

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

July 19, 2017

HDRC CASE NO: 2017-248
COMMON NAME: St John's Seminary
ADDRESS: 222 E MITCHELL ST
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 3975 BLK 1 LOT 1-4,6-10,17- 21,29, N IRR PT 4 OF A29,A-31A, P-100 & ADJ 16' STRIP
ZONING: MF-33, MPOD-1, HS, RIO-4
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 3
DISTRICT: Mission Historic District
APPLICANT: Mark Tolley/Mission DG, LTD
OWNER: Archdiocese of San Antonio
TYPE OF WORK: Amendment to a previously approved design regarding roof design, foundation heights, building footprints, site design, site parking and building elevations

REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval amend a previously approved design to include modified roof design, foundation heights, modified site designs, the relocation of the swimming pool, site parking, the elimination of one structure and façade modifications to include a redesign of structures G and F.

APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

Historic Design Guidelines, Chapter 4, Guidelines for New Construction

2. Building Massing and Form

A. SCALE AND MASS

- i. Similar height and scale*—Design new construction so that its height and overall scale are consistent with nearby historic buildings. In residential districts, the height and scale of new construction should not exceed that of the majority of historic buildings by more than one-story. In commercial districts, building height shall conform to the established pattern. If there is no more than a 50% variation in the scale of buildings on the adjacent block faces, then the height of the new building shall not exceed the tallest building on the adjacent block face by more than 10%.
- ii. Transitions*—Utilize step-downs in building height, wall-plane offsets, and other variations in building massing to provide a visual transition when the height of new construction exceeds that of adjacent historic buildings by more than one-half story.
- iii. Foundation and floor heights*—Align foundation and floor-to-floor heights (including porches and balconies) within one foot of floor-to-floor heights on adjacent historic structures.

B. ROOF FORM

- i. Similar roof forms*—Incorporate roof forms—pitch, overhangs, and orientation—that are consistent with those predominantly found on the block. Roof forms on residential building types are typically sloped, while roof forms on nonresidential building types are more typically flat and screened by an ornamental parapet wall.
- ii. Façade configuration*—The primary façade of new commercial buildings should be in keeping with established patterns. Maintaining horizontal elements within adjacent cap, middle, and base precedents will establish a consistent street wall through the alignment of horizontal parts. Avoid blank walls, particularly on elevations visible from the street. No new façade should exceed 40 linear feet without being penetrated by windows, entryways, or other defined bays.

4. Architectural Details

A. GENERAL

- i. Historic context*—Design new buildings to reflect their time while respecting the historic context. While new construction should not attempt to mirror or replicate historic features, new structures should not be so dissimilar as to distract from or diminish the historic interpretation of the district.
- ii. Architectural details*—Incorporate architectural details that are in keeping with the predominant architectural style along the block face or within the district when one exists. Details should be simple in design and should complement, but not visually compete with, the character of the adjacent historic structures or other historic structures within the district.

Architectural details that are more ornate or elaborate than those found within the district are inappropriate.

iii. Contemporary interpretations—Consider integrating contemporary interpretations of traditional designs and details for new construction. Use of contemporary window moldings and door surroundings, for example, can provide visual interest while helping to convey the fact that the structure is new. Modern materials should be implemented in a way that does not distract from the historic structure.

Sec. 35-673. - Site Design Standards.

(c) Topography and Drainage.

(4) Enhance or Incorporate Acequias Into The Landscape Design and Drainage Scheme of the Site. Where archeological evidence indicates a site contains or has contained a Spanish colonial acequia, incorporate the original path of the acequia as a natural drainageway or a landscape feature of the site by including it as part of the open space plan, and a feature of the landscape design.

Sec. 35-680. - Demolition of Historic Features in the Riverwalk Overlay Districts.

(c) Topography and Drainage.

(a) Other Items of Historic or Archaeological Interest. No certificate shall be issued for demolition of such historic and archaeological features dating from Spanish Colonial times including but not limited to acequias, dams, aqueducts, old mills, trailways, and other river related features or similar items.

FINDINGS:

- a. The St. John's Seminary campus first opened at this location in 1920 with the construction of the main, 3-story building located to the northeast of Mission Concepcion. A second building, Margil Hall, was constructed in 1935 to the rear of the main seminary building. St. Mary's Hall, to the north along Mitchell Street, was constructed in 1949. Several other buildings were constructed after 1951, including the chapel immediately to the east of the Mission Concepcion. Other site features include an allée of trees between Mission Road and the main seminary building, multiple sports courts and a historic koi pond.
- b. Mission Concepcion and the San Antonio Missions are an extremely significant cultural resource for the City of San Antonio. The Missions are the only World Heritage Site in the State of Texas and one of only a few listed structures in the United States. The historically significant St John's Seminary site was included in the nomination of the Missions as part of the World Heritage Buffer. The City and its partners are dedicated stewards to these important sites and have put in place a number of tools to ensure compatible development within the buffer zone. The Mission Protection Overlay Districts were submitted as a critical component to the World Heritage nomination for the Missions which ultimately gained approval from UNESCO.
- c. The applicant received final approval to construct seven new structures in addition to the demolition of accessory structures and the rehabilitation of St Mary's Hall, Drossaerts Hall and Margil Hall at the August 17, 2016, Historic and Design Review Commission hearing with stipulations that a salvaging plan be provided for structures at 203 and 205 Felisa, that each vinyl window be inset at least 1 inch within each wall, that a detailed landscaping plan be submitted to staff, that the archaeological scope of work should be submitted to the OHP archaeologists for review and approval prior to the commencement of field efforts and that the development project shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations regarding archaeology.
- d. **UPDATED DESIGN** – Several changes to the approved 2016 design are proposed. The applicant has claimed that an increased grade for the overall site is required to remedy drainage issues. This change has resulted in an overall increase in building heights as they related to the Mission Protection Overlay District. However, documentation that substantiates this claim has not been submitted for review. Other changes to the proposal include minor relocation of site elements and consolidation of smaller buildings.
- e. **MISSION PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT** – This project falls within the MPOD-1 and complied with the height regulations under the previously approved design. The revised design exceeds the height regulations in several areas. In order to mitigate the non-compliance with the height regulations, the applicant explored the use of a flat roof design with low parapet wall, but is currently proposing a sloped roof that exceeds the height restrictions by several feet. The HDRC has discretion to recommend exceptions to the height requirements where special circumstances, such as existing visual obstructions, exist. If the revised building designs receive a Certificate of Appropriateness, a building permit shall not be issued unless the project is awarded a variance from the Board of Adjustment.
- f. **DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE** – This request was reviewed by the Design Review Committee on May 31, 2017. Revised drawings, which indicated a flat roof design in order to more closely conform to the height requirements, were presented. A committee member indicated preference for the original roof design which was

more in keeping with the historic buildings on the St John's Seminary campus. This request was reviewed a second time by the DRC on June 13, 2017, where committee members commented that amendments to the previously approved design should be shown throughout, noted that instances where the MPOD was encroached upon should be clearly shown and noted that the proposed buildings are set back to the furthest extent possible from the mission.

- g. SITE VISIT – DRONE DEMONSTRATION – Office of Historic Preservation staff met on site with members of the development team, a representative from the District 3 Council Office and other stakeholders on June 23, 2017, for a drone demonstration regarding proposed building heights in relationship to Mission Concepcion. The drone rose to the height of each building corner and was not visible from the marker in front of Mission Concepcion. In many cases, the drone was not visible from the marker in front of the mission at heights of more than one hundred feet. The demonstration provided substantial evidence that the visual impacts of the proposed new construction would be mitigated by the existing visual obstructions of historic buildings and vegetation. Screen captures of the verified drone locations for the demonstration are provided in the exhibits.
- h. LANDSCAPING – The applicant previously submitted and received approval of both landscaping and tree preservation plans at the August 17, 2016, HDRC hearing. These documents included proposed parking located at the corner of E Mitchell and Mission Road and internally within the site to be surrounded by the proposed new construction and existing historic structures. The applicant also received approval to install new fencing to serve as a buffer between the proposed parking lot and the public right of way.
- i. MATERIALS – At the August 17, 2016, HDRC hearing, the applicant received approval for the use of materials that included cement plaster, Hardi board and batten siding, vinyl windows and doors, cast stone trim, wood trim and barrel tile roofing. The applicant has noted as of June 2017, that casement windows will be included as opposed to the previous divided light windows. Staff finds this appropriate.
- j. RELATIONSHIP OF SOLIDS TO VOIDS – According to the Guidelines for New Construction 2.C. in regards to the relationship of solids to voids, the applicant has proposed a façade arrangement which features proportionately sized windows and facades which feature a base, midsection and cap. Staff finds the previously approved design as well as the proposed modifications addressed below to be consistent with the Guidelines.
- k. LOT COVERAGE – With the construction of multiple new structures, the applicant will be covering a large percentage of the available lot space, however, the existing Seminary structures provide the precedent with a campus-like design. Staff finds the applicant's proposed site design appropriate and consistent with the Guidelines for New Construction D.i.
- l. SETBACKS – The applicant has presented a site plan which uniquely positions each new structure to have a setback that is consistent throughout the site, be oriented toward both the interior courtyard as well as address each street and feature primary entrance orientations that are situated to respond to the automobile circulation of the site. This is consistent with the Guidelines for New Construction 1.A.
- m. ARCHAEOLOGY-The property is within the River Improvement Overlay District, the local Mission Historic District, the Mission Parkway National Register of Historic Places District, the Mission Concepcion National Register of Historic Places District, and the recorded Battle of Concepcion battlefield area. Furthermore, the project footprint is within the site boundaries of previously recorded archaeological site 41BX12, which is also a registered State Antiquities Landmark (SAL). Under state law, the SAL designation mandates that the development project will require coordination with the Texas Historical Commission prior to the commencement of construction efforts. In addition, as illustrated on historic maps, the property is traversed by the Pajalache or Concepcion Acequia, a registered National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. Human remains have also been recorded next to this project area, and could possibly extend into the property. The development project shall comply with the Health and Safety Code of Texas, a state law regarding human remains. The archaeology consultant should submit the scope of work to the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) for review and approval prior to the commencement of field efforts. Archaeological investigations shall be required for the project area.

Findings related to site design modifications:

- n. SWIMMING POOL RELOCATION – The applicant has proposed to relocate the previously approved swimming pool location away from Drossaerts Hall to a more centralized location on the site. Staff finds this relocation appropriate and a minor change to the original approval.
- o. ADDITIONAL PARKING AREA – At the corner of Kalteyer and E Mitchell, a smaller building on the corner has been eliminated and replaced with additional surface parking lots. The applicant has noted that the previously approved structure has been removed to address utility and traffic concerns. The applicant has proposed to buffer this parking from the public right of way. However, staff finds that the smaller building at this corner contributed

to the human scale of the overall development, and was an important buffer between the street edge and three-story buildings. The previously-approved configuration is more appropriate.

Findings related to building design modifications:

- p. BUILDINGS G & F MODIFICATION – The applicant has proposed to modify buildings G and F to move them further to the east on the site and away from Margill Hall. Staff finds this proposal appropriate and that through this modification the general size and massing will not be increased in a manner that will be inappropriate.
- q. ROOF DESIGN – The applicant has proposed to modify a previously approved roof design, building footprints, façade arrangements and foundation heights. Generally, the design merit and overall design has not been modified in a manner that removes it from the original design aspect. Regarding roof design, the currently proposed roof design is generally consistent with those originally proposed in regards to form and materials.
- r. FAÇADE ARRANGEMENTS – The applicant has proposed updated facades that include board and batten siding, stucco, protruding balconies and railings, casement windows, double doors, shed roof balcony canopies and small arched openings. Staff finds the proposed updates to be generally consistent with the originally approved design and to exhibit the original design’s merit.

RECOMMENDATION:

Mission Concepcion and the San Antonio Missions are an extremely significant cultural resource for the City of San Antonio. The Missions are the only World Heritage Site in the State of Texas and one of only a few listed structures in the United States. The historically significant St John’s Seminary site was included in the nomination of the Missions as part of the World Heritage Buffer. The City and its partners are dedicated stewards to these important sites and have put in place a number of tools to ensure compatible development within the buffer zone. The Mission Protection Overlay Districts were submitted as a critical component to the World Heritage nomination for the Missions which ultimately gained approval from UNESCO.

Staff recommends that the new construction complies with the height requirements of the Mission Protection Overlay Districts. However, the HDRC has the authority to recommend an exception to the height restrictions in unique circumstances where an application is in keeping with the spirit of the overlay district. The MPOD intent is to minimize visual impact of new construction from the experience of visiting the missions. The applicant has demonstrated that the existing vegetation and historic buildings on the site would mitigate any negative visual impacts to Mission Concepcion. Staff believes based on this evidence that the new buildings will not be visible from the Mission and that the intent of the Mission Protection Overlay District is met by this proposal. If the HDRC recommends approval of the current proposal, then a variance from the height restrictions must also be approved by the Board of Adjustment prior to issuance of a construction permit.

If the HDRC recommends approval, the following stipulations are to apply:

- i. ARCHAEOLOGY-Archaeological investigations are required. The archaeological scope of work should be submitted to the OHP archaeologists for review and approval prior to the commencement of field efforts. The development project shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations regarding archaeology.

CASE MANAGER:

Edward Hall