



Summary of Actions
Mount Rainier Mixed-Use-Town Center Design Review Committee
October 13, 2021

APPROVED NOVEMBER 10, 2021

The Mount Rainier Mixed-Use-Town Center (M-U-TC) Design Review Committee held its regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, October 13, 2021 using GoToMeeting video conferencing software (Meeting I.D. 492-340-765). 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 7:03 p.m.

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

Committee Members Absent: Justin Bost

Committee Liaison Present: **M-NCPPC, Neighborhood Revitalization Section**
Daniel Sams, Planner Coordinator

Committee Liaison Absent: **Mount Rainier City Council**
Jarrett Stoltzfus, Ward 2

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Cederoth asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Motion: Dr. Burtch moved to approve the agenda.

Second: Vice Chair Bliss seconded the motion.

The motion passed in a vote of 4-0.

Because the applicant for Item C.1. was not present, Chair Cederoth asked for a motion to table the item.

Motion: Ms. Bravve moved to table Item C.1.

Second: Dr. Burtch seconded the motion.

The motion passed in a vote of 4-0.

Anthony Lee arrived at 7:11 p.m.

D. PRESENTATION

1. Facades Improvements, SE Side Rhode Island Avenue—Concepts for storefront façade improvements.

City of Mount Rainier Economic Development Director Ronald Hopkins introduced the project, which was presented by Tisa J. D. Clark of Clark Professional Services; Allie O’Neill (Program Director), Sophie Morley (Program Manager) and Angelica Arias (Intern) of the Neighborhood Design Center, and Tia K., Program and Project Management Consultant, #ArtBoxDC, LLC.

Ms. Morley began the presentation, noting that she, Ms. Clark, and Mr. Hopkins had been working with building owners and business over the past months to create the concepts, and that their vision was to embrace the culture of the [Gateway] Arts District.

Committee: It was noted that there was a gap in the streetscape rendering.

Applicant: Mr. Hopkins identified the gap as the antiques shop and that they were still working on connecting with the business. Ms. Morley ran through the slide deck noting the signage proposals, lighting and color palette.

Committee: Chair Cederoth started the discussion by asking committee members to focus on the “macro” issues first, then the details. He reminded the applicants that the design standards must guide their efforts and stressed the need for quality. He asked if the light fixtures were uniform and noted that uniformity in fixtures and blade signs might give the street the flavor of a development. He noted that he generally liked the proposed lighting but was not sure if uniformity was appropriate or not. He praised the individuality of the designs as well and asked how final the designs were.

Applicant: Ms. Morley stated that the designs were concepts that would have to be developed by a sign company.

Mario Cisneros arrived at 7:33 p.m.

Committee: Chair Cederoth stated that he had concerns that some of the signs exceeded the allowable square footage and did not necessarily conform to the development district standards.

A discussion ensued regarding board signs v. pin-mounted lettering and how the different types were affected by the allowable sign square footage.

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss noted that letters could be surface-mounted rather than pin mounted. Chair Cederoth asked the applicant and committee to review each storefront sign individually.

Party Time Liquors (3307 Rhode Island Avenue)

Applicant: Ms. Morley described the proposed decorative window films, firework-like decorative elements, and planters.

A discussion ensued in which it was established that the elements were not “signs” per se.

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss asked if the sign comprised illuminated channel letters and suggested the central martini glass element could be more effectively styled with a “retro” look and/or picked out in faux neon LEDs. Chair Cederoth reminded the applicants to keep the sign size standards in mind including the [maximum 12-inch] lettering height. Mr. Lee said he appreciated the presentation. Ms. Bravve asked if there were any plans for planter maintenance.

Applicant: Ms. Clark stated that it had been discussed to involve the Police Department’s “Young Explorers” in maintenance, or those performing community service, noting the fallback could be the city’s public works department.

Committee: Mr. Lee commented that an ongoing task like planter maintenance provided an opportunity for the Mount Rainier Business Association to step in and help. Mr. Cisneros stated that he was happy something was finally happening and offered his thanks.

N & Co. Salon (3301 Rhode Island Avenue)

Applicant: Ms. Clark stated that they were proposing keeping the existing sign and providing up-lighting.

Mount Rainier Police Station (3429 Rhode Island Avenue)

Committee: Chair Cederoth and Vice Chair Bliss stated that they did not favor either the proposed stucco or applied finishes. Chair Cederoth also stated the beige scheme seemed uninspired, but the blue and yellow was clownish. He suggested building-mounted flagpoles rather than freestanding. Vice Chair Bliss stressed the importance of the building being the first “green” police station in the United States [c. 2002], a repurposed auto dealer and repair shop that incorporated many sustainable materials and practices, including a geothermal heating system, and maintained the [1925] building’s original “SUPERIOR” raised-block sign incorporated into the design of the parapet.

Applicant: Ms. Clark acknowledged that the building finishes were a challenge to make acceptable to all stakeholders, and that the proposal needed more work. She stated that the police had requested the freestanding flagpoles for daily ceremonial uses.

Pan Lourdes Bakery (3239 Rhode Island Avenue)

Applicant: Ms. Clark described the proposed use of window films, signage, lighting, and a second-floor building wrap displaying a feathers/foliate motif.

Committee: Chair Cederoth stated that the building wrap was an effective solution that enlivened the bland façade, and perhaps should cover the windows as well. He wondered that perhaps the applicant should coordinate with MRAC (Mount Rainier Arts Commission) on a mural instead. Vice Chair Bliss stated that any mural design should support the business, and that MRAC's charter of supporting public art may not be expedient to this project's goals. She and asked about the longevity of building wrap: three years? Five Years? Mr. Cisneros asked why not just paint the building a nice color.

Applicant: Ms. Clark said the building's owner preferred the flexibility of the building wrap.

Mediterranean Café/Hookah Bar/Food Market (3233-3237 Rhode Island Avenue)

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss stated that the three businesses were well-defined by the new scheme, but that the colors of the building wrap and signs should be unified. Chair Cederoth stated that he thought it had the strongest balance of individuality and pizzazz, but that the gooseneck lighting should be installed at regular intervals.

Aladdin Sizzler; America Custom Print (3231-3229 Rhode Island Avenue)

Applicant: Ms. Clark stated that the awning would cover the rolling gates enclosure.

Committee: Chair Cederoth reminded them to be mindful of the development district standards' sign size requirements. Window film for some of the windows was suggested by Mr. Lee.

Potomac Fish House (3221 Rhode Island Avenue)

Committee: Chair Cederoth reminded the applicant to be mindful of the development district standards' sign size requirements and sign materials. Vice Chair Bliss stated that light-box signs were not encouraged, or perhaps not permitted by the development district standards, and that the committee would like to see something different proposed.

Applicant: Ms. Clark stated that they had worked at length with the business owner who was concerned about keeping his sign.

Hair Braiding by Zaki; Nu Nails & Spa [Funkhauser Building] (3219-3203 Rhode Island Ave.)

Applicant: Ms. Clark explained that they were trying to define the different storefronts using color taken from the brick hues and had proposed repurposing the ornamented security gratings as decorative “shutters” flanking the windows.

Committee: Vice Chair Bliss said she loved the color inspiration but noted there were a lot of wiring runs and cables that needed to be dealt with. She asked how the aluminum marquee would be handled. Chair Cederoth wished to second everything the vice chair said but noted mounting the grates proud of the building façade would help with undertaking regular maintenance such as painting.

A discussion ensued about the development plan directive that “Existing solid gates shall be phased out over time,” [p. 90] and what the implications were for committee recommendations. The committee discussed next steps, the applicants’ meeting with sign designers and working with staff to ensure development districts standards conformance. The chair suggested pre-application meetings may be appropriate for the final designs.

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of September 8, 2021 Meeting Summary

Motion: Dr. Burtch moved to approve the meeting summary.

Second: Mr. Cisneros seconded the motion.

The motion passed in a vote of 6-0

F. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

There was no administrative business.

G. ADJOURNMENT

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

Motion: Dr. Burtch moved to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Mr. Lee seconded the motion.

The motion passed in a vote of 6-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Submitted by Daniel Sams, M-NCPPC Staff Liaison