



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:14-2422

Agenda Item Number: 14.

Agenda Date: 10/1/2014

In Control: Historic and Design Review Commission

HDRC CASE NO: 2014-289
ADDRESS: 840 E Mulberry, 731 E Huisache, 743 E Huisache
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 2806 BLK LOT 56 BELK SUBD
NCB 6077 BLK 1 LOT 8-10
NCB 6077 BLK 1 LOT 11
ZONING: MF50-DN RIO-1
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 1
DISTRICT: RIO-1
APPLICANT: Tom Guggolz
OWNER: Brackenridge Gardens Ltd
TYPE OF WORK: New construction of multifamily apartments and townhomes
REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to:

Construct a 4-story apartment building on the vacant lot at 840 E Mulberry and 2-story townhome units along E Mulberry. Proposed materials for the requested new construction consist of corrugated metal, metal panels, perforated metal, wire mesh and stucco. Surface parking for the units will be located internally within the site.

APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

UDC Section 35-671. Neighborhood Wide Design Standards

(b)Automobile Access and Parking. Automobile circulation should be efficient, and conflicts with pedestrians minimized. Entry points for automobiles should be clearly defined and connections to auto circulation on adjoining properties are encouraged to facilitate access and reduce traffic on abutting public streets.

(2)Location of Parking Areas. Automobile parking in new developments must be balanced with the requirements of active environments. Large expanses of surface parking lots have a negative impact on street activity and the pedestrian experience. New commercial and residential structures can accommodate parking needs and contribute to a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

A.Locate parking areas, that is any off-street, ground level surface used to park cars or any parking structure, toward the interior of the site or to the side or rear of a building.

UDC Section 35-674. Building Design Principles

(a)Architectural Character. A basic objective for architectural design in the river improvement overlay districts is to

encourage the reuse of existing buildings and construction of new, innovative designs that enhance the area, and help to establish distinct identities for each of the zone districts. At the same time, these new buildings should reinforce established building traditions and respect the contexts of neighborhoods.

When a new building is constructed, it shall be designed in a manner that reinforces the basic character-defining features of the area. Such features include the way in which a building is located on its site, the manner in which it faces the street and its orientation to the river. When these design variables are arranged in a new building to be similar to those seen traditionally, visual compatibility results.

(b)Mass and Scale. A building shall appear to have a "human scale." In general, this scale can be accomplished by using familiar forms and elements interpreted in human dimensions. Exterior wall designs shall help pedestrians establish a sense of scale with relation to each building. Articulating the number of floors in a building can help to establish a building's scale, for example, and prevent larger buildings from dwarfing the pedestrian.

(1)Express facade components in ways that will help to establish building scale.

A.Treatment of architectural facades shall contain a discernable pattern of mass to void, or windows and doors to solid mass. Openings shall appear in a regular pattern, or be clustered to form a cohesive design. Architectural elements such as columns, lintels, sills, canopies, windows and doors should align with other architectural features on the adjacent facades.

(2)Align horizontal building elements with others in the blockface to establish building scale.

A.Align at least one (1) horizontal building element with another horizontal building element on the same block face. It will be considered to be within alignment if it is within three (3) feet, measured vertically, of the existing architectural element.

(3)Express the distinction between upper and lower floors.

A.Develop the first floor as primarily transparent. The building facade facing a major street shall have at least fifty (50) percent of the street level facade area devoted to display windows and/or windows affording some view into the interior areas. Multi-family residential buildings with no retail or office space are exempt from this requirement.

(4)Where a building facade faces the street or river and exceeds the maximum facade length allowed in Table 674 -1 divide the facade of building into modules that express traditional dimensions.

(d)Materials and Finishes. Masonry materials are well established as primary features along the river corridor and their use should be continued. Stucco that is detailed to provide a texture and pattern, which conveys a human scale, is also part of the tradition. In general, materials and finishes that provide a sense of human scale, reduce the perceived mass of a building and appear to blend with the natural setting of the river shall be used, especially on major structures.

(1)Use indigenous materials and traditional building materials for primary wall surfaces. A minimum of seventy-five (75) percent of walls (excluding window fenestrations) shall be composed of the following:

A.Modular masonry materials including brick, stone, and rusticated masonry block, tile, terra-cotta, structural clay tile and cast stone. Concrete masonry units (CMU) are not allowed.

B.Other new materials that convey the texture, scale, and finish similar to traditional building materials.

C.Stucco and painted concrete when detailed to express visual interest and convey a sense of scale.

D.Painted or stained wood in a lap or shingle pattern.

(2)The following materials are not permitted as primary building materials and may be used as a secondary material only:

A.Large expanses of high gloss or shiny metal panels.

B.Mirror glass panels. Glass curtain wall buildings are allowed in RIO-3 as long as the river and street levels comply with 35-674

<https://library.municode.com/HTML/14228/level2/ARTVIHIPRURDE_DIV6RIDI.html>(d)(1) above.

(3)Paint or Finish Colors.

A.Use natural colors of indigenous building materials for properties that abut the Riverwalk area.

B.Use matte finishes instead of high glossy finishes on wall surfaces. Wood trim and metal trim may be painted with gloss enamel.

C.Bright colors may highlight entrances or architectural features.

(e)Facade Composition. Traditionally, many commercial and multi-family buildings in the core of San Antonio have had facade designs that are organized into three (3) distinct segments: First, a "base" exists, which establishes a scale at the street level; second a "mid-section," or shaft is used, which may include several floors. Finally a "cap" finishes the composition. The cap may take the form of an ornamental roof form or decorative molding and may also include the top floors of the building. This organization helps to give a sense of scale to a building and its use should be encouraged.

In order to maintain the sense of scale, buildings should have the same setback as surrounding buildings so as to maintain the street-wall pattern, if clearly established.

In contrast, the traditional treatment of facades along the riverside has been more modest. This treatment is largely a result of the fact that the riverside was a utilitarian edge and was not oriented to the public. Today, even though orienting buildings to the river is a high priority objective, it is appropriate that these river-oriented facades be simpler in character than those facing the street.

(1)Street Facade. Buildings that are taller than the street-wall (sixty (60) feet) shall be articulated at the stop of the street wall or stepped back in order to maintain the rhythm of the street wall. Buildings should be composed to include a base, a middle and a cap.

A.High rise buildings, more than one hundred (100) feet tall, shall terminate with a distinctive top or cap. This can be accomplished by:

- i.Reducing the bulk of the top twenty (20) percent of the building by ten (10) percent.
- ii.By stepping back the top twenty (20) percent of the building.
- iii.Changing the material of the cap.

B.Roof forms shall be used to conceal all mechanical equipment and to add architectural interest to the structure.

C.Roof surfaces should include strategies to reduce heat island effects such as use of green roofs, photo voltaic panels, and/or the use of roof materials with high solar reflectivity.

(2)Fenestration. Windows help provide a human scale and so shall be proportioned accordingly.

A.Windows shall be recessed at least two (2) inches within solid walls (not part of a curtain wall system).

B.Windows should relate in design and scale to the spaces behind them.

C.Windows shall be used in hierarchy to articulate important places on the facade and grouped to establish rhythms.

D.Curtain wall systems shall be designed with modulating features such as projecting horizontal and/or vertical mullions.

UDC Section. 35-675. Archaeology.

When an HDRC application is submitted for commercial development projects within a river improvement overlay district the city archeologist shall review the project application to determine if there is potential of containing intact archaeological deposits utilizing the following documents/methods:

- (1)The Texas Sites Atlas for known/recorded sites, site data in the files of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory and the Texas Historical Commission;
- (2)USGS maps;
- (3)Soil Survey maps;
- (4)Distance to water;
- (5)Topographical data;
- (6)Predictive settlement patterns;
- (7)Archival research and historic maps;
- (8)Data on file at the office of historic preservation.

If after review the city archeologist determines there is potential of containing intact archaeological deposits, an archaeological survey report shall be prepared and submitted. If, after review by the city archeologist, a determination is made that the site has little to no potential of containing intact archaeological deposits, the requirement for an archaeological survey report may be waived.

Upon completion of a survey, owners of property containing inventoried archaeological sites are encouraged to educate the public regarding archaeological components of the site and shall coordinate any efforts with the office of historic preservation.

FINDINGS:

- a. This request was reviewed by the Design Review Committee on August 26, 2014. At that meeting, the applicant indicated that the site plan was organized to preserve as many mature trees as possible. Further considerations were being made to reduce stormwater runoff on the site. The applicant indicated that there was a desire to connect the site landscaping to the adjacent park space and that fencing between the properties would be minimal. The

committee members noted that the massing, placement and scale of the proposed buildings were appropriate and agreed that the site plan had been thoughtfully developed. The committee suggested that exterior walls that had limited fenestrations be reconsidered. The committee also requested that more detail regarding exterior finishes be provided.

- b. This request was reviewed by the Design Review Committee again on September 9, 2014, to assess the proposed materials for the project. The applicant presented other examples located within the RIO which incorporate similar materials. The committee members present agreed that there was precedent and that the selected materials would provide sufficient shadow lines consistent with the intent of UDC Section 672(d). There was concern expressed over the length of unbroken facade, particularly along Mulberry.
- c. The proposed site is in close proximity to Brackenridge Park. Although a landscaping plan has not been submitted for review, the perimeter treatment and landscaping design of the proposed development must comply with UDC Section 35-673, Site Design Standards.
- d. The proposed parking area is located towards the interior of the site consistent with UDC Section 35-671(b)(2).
- e. The proposed height and scale of the proposed new construction is consistent with UDC Section 35-672(b).
- f. UDC Section 35-672(d) requires that at least 75% of building surfaces implement exterior materials that are either traditional or convey a human scale. Brick, or other masonry units, are strongly encouraged. It is unclear whether the proposed metal siding types meet this requirement. The use of traditional masonry units would be more consistent with the UDC.
- g. UDC Section 35-672(e) provides guidance for the façade composition of new buildings in the RIO. New buildings should have an articulated base, middle and cap. The base (ground floor) of the proposed new construction is clearly distinguished by a change in materials. However, staff finds that the proposed new construction lacks a traditional “cap”. While a modern design is not expressly discouraged in the UDC, staff finds that the applicant should explore ways to incorporate this required cap element into the design.
- h. The proposed fenestrations, although not of traditional dimensions, are recessed at least two inches within the exterior walls and are divided vertically and horizontally by mullions consistent with UDC Section 35-672(e)(2).
- i. UDC Section 35-675 requires an archaeological survey wherever a property has potential of containing intact archaeological deposits. Due to the projects proximity to known archaeological resources and the potential for impact to previously-unidentified resources, an archaeological investigation will be required prior to any construction activities.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval with the following stipulations:

- 1) That a detailed landscape plan be submitted for HDRC review based on finding c.
- 2) That more traditional building materials, such brick or other masonry units, be incorporated into the façade based on finding f..
- 3) That an archaeological investigation occurs prior to any construction activity and that results are submitted to OHP staff for concurrence based on finding i.

The applicant has met with the River Road Neighborhood Association and has indicated that a number of changes will be presented at the public hearing for HDRC consideration. Although staff has not reviewed these changes, discussions with the applicant indicate that they likely meet the recommended stipulations.

CASE COMMENTS:

The applicant is responsible for satisfying all federal, state, or local cultural resources laws, rules, and regulations that may apply to this site.

CASE MANAGER:

