



Agenda Item #: 9

Project Title: 674 S. Whitney Way – Exterior Renovations of a Planned Commercial Site in Urban Design District (UDD) No. 3. 19th Ald. Dist.

Legistar File ID #: 69784

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

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of May 11, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of exterior renovations located at 674 S. Whitney Way in UDD No. 3. Registered and speaking in support was Brad Koning, representing Galway Companies.

Updates to the plans included additional planters as part of the already approved planting schedule to soften the west side of the building, reduction of the overall height and dimension of the roof plane, addition of a few accent bands top and bottom to narrow the white signage band and the roof of the building. The fiber cement panel will give texture to that wall, and transition to a soft yellow to match the Vintage logo. The north elevation now has stone to match the existing building rather than brick. Natural wood recessed areas were added as an accent to bring more presence to the west entry.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Very nice renderings. Can you remind us the origination for this project? Is there a functional need, or branding issue?
 - For the most part it's a branding exercise for the Vintage. The existing building is getting tired, they wanted to give it a more contemporary look. Instead of repairing what is there they want to take it another step further.
- Even the name of the company is Vintage, but I'm not convinced with this approach. Same style and form, similar materiality as what's there, I don't see it as necessarily an improvement, particularly the roof work and the massing. I think the building as is aligns with the brand, the name, and is not necessarily in need of that modernization. I like the planting proposed, the planters on the sides is a very nice touch. I wonder if there's money better spent in other areas of this site: improving the patio space and the landscaping rather than changing the building form and roof.
- I don't love it, but I don't hate it. There's some competing elements that are not working together. The modern approach is the way to go, but some of these elements individually don't work with the building as a whole. The wood looks heavy and foreign on the patio side, like boarded-up windows, and doesn't support the base of the window. The tile or the metal panel on the roof is way too big. I don't know if the yellow is trying to tie into future signage. Each piece works, but not well together.
- The existing building is set apart from the rest of the mall, maybe seeing it as a separate entity would be a valuable thing rather than trying to make it look like it fits in. You're trying to mask what the building wants to

be, which is breaking down the geometries. It has more of a pedestrian scale this close to the road, but it's really missing some window areas or some translucency to make the entrance more welcoming. There's a disconnect between what you're keeping and what you're trying to add to it.

- That retaining wall is really tall, unless you're regrading, that is not a true representation of how a pedestrian will see and interact with that façade of the building. I'd like to see that in a more realistic framework.
- This feels like a rebrand or general wanting to change things up. What's the intent and purpose, to give a fresh look, attract new clientele? I want to understand what's driving this.
 - The intent is a new look and feel that maybe spurs more business. The building is a little bit tired, both inside and out, it's a fresh approach to this existing building without spending significant amounts of money.
- I understand the intent that the Commissioners bring. I know this site very well, I love the place and like what I saw in the renderings. To a random person on the street, they won't see anything off. This is a benefit for the business owners, we should give them discretion on how they want to run their show. We're nitpicking this a little bit. I'd be in favor of letting them take the project as is, so to speak.
- People don't go here because of the building. When you have the opportunity to enhance it you can either upgrade the historical architectural elements or modernize. You're trying to rebrand and modernize, give it a new life. You have to go hard or go home, and those windows are a major part. Glazing and bringing in daylight is a major aspect of modern design. Especially if you look at the Whitney Way elevation, it looks like a bay window and the proportions are off. There's a lot you can do, but you have to let go of either the bases around the windows, or some of those other existing elements and just fully modernize it or renovate the building in the same era and style. There's too much conflict between the two.
- I always like to encourage redevelopment. The cedar shake, bay window, the roof all work together very well, but the introduction of modern elements doesn't work for me, it's kind of jarring. The lack of contemporary glazing, the squared off roof is too heavy, and the wood panels.
- We commented on keeping some of the funkiness of this building, this evokes no emotion at all, where at least the existing building has its integrity. It's not an overall improvement, I see seven materials where originally I may have counted four. We've got more going on now, and I agree celebrating the forms of the original building might refresh it in a way you'd be surprised and save some money.
- The planters along the parking lot side are a nice touch. I share the sentiments of this being a funky building, but also respect the owners wishing to make improvements. The overall effect of it is not quite right, it doesn't flow. The new tech wood is a key part of the design; what is it? I wish I could see the real material. Adding same sized panels on either side of the chimney might help a little bit.
- We do see some of these older buildings being accentuated for their quirky shapes rather than masked over. Embrace it, change the materials, add some color, you could make this more iconic than just covering over it. I understand the budget restraint, maybe just change the perspective of working with an older building.

Action

On a motion by Knudson, seconded by Asad, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (8-0).

The motion provided for the following:

- Increase the cohesiveness of the base and top of the building by utilizing the design elements from either the proposed modern architectural style or the existing more retro architectural style.
- Reduce the overall materials proposed.
- Provide a rendering of the Whitney Way frontage wall that accurately reflects the retaining wall.