



Summary of Actions
Mount Rainier Mixed-Use-Town Center Design Review Committee
April 14, 2021

APPROVED JULY 14, 2021

The Mount Rainier Mixed-Use-Town Center (M-U-TC) Design Review Committee held its regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, April 14, 2021 using GoToMeeting video conferencing software (Meeting I.D. 716532181). The meeting was hosted by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Prince George's County Planning Department's Community Planning Division.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Cederoth called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Chair Nathan Cederoth, Vice Chair Robin Bliss, Elina Bravve, Mario Cisneros

Committee Members Absent: Justin Bost, Nathan Burtch, Anthony Lee

Staff Present: **M-NCPPC**
Daniel Sams, Mount Rainier M-U-TC Staff Liaison

City of Mount Rainier
Ronald Hopkins, Director of Economic Development

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Cederoth asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Motion: Vice Chair Bliss moved to approve the agenda with the stipulation that Item C.1, Approval of the October 14, 2020 Meeting Summary be moved to the end of the meeting.

Second: Mr. Cisneros seconded the motion.

The motion passed in a vote of 4-0

C. NEW BUSINESS

- 1. Era Wine Bar, 3300 Rhode Island Avenue**—Ms. Michelle Grant and associates representing Era Wine Bar LLC.

Committee: Chair Cederoth ask if there was a staff report and Mr. Sams indicated there was not, but that he could guide the committee to some applicable development plan standards for consideration.

Applicant: Ms. Grant explained that they were pleased to be on the same block as the restaurant Pennyroyal Station. She stated that wood would be used for the face of the signs, and that the corner hanging sign was meant to evoke a wine barrel. She confirmed that the drawing of the hanging sign, showing the Singer Building in perspective, incorrectly showed it fixed flat to the building at the intersection of 33rd Street and Rhode Island Avenue, but that it was proposed to install it perpendicular to the building face as a hanging sign on a bracket.

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss asked if they had selected a sign manufacturer, and if the other sign was painted on the building or if it was a flat sign.

Applicant: Ms. Grant responded that they were planning to work with the same artist who fabricated the Pennyroyal Station sign. She confirmed that it was a flat board sign.

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss encouraged the applicant to make sure the lettering was large enough, and to consider using the wine glass motif as the sole image on the proposed hanging sign. She indicated that generally a white typestyle on a dark background (such as maroon) is more readable than the reverse. Chair Cederoth asked if the frames of the signs were metal.

Applicant: Ms. Grant confirmed that it was proposed to use a metal frame for the wood signs, and that the wood portion would be set back from the frame by one-half inch.

Committee: Citing Architectural Elements Signage-Hanging Signs Standard 2, Chair Cederoth asked if the bracket and sign projected no more than 42 inches from the building, completed some calculations and determined the proposed sign conformed to this standard.

A discussion of development plan standards signage dimension limits ensued. It was stated that the building had approximately 58.53 feet of linear building frontage on Rhode Island Avenue; therefore, Architectural Elements Signage Standard 3 could permit a maximum of 58.53 gross square feet of signage. The Rhode Island Avenue façade is divided into what appears to be three storefront bays, which would appear to indicate a maximum signable area for each bay of 19.51 gross square feet (58.53/3). However, there are only two storefronts: Era Wine Bar will occupy the bay at the left, and the remaining windows and double-leaf door access another retail space, currently vacant. If the building is divided into two storefronts, the permitted gross square feet for each storefront sign would then be approximately 29.26 square feet (58.3/2).

Applicant: Ms. Grant confirmed the flat sign size they were requesting was 12 feet by 3 feet for a total of 36 square feet of signage on the Rhode Island Avenue façade.

Committee: Citing Architectural Elements Signage Standard 3 Chair Cederoth indicated that was too large.

Applicant: Ms. Grant stated that it was important that the sign be visible from the road. She indicated they had installed a temporary banner that was 4 feet high by 16 feet long, which was the same size as the “RETAIL FOR LEASE” banner that had been in that location for some time. [Google Street View shows the banner in place as early as July 2019.]

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss stated she supported a large sign.

Staff: Mr. Sams read aloud the relevant signage standards and sign dimension limits on page 100 of the development plan.

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss asked if the drawing on page D5 of the applicant’s submittal package was to scale.

Applicant: Ms. Grant responded that it showed a sign 2 feet high by 10 feet long.

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss asked if the committee could approve a sign drawing with the correct proportions after the meeting.

Staff: Mr. Sams said yes, provided the drawing reflected the motion for a recommendation for approval made at the meeting.

A discussion of fonts, font colors and their placement on the signs ensued.

Applicant: Ms. Grant stated that the Pennyroyal Sign was 21 feet long.

Committee: Chair Cederoth indicated the committee may have considered the sign to extend over two building bays.

Applicant: Ms. Grant stated that that does not help their business or building.

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss asked if there was a way to word a conditioned approval so that what was proposed was in compliance with the standards. Chair Cederoth reiterated there was an 8-foot flat sign length limit. He wondered if the “should” in Architectural Elements Signage Standard 3 provided any way to expand it.

Staff: Mr. Sams explained that if the applicant proposed a maximum flat board sign of 8 feet long by 3 feet high, or 24 gross square feet, in theory a second sign of 5 gross square feet or less could be proposed and still conform to the development standards if using 29.26 gross square feet as the maximum amount of signage permitted for this storefront.

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss stated that the drawing did not look like it was scaled at 3 feet high by 12 feet long as written in the application, but that from the aspect ratio shown, it appeared to be more like 7 feet wide if the height was scaled to 3 feet. The vice chair suggested creating the drawings in CAD so that they would be appropriately scaled.

Applicant: Ms. Grant stated that if 8 feet in length was the limit, they could scale the sign down to that, and asked if the three feet was also a maximum.

Committee: Chair Cederoth stated that 3 feet was the maximum height for flat board signs and suggested the applicant could propose two signs for the Rhode Island Avenue façade.

A discussion of the maximum sign dimensions ensued.

Applicant: Ms. Grant indicated they preferred one sign.

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss asked if based on the Pennyroyal sign could a longer sign be recommended for approval. Chair Cederoth stated that the Pennyroyal sign was not relevant vis-à-vis the current application.

Applicant: Ms. Grant stated they just wanted direction from the committee. If they were required to change the flat sign dimensions, what do they need to be?

Committee: Chair Cederoth stated the *raison d'être* of any development plan standard is to review for compliance with it. He stated the committee tried to offer guidance, and that “maximum” cannot be interpreted any other way than “maximum.” He requested a motion that would recommend approval of the application based on conditions that it conformed to the standards. Vice Chair Bliss said that the committee wants to respect the integrity of the sign’s design as submitted.

Applicant: Ms. Grant stated they understood the flat sign sizing parameters and that was fine with them.

Motion: Ms. Bravve moved to recommend approval of the application as submitted provided the flat sign dimensions be limited to 8 feet long by 3 feet high with 12-inch-high lettering to conform with the development plan standards.

Second: Mr. Cisneros seconded the motion.

The motion passed in a vote of 3-1-0, Vice Chair Bliss dissenting.

2. Welcome Center, 3311 Rhode Island Avenue—Mr. Ronald Hopkins representing the City of Mount Rainier.

Applicant: Mr. Hopkins stated that this was a joint project between the Prince George’s County Arts and Humanities Council and the City of Mount Rainier.

Committee: Chair Cederoth summarized the staff report by stating it should be determined if the proposal was “art” or “signage.” He asked if the committee foresaw any “landmines” if it was recommended for approval as art. Vice Chair Bliss stated the committee had to be aware they could set a precedent. Chair Cederoth stated that part of the balance they try to strike as a design review committee is to adhere to the development plan standards and support efforts to advance the plan vision.

A discussion of signs versus art ensued.

Applicant: Mr. Hopkins stated the proposed pictures were part of maintaining their Main Street Affiliate designation.

Committee: Chair Cederoth summarized that the pictures were decoration expressing certain themes and were not explicitly directive. He asked for a motion.

Motion: Vice Chair Bliss moved to recommend approval of the application based on the fact that the images are artwork/graphics and are not explicitly directive.

Second: Mr. Cisneros seconded the motion.

The motion passed in a vote of 4-0.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of October 14, 2020 Meeting Summary

Chair Cederoth stated that since neither Vice Chair Bliss nor Ms. Bravve had attended this meeting, there was not a quorum, and that review of this meeting summary would be deferred to the next meeting.

E. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Chair Cederoth, Vice Chair Bliss and Mr. Cisneros welcomed Ms. Bravve to the committee.

F. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the chair asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Vice Chair Bliss moved to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Mr. Cisneros seconded the motion.

The motion passed in a vote of 4-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Submitted by Daniel Sams, M-NCPPC Staff Liaison