

Montpelier Design Review Committee
July 19, 2005
Memorial Room, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Margot George, Chair; Stephen Everett, Vice Chair; Guy Tapper, Vicki Lane, Soren Pfeffer
Staff: Kathleen Swigon

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Ms. George.

I. Design Review and Site Plan Review

Property Address: 2 Liberty Street

Applicant: Daniel and Britt Richardson

Zone: HDR/DCD

- Landscaping improvements including a 25' long stacked stone retaining wall at the end of a residential drive

Ms. George explained the design review process and the advisory role of the Design Review Committee. Mr. Richardson described the proposal to cut back the angle at the end of the driveway and to install a stone retaining wall and a perennial garden. He said that the existing curve on the driveway is difficult for vehicles to maneuver and the proposed change will allow the drive to better function. Ms. Richardson said that the change will expand the end of the drive by about 3'. She said that the wall will end at the existing telephone pole. Ms. George recommended that the applicants contact the public works department to make sure that there are no issues. Mr. Richardson said that Ms. Smith indicated that she would check with public works.

Mr. Pfeffer asked whether the straight line of the retaining wall could be softened by curving it at the corner near the pole. Mr. Richardson said that only a small curve could be added since the pole is on the inside of the driveway. Mr. Everett noted that the applicants had expressed interest in expanding the gardens on the site. He said that the expansion of the gardens could be addressed as an optional change to this application. Ms. Richardson said that perennial beds would be created along the line of the stone wall.

The Committee reviewed the evaluation criteria and recommended approval of the application with the following optional changes:

1. The rock wall may be slightly curved at either end.
2. Perennial and annual flower beds may be installed near the rock wall as an extension of the current landscaping plan.

II. Design Review and Site Plan Review

Property Address: 89 State Street

Applicant: Applicant: Vermont Mutual Insurance Company

Zone: CB-I/DCD

- Alterations to main entrance
- Raising and increasing size of landing, adding two steps and replacing pipe railing.
- Existing door to be modified to swing out

Interested Parties: Greg Lord of E.F. Wall and Diane Norwood of Vermont Mutual

Mr. Lord described the proposed alterations to the Vermont Mutual building. He said that the applicant has been making internal changes to the executive offices and wants to make the front entry code compliant. He said that the door would be made to open out, the landing will be expanded and the stairs will be replaced with stairs that will have 8" risers. The stairs will be made of Barre granite and a foundation will be poured under the entry. He added that the existing nondescript metal railing will be replaced with a new steel pipe railing. Mr. Lord noted that the changes had been designed in consultation with Mary Jo Llewellyn, a historic preservation consultant.

Mr. Pfeffer asked whether the work would affect architectural details like the columns. Mr. Lord said that the intent is to leave the existing door frame intact as much as possible. Ms. George asked if the extension of the landing and stairs would require that the walkway be altered. Mr. Lord said that the walkway would not change and that the end of the stair would be matched into the walkway. Ms. George said that the plan did not show how that work would be accomplished. She noted the 16' distance from the stair to the property line did not appear to be accurate based upon her observation of the site. She said that she would like to see detailed plans at a reasonable scale showing the existing and proposed stairs and walkway. Ms. Lane said that she could not see how the changes could occur without encroaching on the sidewalk

Ms. George said that historic buildings are not required to be made ADA accessible. Mr. Lord said that the work would bring the entry closer to meeting building codes, but would not create an ADA compliant entrance. Mr. Tapper asked whether the direction of the door swing was a safety issue. Mr. Lord said that egress doors should open out. Ms. George said that she was having difficulty with the proposed severe treatment. She said that the building, one of the oldest buildings on State Street, was originally a house and the goal is to keep it looking like a house. She said that the existing simple metal railing is appropriate for a building of this age and the proposed railing is not in character with the age of the building. Mr. Lord said that the building owner feels that the upgrades are needed for safety reasons. Ms. Lane said that she would also take issue with the replacement of the railing. She said that there is no reason to replace it if it is in good condition. Mr. Lord said that the work was design in consultation with a historic preservation professional, but the proposal for the railing could be changed. He said that the property owner wants to make the improvements while preserving the historic integrity of the structure. Mr. Lord said that he could bring Ms. Llewellyn to meet with the Committee if that would help. Ms. George said that members of the DRC have historic preservation expertise. She said that Eric Gilbertson, who has that expertise was not able to attend this meeting.

Ms. George said that she would like the Committee to have the opportunity to conduct a site visit. Mr. Lord said that he would want to have his design people present during any site visit. Ms. George agreed and added that a better plan showing existing and proposed development was needed.

Ms. George said that it sounded like the applicant would like the opportunity to provide better architectural plans and details. She said that the Committee would like to conduct a site visit and to have Eric Gilbertson involved in the review. She added that the applicant might want to reconsider the railing. The Committee agreed to approve a continuation of the application to the next meeting and to begin that meeting with a site visit at 5:30 p.m.

III. Design Review and Site Plan Review

Property Address: 100 State Street

Applicant: Frederick Bashara for Capitol Plaza Hotel

Zone: CB-I/DCD

- Replace existing wooden railing with 36" wrought iron railing on edge of existing deck
- A 42" tall wrought iron fence in planting beds.

Mr. Bashara described his proposal to replace the existing 42" high wooden railings on the deck with 36" high wrought iron railings. He said that the wood railings were subject to rotting and he expected that the wrought iron railings would last longer. He said that larger 6" posts would be used to support the awning. He said that the porch was a relatively recent addition to the building. The Committee discussed the use of the 6" posts and reached a consensus that there was no issue with the posts, but 4" posts could be authorized as an optional change if the applicant determined that the larger posts are not needed to support the awning.

Mr. Bashara said that the 42" high wrought iron fence proposed for the planting beds would protect the plants by preventing trampling by foot traffic. He said that he has had to replace the plants every year due to damage. He proposed placing the fencing in the middle of the beds so that the bushes could fill in around it. He said that it would be set back slightly from the curb at the parking lot entrance and would probably run it right up to the existing fence at the church. Ms. George said that it was appropriate to discourage pedestrians from cutting through the planting beds. She added that this would also be a step toward screening the parking lot. She suggested moving the fence toward the sidewalk to provide a better planting area. She said that she would also like to see a tree planted in the bed. Mr. Bashara said that he liked the shrubs since they are attractive and would not spread too wide or high. He said that any tree would get ripped down. He said that he would agree to moving the fence as close to the sidewalk as the city would allow. Ms. Lane suggested that the height of the fence match the height of the church fence. Mr. Bashara said that fence is set in concrete and is too high to match. He said that he is proposing a height of 42".

The Committee reviewed the evaluation criteria and voted to recommend approval of the application with the following adjustment and optional changes:

Adjustment to the scope of the proposal:

1. The fence installed in front of the parking lot will be placed toward and as close to the edge of the sidewalk as possible.

Optional changes:

1. The interior posts used to support the awning can be either 4" x 4" or 6" x 6" posts.
2. The landscaping may be expanded and may include trees.

IV. Design, Conditional Use Review and Variance Request

Property Address: 154 Main Street
Applicant: Robert Hitzig and Mary Jo Krolewski
Zone: CB-II/DCD

- Construction of an accessibility ramp between the main structure and the carriage house

Mr. Hitzig explained that the previously proposed ramp at the side of the building did not work dimensionally. He said that he believed that the current proposal worked the best because the ramp is hidden behind the building. He said that the door at that location was installed in the 1960's. Mr. Hitzig said that the railings will be 1" by 1" posts similar to those on the deck in the rear. He said that the rail height and shape will be ADA compliant. The Committee discussed the ADA requirements and suggested that the applicant check on them.

The Committee reviewed the evaluation criteria and recommended that the application be approved as submitted.

V. Design Review

Property Address: 154 Main Street
Applicant: Robert Hitzig
Zone: CB-II/DCD

- illuminated six square foot double-sided sign

Mr. Hitzig said that he will put the sign at the location of the previous sign for “Jan’s”. The Committee discussed the previous sign. Ms. George said that even though the previous sign was larger and mounted on two posts, the currently proposed sign did not have to be that large.

The DRC members said that the application materials were not clear on the color scheme for the sign. Mr. Hitzig said that the sign lettering will have a natural wood stain and the background will have a darker stain. He said that the posts will be a natural cedar color. Ms. George asked whether the lettering shown on the computer-created sketch was an accurate depiction of the proposed lettering. Mr. Hitzig said that the sign would be hand made. Ms. George said that the sign shown in the application materials would be the sign that the Committee was acting on. She suggested that Mr. Hitzig might want to consider continuing the application to the next meeting so that he could consider the representation of the sign and make any changes that were desired. Mr. Pfeffer said that the applicant might want to consider curving the corners of the sign to soften the look. Ms. Lane encouraged Mr. Hitzig to be creative. Ms. George said that she would like to have a picture of the building for the next review. She asked what type of lights would be used. Mr. Hitzig said that he would use flood lights at the same location as the lights for the “Jan’s” sign. Ms. George said that lights shining down from the top of the sign would be more appropriate. Mr. Hitzig said that running the wiring up the sign could be difficult. Mr. Everett suggested routing the post to create a channel for the wiring and putting a channel cover over it.

Mr. Hitzig asked that the application be continued. The Committee voted unanimously to continue the application to the next meeting.

Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the May 3 and June 21, 2005 meetings. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the May 3 minutes as drafted. The Committee corrected the June 21 minutes so that the word “side” would be exchanged for “rear” in the third sentence in item I. Ms. George said that “and lining up with the existing trim detail in the transom above” should be added at the end of the sixth sentence in item I. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes with those changes.

Adjournment

The Committee agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Smith
Administrative Officer

These minutes are subject to approval by the Design Review Committee. Changes, if any, will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which they are acted upon.

