

SITE PLAN REVIEW ADVISORY BOARD

NOTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, May 14, 2014

PRINCETON MUNICIPAL BUILDING

Meeting Room A –7:30 P.M.

Princeton, New Jersey

PRESENT: James Begin, Alyce Bush, Robert Cerutti, Dana Molina, Lydia Robinson, William Wolfe

ABSENT: Harry Cooke, Holly Nelson, Pamela Rew

ALSO PRESENT: Derek Bridger, Zoning Officer; Kerry A. Philip, Secretary

Chairman Wolfe called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. reading the Opening Statement as required by the Open Public Meetings Act, acknowledging that notice of this meeting was issued on the 5th day of December, 2013.

MINUTES

- a) November 13, 2013 – Motion was made by A. Bush and L. Robinson seconded the motion to approve the minutes as amended. The vote was 5-0 in favor. Motion carried.
- b) December 11, 2013 – Motion was made by R. Cerutti and J. Begin seconded the motion to approve the minutes. The vote was 4-0 in favor. Motion carried.
- c) April 9, 2014 – Motion was made by D. Molina and R. Cerutti seconded the motion to approve the minutes as amended. The vote was 5-0 in favor. Motion carried.

APPLICATION

- a) 66 Witherspoon LLC
Minor Site Plan
66 Witherspoon Street
Block 24.04, Lot 53
File #P1414-017P
MLUL Deadline: 5/25/14

Representatives for the applicant: Robert Ridolfi, Esq.; Stephen Distler, Applicant; Frederick Schmitt, AIA.

The submission by 66 Witherspoon LLC is to convert the existing service and office uses to eating and drinking uses, construction of an elevator addition, additional outdoor dining and a small second floor addition. Conceptual plans including a revised design of the rooftop and elevator addition were presented at the meeting.

Mr. Ridolfi stated that the application is to convert the existing UPS portion of the building, the first and second floors will be converted into a bar/restaurant. The restaurant "Elements" will be on the first floor and private dining space on the second. Fred Schmitt, architect for the applicant, presented a photograph of the existing building. He stated that three-quarters of the structure is being renovated, the Elements restaurant will be joined with Mistral sharing a bar facility, egress

components, and service functions (prep room). But they will be two separate restaurants with two separate chefs. The proposal is to add 308 sf of functional space on the second floor in the form of a new projection. An elevator is not required by code but they are proposing this so that the building is ADA compliant. The interior modifications were then described. The outside of the building will follow the carriage house design with a modern conventional approach for the small elevator addition. The façade will blend with the library.

Mr. Schmitt stated that there has been a slight change to the roof design so a revised plan was presented. He advised that they got away from the inverted truss and now proposing a simplified design, and the mechanical equipment will be within an enclosure on the rooftop above the new addition. The new design is flat with the existing roof trusses exposed. Stephen Distler, applicant, stated that he is trying to accomplish on the 2nd floor a feeling of an old loft in a private space. Residential scale condenser units are proposed on the rooftop, they will be screened and in full compliance with code requirements. W. Wolfe expressed concern about the rooftop units sitting on an angled rooftop and questioned if the units would have to be raised slightly. Mr. Schmitt acknowledged that the roof may need to be raised and the shielding raised slightly.

Mr. Distler stated that wooden framed windows are now proposed to face Witherspoon Street instead of the glass windows that were proposed in the plans reviewed by staff. W. Wolfe stated that the face of the stone piers must be on the property line because in the elevation it looks like the balcony face is 8 inches back and asked how far back is the glass pane. Mr. Schmitt stated that the glass is 4 to 6 inches from the property line. The windows may be folding or sliders, this is undetermined.

L. Robinson asked about the shutters on the 2nd floor windows. Mr. Schmitt stated that window openings without shutters would appear too small, Mr. Distler stated that he is willing to do whatever is recommended. W. Wolfe suggested that the shutters be painted with the matching stain of the windows on the first floor. He also suggested that the applicant extend the overhang on the south side so that it becomes a part of the overhang on the east side. As designed it appears that there is a gap of approx. one foot of glass above the bridging. It was recommended that the applicant take the glass down to the ceiling line or use the same façade material to fill the gap. W. Wolfe recommended pushing the elevator back on the Witherspoon Street side to the same line of the adjacent building "The Taste of Cuba", so there would be no projection. He also recommended that they retain the window that is on the east wall of the existing stair.

D. Molina asked about waste composting. Mr. Distler stated that they are in partnership with the StonyBrook Farm and they recycle their waste to feed the animals. D. Molina requested for a covered spots for bicycles, Mr. Schmitt stated that he will try to find a small space for a covered bike rack. W. Wolfe stated that the street number should be on the Witherspoon Street side of the building.

The landscaping was discussed, two planters are proposed near the entryway. The board fully endorsed the planters and recommended that they be between the tables and the entrance. W. Wolfe stated that he is not convinced that the Board knows how the building will appear because of the changes to the roof units and the ceiling and suggested that the applicant return with a revised plan. In addition, the roof plans and the elevations in the plans submitted for completeness are not coordinated, some things are not unified. He also asked for a section through the dining room and beyond. The changes are minimal so he suggested a meeting with an ad hoc committee.

The ad hoc committee members appointed are R. Cerutti and W. Wolfe. The committee members will meet with the applicant and if the revised plans are acceptable then the Site Plan Review Advisory Board members agree to approve the project without further review from the Board but the Land Use Engineer must review the revised set of plans for compliance.

Based upon the foregoing, a motion was made by Mr. Cerutti, seconded by Ms. Bush and carried by a vote of six ayes to classify this application as a minor site plan, endorse the joint Engineering and Zoning Report dated April 14, 2014 and to recommend approval of the application with the following recommendations.

1. The note from Mistral's prior approval (66 Witherspoon LLC - File #P1313-006PM) is omitted from the plan for the outside dining area. The applicant should add the following note to the plan: No cooking or kitchen operations allowed at gas 'fireplace' unit as per sheet A4, dated Jan 18, 2013, last revised Jan 6, 2014.
2. The new components of the east side addition north of the elevator tower and stone piers) should be pushed back to align with the existing adjacent building's front façade. The zoning officer noted that the zone regulation for building setback is 10 feet or on the property line – nothing in between. See comment below. SPRAB felt that by placing components of the second floor dining room and the elevator tower at the front lot line, the applicant's design is conforming to this regulation. The ordinance should not be interpreted to require all elements of the addition to be at zero setback.
3. One result of the above zoning is that the building façade is about 4 feet forward of the adjacent buildings and very close to the existing mature street tree, its well, and the street light. It appears that the tree will require pruning and this should be overseen by the municipal arborist.
4. Since the sidewalk will be narrower, a metal grating or similar aerating device should be provided over on the tree well, flush to the sidewalk, to avoid a tripping hazard.
5. The roof plan and the exterior plans submitted for completeness review are not coordinated and the proposed redesign of the roof does not accurately depict the final appearance. The applicant was asked to provide a cross section of the building through the Elements bar and dining room showing the relationship of the upper ceiling to the roof. The applicant was also asked to provide a roof plan showing the location of the equipment.
6. A revision to the design of the roof adjacent to the elevator tower may be required, as the rooftop units may not fit on the roof with the new design and the rooftop height may need to be raised. The applicant should attempt to mitigate the massing of the elevator tower by locating the screening at the existing wall.
7. To address design coordination issues, the applicant was asked to meet with an ad-hoc committee of SPRAB (Wolfe and Cerutti) and then submit revised engineered drawings for review and approval by the Land Use Engineer and the Zoning Officer.
8. The applicant should consider modifying the overhang on the south side to match and be continuous with the overhang on the east side. As designed it appears that there is a gap of approx. one foot between overhangs.
9. The applicant proposes that shutters be retained on the 2nd story of the south façade. If these windows are replaced and shutters are used, SPRAB recommends that both should be stained the same color as the front doors and window trim on the first floor.
10. The applicant should consider retention of a window on the east wall of the existing stairway at Witherspoon Street.

11. The building street number should be facing Witherspoon Street, located and sized to be clearly visible to passing traffic.
12. A material board should be submitted to the Planning Office for the file showing all exterior materials.
13. The planters proposed on the landscape plan should not extend beyond the elevator wall or the south wall. No additional landscaping was recommended because of the small amount of space between the parking lot and front entry.
14. The applicant was asked to review whether there is a location towards the rear of the site that is suitable for a covered bike rack.
15. The applicant was asked to determine the type of windows. No window component should extend beyond the building façade lines.

The ad-hoc committee met on May 22nd to review the applicant's revised architectural design, SK-2 dated May 21, 2014. The design shows an improvement to the location and design of the rooftop screening and showed compliance with #2 above.

The applicant was asked to further refine the design of the east side of the roof monitor, perhaps using it to mask the east gable end of the existing building.

COMMENTS

SPRAB would have preferred to see the width of the existing sidewalk preserved by having the front façade align with the adjacent buildings to the north, but could not recommend this because the existing zoning regulations require either no set back at all from the front property line or a 10 foot front set back. This requirement appears to be antithetical to good urban design standards, which suggest continuity with existing façade lines. SPRAB recommends that the Zoning Officer and the Municipal Planner look at all conditions in the Central Business District and beyond, where this or similar restrictions exist, and draft an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance for consideration by Council that corrects this requirement.

Vote on motion:

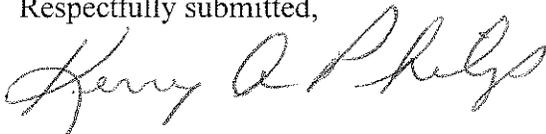
For: Begin, Bush, Cerutti, Molina, Robinson, Wolfe

Against: None

Abstain: None

With no further business before the Board, motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kerry A. Philip
Secretary