



Agenda Item #: 3

Project Title: 710 John Nolen Drive - Renovation of an Existing Office Building for a Restaurant-Tavern in Urban Design District (UDD) No. 1

Legistar File ID #: 70584

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Tom DeChant, Shane Bernau, Lois Braun-Oddo, Christian Harper, Christian Albouras, Rafeeq Asad and Russell Knudson.

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of April 27, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of the renovation of an existing office building located at 710 John Nolen Drive in UDD No. 1. Registered and speaking in support was Josh Wilcox, representing Cobalt Restaurant Group. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Jose Granados.

The Cobalt Group proposes a renovation of the vacant former office building in front of the Sheraton Hotel to a restaurant on the first floor with office, kitchen and demonstration space on the second floor. They will be removing a row of parking, integrating a trellis structure, landscaping buffer, modernizing the landscaping throughout, in addition to upgrading finishes on the trash enclosure. The existing access points and orientation to the bike path would remain the same. A new vestibule will connect to the existing parking lot, center core kitchen, dining and bar, activating that large corner storefront, along with an outdoor seating area. Upstairs will contain flex space where they could have private chef demos, train bartenders and chefs, and test new menu items. The existing EIFS will be simplified, a stone base will be added to tie to the story of the restaurant, and a mural will help make the large flat corner pop. The existing brow on the corner will be removed and replaced with a large sign.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Interesting project, and intention. The floor plan looks like a nice space to be in. I don't know that the exterior is working, I don't know that you simplified it. The stone as rendered may not work with the other materials; I'm not sure they complement each other.
- I commend the team on repurposing this building, seems like a nice use. Can you explain why the lower brow is being removed?
 - That brow really connected to the floating mass to the left of it. By pulling that off it allows the mural to stand on its own and defines that radius a little bit more.
- I agree, I think the only thing I'm interested in is its intent and function perhaps was to try to manage the solar gain there using good architectural design. I'd be curious on any thoughts about what you're losing by losing that function. The mural is a really sharp idea.
- This could be simplified and have more of a cohesive design, especially from the parking lot side. The Rimrock side EIFS has a darker frame around it; if you brought the black color from that "signage" panel all the way to the red and around (looking from the Sheraton side) with that same framed element, it would organize the color changes a little better.

- That's great, certainly something we could do.
- It warrants having a bit of relief from that bold dark color, but it's greatly improved from what it looks like now.
- Overall the planting palette looks great. In response to some staff comments, the treatment along the street frontages and parking lot edges could be bolstered. It would benefit from more plant material screening those edges on both the service road and bike path side.
- Echoing that, it's a pretty nice landscape plan, nice to see some different plants we don't always see and in these amounts to make an impact. Some varieties are particularly attractive to bees but those are well enough away from the seating area. Regarding staff comments about further bulking up to screen the parking, the section along the bike path has fairly strong existing elements of deciduous trees, but there certainly could be some upright evergreens placed in some of those openings. There are upright varieties of Junipers that could help in the vision triangle bed, or echoing some of the plantings to the east in that adjacent bed with Switchgrass and Viburnums would help block the view there.
- The signage seems excessive, that will have to be addressed. Love the mural. I wonder if the parking is adequate?
- I'd like the Commission to consider the following: black EIFS can be problematic with regard to fading and cracking due to its low reflectivity and those orientations. The terra cotta is a little different, it's lighter and mottled and will be more successful. Think about how that may appear over time. I'd caution against a black background for the mural; that means the mural has to be there as soon as the building is designed because you can't have a big black square just waiting. The material photos show the stone as vertically oriented, pasted onto a building that doesn't look very natural, particularly around corners. I would caution against a stone that doesn't have some horizontal more load bearing look, even if it is a veneer. There was also concern from staff on the lighting, ultimately we're going to be asked to address the lighting, is it the selection of lights?
 - It's the general composition of the fixtures, but more so the light levels.
- I support that position on the stone. I would expect horizontally oriented on that façade. Appreciate the comments on the black EIFS, perhaps charcoal could be considered. Will we get a crack at approving the proposed mural as we did with the old Ella's Deli? It's important to be part of the completed project, not looked at later.
 - (Secretary) Typically the Commission has adopted conditions that note unfinished murals do have to come back for details on the materials, mounting, lighting, etc.
 - (Wilcox) The stone is integrated with the interior of the project, it flows in and out of the building as a history of the restaurant, the Barcelona concept.
- Branding aside, restaurants come and go and we're looking at this as a part of the City, the detailing of the stone and certainly I didn't hear any criticism on the selection, it's just the way it's pasted up there, very applied looking, very 70s looking.
- I would entertain Initial Approval with specific comments providing guidance, or entertain a motion with Final Approval that would do the same, adopt conditions of approval that speak specifically to the comments we've heard tonight.
- I definitely would like to see it come back, I'm not comfortable with the use of materials. I liked the cohesion comment, but I would like to see that applied before we say Final. I'm not opposed to EIFS, but I'm not convinced the all dark black works.
- I don't love how this stone is presented, I see a disconnect between the renderings and the limited pieces that we're shown on the material sheet. A stone veneer can work as applied to this building, it's certainly a good contrast with all the EIFS, but I would encourage the applicants to not follow how it's mirroring something on the inside. I can appreciate where they're coming from to tie an inside design element with the exterior, but I would encourage investigating some other options, something more appealing with a more horizontal, linear element that doesn't need to match the inside. They could do better with the stone.
- I do think that the rendering of this stone does not match the sample at all, if the rendering was more accurate this might make the exterior more coherent.
- I appreciate your comments on certain elements having a 70s vibe, I'd like to hear the applicant's response to that.

- The stone certainly is an applied veneer tying into the branding of the restaurant, bringing the inside out in limited capacity. It's really just along the touch points of the lower level and framing windows. We feel comfortable with it, while it's certainly not a traditional material for a modern building, the texture is what's providing the interest. The darker EIFS, historically that's something to avoid given its ability to fade or crack. Those hurdles have been overcome in the last 5-6 years, we do a lot of projects across the country with EIFS and are comfortable with its ability to perform.
- While I understand the Commission's concerns it was helpful to hear the applicant's response. I'm inclined to allow them to have this color scheme.

Action

On a motion by DeChant, seconded by Asad, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (7-0).

The motion provided for the following:

- Consideration of repeating the framing element to make the design more cohesive and organize the color changes.
- Consideration of bolstering the plant materials along the parking lot edges.
- Consideration of upright evergreens along the bike path to bulk up the screening, and upright varieties of Junipers in the vision triangle planting bed.
- Look at the amount and application of the stone (horizontally oriented), how the other materials complement each other or work together in their locations, as well as the dark EIFS color.
- The Commission would like to see the final mural design details before granting Final Approval.