons. One of them being just the sheer height of the wall, the placement of the playground, and the lack of significant shade.

Thank you, Madam Chair.
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you.
Ms. Berling.
BOARD MEMBER BERLING: I'm going to agree with my colleagues. Thank you to First Baptist Church. I think that you guys do an amazing job of, you know, activating our downtown and engaging with the community. And so, you know, this is exciting in that you're taking this amount of land and you're giving it over to a park. And I see what you're trying to do as far as security for the children, and I totally

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support that.
I think that there are just some things that we've discussed that need to be overcome to get to an approval, like some of my colleagues' suggestions are phenomenal options, especially what Mr. Lee proposed. And so -and I, too, would like to see the mural, what you're proposing. Not to say that that's the answer, but it is an alternative.

But again, thank you for your involvement in the community and everything that you do to activate and to give people a place to go, and so I hope that we can get to a project that makes sense for everybody.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Mr. Loretta.
BOARD MEMBER LORETTA: So, I mean, I think it's somewhat interesting if you guys -- you know, part of me thinks if you just go back to the drawing board and make a couple of tweaks, you could probably make this work without too much difficulty here.

I mean -- and maybe -- you know, David Vicars, I know him well. He's your landscape architect. He should be able to handle grading. If you guys just take a little bit of

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a look at the grading here, you can make this work.

Your parking lot that's on the southern portion goes from 17.66 to 14.3 . Your sidewalk on the eastern edge is 12.5 . I mean, staff has basically said they're open to a 3-and-a-halffoot wall. If you basically make this entire playground and -- greenspace, you know, I actually -- I love Trevor's idea, but if you don't like that idea, you could basically make this greenspace flat at -- 12-and-a-half plus 3.5 is $13-16$, which would basically be the middle of the height of your parking lot.

And you could probably play with some walls on the perimeter like you're wanting to do, a little bit of an additional topography to make that simple. You -- the road north-south on the east side of your church, you'd basically have to drop a foot-and-a-half to this now-level 16-foot pad, and it would basically accomplish everything you want, keep the design dead on nuts, and just -- you know, would accommodate what staff has actually requested you all to do.

Beyond that, I do believe that we need, on
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Beaver and Main Street, at least three -- three trees that generally meet the criteria of the City's downtown guidelines. I don't know what that is for this district, but I would ask you to look at the DIA's downtown guidelines and look at the tree requirement. And whatever size plant you -- you feel you need, let's figure out how to get, you know, three on both Beaver and three on Main.

And I appreciate y'all for coming in.
Thank you.
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you, Board Members.
I am actually going to echo pretty much every single thing you said, so thank you all for your comments.

I'm excited to see the church making an investment, and especially in kids. I think the project itself is wonderful and will add value to downtown.

My biggest concern is a blank, unactivated wall that, as proposed, could be as tall as me, especially on Main Street, which if you have tried using Google maps to go to any event downtown, Google maps always directs you to Main Street going in or out. And so a blank

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## Madam Chair, you can defer it at your

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wall to visitors on Main Street who may have -be visiting Jacksonville for the first time is -- is not something that I want to encourage.

So I like some of the suggestions that have been made here today, personally, so I hope that those maybe are up for consideration.

At this point, I could entertain a motion. We could defer the item.

Ms. Lopera, do you want to direct me on our options?

MS. LOPERA: Sure thing.
Through the Chair to the Board, your options at this point are to -- you know, you could move to approve or move to deny. You could move to approve with staff conditions, which I believe Board Member Schilling pointed out that the staff recommend the wall height not exceed 3-and-a-half feet. So that's an option.

If you want to give the applicant maybe time to come up with a different proposal, maybe tweak some things based on your comments today, you could offer a deferral, or even,
discretion any time a vote -- before a vote is taken.

MS. KELLY: To the Chair -- and I just want to remind everybody that one of the conditions is that the fence on top is 4 feet as well. And I guess, you know, they had said that they would like the 6 feet. So I just want to point out that that is a difference between what they are asking for and what staff's condition is, aside from the wall.

BOARD MEMBER LEE: May I make a suggestion, Madam Chair?

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Please.
BOARD MEMBER LEE: I would recommend that the applicant defer. And if the applicant does not wish to defer, I would make the decision to defer.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: I am hearing no motions for approval, so I am going to make the decision to defer.

Is there a correct posture or way I need to phrase that?

MS. LOPERA: No, Madam Chair, that is just fine.

So, normally when you defer it, the item
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will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting, if that's acceptable to you. I don't know if you want to confer with the applicant, if they'll be prepared for the next meeting, or with staff.

MS. KELLY: To the Chair -- so I guess to the applicant, through the Chair, the next meeting, the July meeting is the 13th, right? July 13th. The August meeting is August 10th. So those are the upcoming meetings.
(Mr. Sykes approaches the podium.)
MR. SYKES: The question would be -- so there's a lot of moving parts, obviously, to this. And so the question would be, if we defer to July and we're not quite ready for whatever reason, and -- what's the process and how do we punt to August?

MS. LOPERA: Through the Chair to the applicant, you could work with staff, and they can get you on the next meeting if you're not prepared.

MR. SYKES: Okay. So then, yeah, we would appreciate the opportunity to defer.

THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you so much.
All right. Then I'm going to go ahead and
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defer DDRB application 2023-013 to perhaps the July meeting, to be determined with staff.

Okay. Thank you, Board Members.
Our new business, I am going to throw it over to staff to provide a preview of officer elections.

MS. KELLY: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair.
So, really quick, we have the funky and weird DDRB election cycle coming up, so there's an election memo in your packet. And just a reminder -- and this is -- just serves as a reminder.

So at the July meeting, you all will elect a chair or the current chair can serve another year. And then at that meeting as well, a Nominating Committee is chosen, and then -- I'm reviewing my bylaws -- and then the slate for vice chair and secretary is presented to the whole board at the August meeting.

And then at the regular meeting in September, that's when the slate is presented. And then they -- and then the newly elected officers take effect October 1.

But anyway, that's all to say, be prepared for election season because it's going to last

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year-and-a-half, so hopefully there are no real
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surprises here.
All right. So what you see in front of you, or maybe in the first of your packet, is the illustrative site plan for Riverfront Plaza. The cafe building is shown with the red circle around it. It has frontage on Independent Drive, and it basically opens to the interior of the park.

So this is a zoomed-in of that, so you can take a look. So I have better images that are going to show this, but just so you know, the playground/play area goes up on top of the cafe roof. So the cafe is at grade, but then the play/park area ramps up, and so the cafe is kind of tucked under it. It's really considered, like, ancillary to the playground use.

All right. Now, these -- the next one are these AXOS, and they are light, I know. I tried to increase the contrast a bit. But this starts to give you an idea of how that -- that grading starts to work, I guess, and how the topography of the site is being made. So as, hopefully, you can see from these various images -- but the -- the park/play area does

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start at grade, and then it ramps up onto the roof of this cafe. And the cafe are the -the, like, glass panes that you see underneath.

Okay. And then I do have prettier pictures in here somewhere. We're going to end with pretty pictures, but --

All right. So the next slide, please, Jovial, has -- this is the basic site plan of the cafe building. The area closest to Independent Drive is going to be an office for park staff, and then the larger space is the cafe space, followed by some bathrooms and electrical/mechanical/service areas.

The -- there is -- that, like, white path you see through the shaded areas, that is where it goes under the park above, to lead you to the park area. So there's that. That gives you an idea.

And now we have the pretty pictures I promised. So this shows -- this is sort of the aerial, kind of a drone shot idea, rendering of the park and the cafe. And this shows how it starts to ramp up onto the -- onto the roof with the cafe under it.

And then the last slide I've got for you
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just shows the cafe entrance. So, as you can see, I mean, there's going to be a ton of transparency. This is all, like, you know, glazing, it's pedestrian scale. We have an innovative and interesting design. And just personally, not related to regulations at all, but I know my kids are going to be really excited to see something that's not flat land in Florida and to climb a hill. So that's the basics on this cafe building.

And, of course, when we get to the other end of this park, the tower portion, that will for sure come through for conceptual and final for you all.

And if you have any questions, I am happy to take them.

BOARD MEMBER BERLING: So the ones that are marked "future," what is the latest and greatest plan for that usage?

MS. KELLY: So, Jovial, can you go back to the big, big site plan, all the way at the first -- the first colorful one?

MS. HARPER: (Complies.)
MS. KELLY: That one.
So that's the -- that's currently going
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|  | 61 |  | 63 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 1 | through the stuff that I don't have to deal | 1 | CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER |
| 2 | with. It's going through the economics and all | 2 |  |
| 3 | that stuff. They do have an architect who is | 2 |  |
| 4 | working on it. Last I heard, it was Bjarke | 3 | STATE OF FLORIDA) |
| 5 | Ingles. I believe he's still in the mix on |  | ) |
| 6 | that, and they're working on that design. | 4 | COUNTY OF DUVAL ) |
| 7 | And then that's -- so we're doing -- | 5 |  |
| 8 | obviously, I mean, this is really huge. We're | 6 |  |
| 9 | doing this in a phased approach. So the first | 7 | I, Diane M. Tropia, Florida Professional |
| 10 | phase is this corner that you're seeing at | 8 | Reporter, certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing proceedings and |
| 11 | Hogan and Independent. And then, hopefully, it | 10 | that the transcript is a true and complete record of my |
| 12 | loops around and we get the Riverwalk and that | 11 | stenographic notes. |
| 13 | western -- southern -- western portion of the | 12 |  |
| 14 | park, and that will be Phase I. And then | 13 |  |
| 15 | Phase II is going to be, like, that -- civic | 14 |  |
| 16 | stairs and the beer garden area and the future | 15 | DATED this 20th day of June 2023. |
| 17 | development. | 16 |  |
| 18 | So the park should, hopefully, be -- the | 18 | Diane M. Tropia |
| 19 | park that I'm referring to should be done -- |  | Florida Professional Reporter |
| 20 | the Phase I, we have 18 months as the timeline. | 19 |  |
| 21 | Fingers crossed. And then I really don't know. | 20 |  |
| 22 | I don't feel comfortable giving a timeline on | 21 |  |
| 23 | the future development, because that's -- so | 22 |  |
| 24 | much of that is kind of out of my hands. It | 23 |  |
| 25 | has to go to Council, it has to -- you know, | 24 25 |  |
|  | Diane M. Tropia, Inc., Post Office Box 2375, Jacksonville, FL 32203 (904) 821-0300 |  | Diane M. Tropia, Inc., Post Office Box 2375, Jacksonville, FL 32203 (904) 821-0300 |

through the stuff that I don't have to deal with. It's going through the economics and all that stuff. They do have an architect who is working on it. Last I heard, it was Bjarke Ingles. I believe he's still in the mix on that, and they're working on that design.

And then that's -- so we're doing -obviously, I mean, this is really huge. We're doing this in a phased approach. So the first phase is this corner that you're seeing at Hogan and Independent. And then, hopefully, it loops around and we get the Riverwalk and that western -- southern -- western portion of the park, and that will be Phase I. And then Phase II is going to be, like, that -- civic stairs and the beer garden area and the future development.

So the park should, hopefully, be -- the park that I'm referring to should be done -the Phase I, we have 18 months as the timeline. Fingers crossed. And then I really don't know. the future development because that's - so much of that is kind of out of my hands. It has to go to Council, it has to -- you know,

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all those things that, like I said, aren't in my half of our shop.

BOARD MEMBER BERLING: But what about the green area, where it says "future development parcel," that's closer to the water? Do you know what is the leading plan for that?

MS. KELLY: Oh. So for that area, if memory serves, we're hoping to get, like, a restaurant on that. But it's -- I don't think anything has been, like -- we don't really have anything for that yet. That's just sort of the plan.

BOARD MEMBER BERLING: (Off microphone.)
MS. KELLY: Oh, yeah. Yeah.
THE CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you, Ms. Kelly.
Staff, is there any additional public comment?

MS. HARPER: No.
THE CHAIRWOMAN: All right. Seeing no more public comment, we are going to adjourn at 3:06.
(The foregoing proceedings were adjourned at 3:06 p.m.)

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