



SAVANNAH HISTORIC DISTRICT
BOARD OF REVIEW

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
January 18, 2017 1:00 P. M.
Meeting Minutes

JANUARY 18, 2017 HISTORIC DISTRICT BOARD OF REVIEW SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

HDRB Members Present: Stephen Merriman, Jr., Chair
Debra Caldwell
Jennifer Deacon
Justin Gunther
Becky Lynch
Tess Scheer

HDRB Members Not Present: Zena McClain, Esq., Vice-Chair
Dr. Betsy Dominguez
Kellie Fletcher
Keith Howington
Andy McGarrity

MPC Staff Present: Ellen Harris, Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation
Alyson Smith, Historic Preservation Planner
Mary E. Mitchell, Administrative Assistant

I. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

1. [Call to Order and Welcome](#)

Mr. Merriman called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. He outlined the role of the Historic District Board of Review and explained the process for hearing the various petitions. Staff will present each application with a recommendation. The petitioner will have the opportunity to respond to the recommendation. The petitioners are asked to limit their presentation to 10 minutes or less and only address the items identified as inconsistent with the ordinance and questions raised by the Board. The public will have the same allotted time, ten minutes, to comment. The petitioner will be given the opportunity to respond to the public comments.

The Board will then go into Board discussion at which time no further testimony is received

unless specifically requested by the Chair. Each Board member will be given two minutes twice to provide comments, if they so desire.

II. SIGN POSTING

III. CONSENT AGENDA

IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

2. [Adoption of Agenda for January 18, 2017 Meeting](#)

Board Action:

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review does hereby adopt the January 18, 2017 Special Called Meeting Agenda. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Tess Scheer
Second: Jennifer Deacon
Debra Caldwell - Aye
Jennifer Deacon - Aye
Justin Gunther - Aye
Keith Howington - Not Present
Becky Lynch - Aye
Stephen Glenn Merriman, Jr. - Abstain
Tess Scheer - Aye

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

VI. ITEM(S) REQUESTED TO BE REMOVED FROM THE FINAL AGENDA

VII. CONTINUED AGENDA

VIII. REGULAR AGENDA

3. [Petition of Gunn Meyerhoff Shay | 16-006852-COA | 630 East River Street | New Construction Parking Garage: Part I, Height and Mass](#)

Attachment: [Submittal Packet- Narrative and Drawings.pdf](#)
Attachment: [River Street East Rendering.pdf](#)
Attachment: [16-006852-COA Staff Recommendation.pdf](#)
Attachment: [Aerial.pdf](#)
Attachment: [New Franklin Ward Wharf Lots MAP B.pdf](#)
Attachment: [2012 COA and Submittal Packet.pdf](#)

Mr. Patrick Shay was present on behalf of the petition.

Ms. Ellen Harris gave the staff report. The applicant is requesting approval for New Construction: Part 1B, Height and Mass for a nine-story parking garage to be located on the vacant parcel at 630 East River Street.

Ms. Harris stated that due to the size and significance of this project, it was previously decided (in 2012) by the Review Board that the Part I, Height and Mass review would be considered in two phases. Phase A would consider height, proportion of structure's front façade, rhythm of structures on the street (setbacks and any parking standards that affect setbacks), massing including recesses and scale. Phase B would consider proportion of openings, rhythm of solids to voids, entrances and balcony/porch rhythm, any parking standards that may affect these openings or entrances, walls of continuity, and roof shape. Directional character would be considered by both the building form and openings, and applies to both Part I and II reviews.

Ms. Harris said this building is in the northeast corner of the Savannah Historic District. It is, roughly, triangular-shaped and has frontage along both River Street and General McIntosh Boulevard. The vehicular entrance is along River Street and there is a secondary automobile egress along General McIntosh Boulevard. The footprint of the building is 21,678 square feet.

Ms. Harris explained that this development first came before the Review Board in 2012 [File No. H-120719-4727-2] after the applicant petitioned City Council for a change to the Historic District Height Map in this specific area of the Savannah Historic District. The Height Map was subsequently changed, in June 2012, to permit 3-stories or 45 feet above Bay Street in this building's location, (measured at the datum of City Hall which is 42 feet above MSL, allowing 87 feet above MSL).

The conditions of the approval (and previous continuances) were as follows:

December 2012 Meeting (continued):

General Comments:

1. Lower heights will allow greater views in the spirit of open structures along River Street. Preserve as much of the River view as possible.
2. River Street is an organic element that follows the shape of the river and Factors' Walk is the primary context.
3. Cupolas and rooftop features have a better place at the end or beginning of River Street, as you enter General McIntosh Boulevard, not the centerline of the road.
4. Continue the connections between the pedestrian spaces and the River.

Building Specific Comments:

1. Saw-tooth configuration of wall along General McIntosh Boulevard is not compatible with historic warehouses to the west.
2. Ground floor height for the active ground floor uses be a minimum of 14 feet in height to be consistent with ground floor commercial building heights in the proposed development and in the historic district.
3. Reduce the height of the parapet at the eight foot-six inch portion of the top floor.
4. Reduce the height of the building at the southeast corner adjacent to General McIntosh Boulevard at the eastern property line. Eliminate the fire stair and five spaces within this segment to reduce the height at the corner, the overall height of the building, and the size of the additional story.

January 2013 Meeting (approved with conditions):

1. Restudy the massing to mitigate the saw tooth design on the south façade;
2. Provide an entry point that has a better relationship with Hotel 1 for a gateway;
3. The ground floor height (for active ground floor uses) be a minimum of 14 feet in height to be consistent with ground floor commercial building heights in the proposed development and in the historic district; and
4. Approval of the additional story provided that the ground floor active use standard is met and verified through submittal of entrances and openings with Part I, Phase B application for the Certificate of Appropriateness.

The height and mass of this proposed garage has further been revised as follows:

1. The sawtooth element has been revised to provide a more consistent façade following the curve of River Street.
2. The overall height of the building has increased from 98 feet MSL to approximately 105 feet MSL.
3. The building previously stepped down 18 feet, or two stories, at the southeast corner. The two story step down has been eliminated.

These changes and conditions have been re-evaluated under the Part 1 review standards.

Ms. Harris reported that staff recommends a continuance in order for the petitioner to address the following:

1. Reduce the height of the southeast portion of the building along General McIntosh Boulevard to step down two stories as was previously approved to be more compatible with the smaller scale buildings in the Trustees' Garden.
2. Redesign the prominent curved element at the transition between River Street to General McIntosh Boulevard to better function as the primary façade element in relation to the pedestrian entrances.
3. Revise all square openings to have a more vertical character and meet the 5:3 ratio.
4. Restudy the solid to void pattern in the second and third floors which creates the appearance of a single story but the proportions of this combined story result in a much greater height than the first story. Additionally, this combined story has a solid to void pattern within the openings themselves which is not visually compatible.
5. Incorporate voids into the stair towers which anchor the ends of the buildings.
6. Incorporate voids into the first three floors of the east façade, which faces the Marriott and away from the Historic District.
7. Redesign the open entrance on the south façade to be more pedestrian-oriented.
8. Redesign the parapets to not exceed four feet in height.
9. Eliminate the diagonal sloped parapet in favor of a stepped parapet.
10. Ensure the parapet has a stringcourse and coping.
11. Redesign the first floor interior configuration to ensure that both the parking spaces and drive aisles be setback 30 feet to meet the standard.
12. Ensure the curb cuts do not exceed 20 feet in width and that the sidewalk serves as a continuous uninterrupted pathway.
13. Provide location of refuse storage area.
14. Revise the location of the mechanical and access structures to be contained within the additional story.
15. Redesign the office space along River Street and General McIntosh Boulevard to be greater in depth, length and size, and provide a more active use for the space in order to meet the criterion for a bonus story.

Ms. Harris reported that staff received a letter from the Downtown Neighborhood Association today. A copy of the letter was placed at each Board member's station.

Ms. Caldwell asked staff that when this request came before the Board in 2012, what has happened between 2012 and now?

Ms. Harris answered that the 2012 submittal contained a much greater development. It included the Homewood Suites, the portion where the Georgia Power was located, etc. It was the entire site of the five

buildings. The two front portions of that project have been ongoing. Therefore, the Homewood Suites for example has gone through the design details as well as the hotel that is on the Georgia Power site and has Part I - Height and Mass approval. But, they have not come forward with the Part II - Design Details.

Mr. Gunther said there was Part I-A and Part I-B. He asked Ms. Harris to clarify the difference between these reviews and what exactly should the Review Board be looking at.

Ms. Harris explained that in 2012, the Board determined that because of the size and scale [the master plan] Part I - Height and Mass would be considered in two phases. Part A would consider height, proportions of structures, front façade, rhythm, structure on the street including setbacks for parking standards, massing including recesses and scale. This was reviewed in 2012. Part B would consider proportions of openings, rhythm of solids to voids, entrances, balconies, porch rhythm, parking standards as well as walls of continuity, roof shapes, and directional character.

Mr. Gunther asked that since the design has changed, then the Board now should be doing the same kind of review. The design has changed significantly.

Ms. Lynch asked if the Height Map allows three stories or 45 feet. Is this for all of the parcels that are being evaluated today?

Ms. Harris explained that this is the only part of the Historic District which does not only governing a number of stories. The way the ordinance is written states a number of stories or 45 feet. It is whichever meets the standards. It is difficult as you measure the number of stories from a point of City Hall is only 42 feet above mean sea level (MSL). Therefore, the way that the Board has interpreted it within these particular areas has been provided on the number of feet that is allowed.

Ms. Deacon asked that in terms of technicalities if the project does not have to meet the requirements of the large scale development standards, how is it eligible for the extra story because that is a part of the large scale development standards?

Ms. Harris answered the ordinance specifically says that it is exempted from the large scale development standards; however, projects within the Factors Walk Character area can qualify for the bonus story provided that the criterion are met.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Shay introduced the team members accompanying him today. He thanked the Board members for having the Special Called Meeting. He passed out some additional information to the Board pertaining to the overall project.

Mr. Shay said he would begin his presentation with one of the things that they took a great deal of inspiration from in 2012. It was taken from one of Savannah's images from the past. Their site is near the Trustees Garden area. This area is out side the Historic Landmark District. It has always been industrial in character. He showed the Board a photograph that he believes goes back to 1920. It is the Rourke Ironworks. River Street at that time was not continuous, but now it has been rejoined and is now General McIntosh Boulevard. He said their belief, although they no longer have coals, timber, ship stores, and ironworks, the industries that we have in the 21st Century dominating the waterfront are the tourists and visitors. Therefore, they believe their use is appropriate for this area. He said another thing that has completely changed the scale of River Street in general is the giant container ships that come and go right at the edge of the river.

Mr. Shay stated that the overall development [master plan] was presented in 2012 and approved with conditions in 2013. The majority of this space will be public access space. The right-of-way area was considerably widened and expanded as a part of the first portion of the project during the Homewood Suites. A left-hand turn lane was added. He pointed out that the areas shown in the green color are

privately owned with public access. The developer has committed to making all of these spaces wide open and available to the public and will maintain it. The River Walk along here is on private property and an easement was granted in the City of Savannah. They are trying very hard to create a place for Savannah, the public, and visitors.

Mr. Shay said he will now address the parking garage. The overall development was initially brought forward to the Review Board in 2012. Some of the comments received are contained in the staff's report. They brought back a master plan which was called Part I-A in the January 23, 2013 meeting. This was approved with conditions. They have brought back different elements.

Mr. Shay with they have read the staff's report and have considered it carefully. They also want to get input from the Board. A lot of the concerns are strict interpretations of the ordinance on the issue of compatibility. They have been asked not only by the developer, but also by the City of Savannah to seriously consider putting in as much public parking as possible in this building. There is more than enough as planned now to service the hotels and independent restaurants. They want to incorporate a lot of retail so there will be the opportunity for people who are not the hotel's guests to come here, park and enjoy the riverfront. However, they want to hear the Board's thoughts on what they feel about the stepping down.

Mr. Shay said they want to hear from the Board about the stair towers, especially where they are making a change from one building to another. Mr. Shay said they decided not to articulate those with openings and feel this is a good solution. They have had the opportunity to present a number of different projects in the downtown area where the 30 foot setback from the street for the parking. He wants some help from the Board on clarifying this. There is some concern about the way to qualify for the bonus height. They want to get as many parking spaces at this facility as they possibly can. He is not sure whether or not this standard applies to a building that does not have access to a lane.

Mr. Shay entertained questions from the Board.

Ms. Lynch stated that staff recommends that voids be incorporated in the east façade. She asked if there is a reason that voids are not there.

Mr. Shay answered that a number of things can into play when they were studying this. They could not incorporate voids at that low level. He does not believe they would be openings such as in the upper stories because they would not be able to achieve natural ventilation on those lower levels of the parking deck. But, what they could do was to incorporate windows. He said they can articulate this.

Ms. Lynch said the voids that are shown on the building are a combination of voids and windows. Are all or some of the windows on the upper floors glazed?

Mr. Shay answered that they are not intended to be glazed; they have tried very hard and are hopeful that they have successfully designed something that really appears as a building, rather than just a parking deck.

Ms. Caldwell asked Mr. Shay that in 2013 they received approval with conditions, but, now are they coming back with more revisions that are creating more necessary conditions?

Mr. Shay answered that this is the first time that the Review Board has heard Part I-B. He explained that what was approved with conditions in 2013 was the overall plan. The conditions were to restudy the massing and mitigate the saw tooth design, which they did. Provide an entry point that has a better relationship with Hotel I for a gateway; he believes they have adjusted this; the ground floor height be a minimum of 14 feet in height to be consistent with the ground floor commercial buildings, and the additional story was approved as they met the criteria.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Rebecca Fenwick of 340 Habersham Street stated that the Historic Landmark District is currently under review by the National Park Service. The changes and the district's integrity are unfolding rapidly. There is no greater drive to the downtown district than hotel construction. Savannah has one of the nation's most reviewed historic community, it does not have a preservation commission. Ms. Fenwick urged the Review Board to be stewards of Savannah's historic resources. Things are changing fast and there is a cost.

Ms. Danielle Meunier of the Historic Savannah Foundation (HSF) stated that staff has done a tremendous job outlining the project. Now, it is really at the Board's discretion to determine if what is proposed is visually compatible. The HSF believes that what was reviewed in 2012 is today quite a departure. While they believe that all aspects and standards in the ordinance are equal, they do believe that height is one factor that greatly, if not more so, affects visual compatibility. A text amendment was approved to increase the height. Now, they are looking at additional height than what was proposed in 2012. Eighty-seven feet above MSL is what was approved or allowed, but 105 MSL is proposed. The HSF recognizes that this project is eligible for the bonus story, but this is an 18 feet difference. Therefore, does this show that the bonus story is 18 feet or is the 18 feet an allowable height beyond what is allowed. It appears from the drawings that there are nine stories that include parking, which includes the bonus story and parking is shown on the roof. Regarding the parapet, staff says that if they are taller than four feet, they are considered a story. All of these things increases the height. The building is not stepping down. They believe the height is too high and is not visually compatible.

Ms. Meunier stated that regarding the mass of the building, while the overall footprint may not have changed since 2012, the interior function appears to affect other factors such as the retail use and its layout. The HSF agrees that this is not acceptable in its current proposal because it does not meet the 30 feet setback. The HSF does not approve of the scale and design of this project. In HSF's opinion, it has changed drastically from what they saw before. The staff raises many concerns related to height and mass. Ms. Meunier said the Downtown Neighborhood Authority (DNA) holds an ex-officio seat on their board. She said they spoke to the representative of this board and believe that many of their complaints are valid.

Mr. Shay, in response to the public comments, stated that they are present to get comments. He wanted to remind the public that when he began his presentation, he stated that their project is outside the National Landmark Historic District. The Marriott is just beyond the Historic District Zoning Ordinance. They believe that this area is more appropriate for intense development. They have shown that this area has become home to large scale industrial. They will do a better job when they come back of labeling their plans to better help understand the project. He understood HFS's general concern about the height of the building. The ground floor was explored to be office space, but they changed that to be located on the second floor. They would, however, like to have the opportunity to restudy this and come back with some level of retail along the frontage.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board agreed with the staff conditions and public comments. The Board has the obligation to preserve the Historic District. At this time, the Board does not believe that the project meets the standards for the additional story; especially when there are contentions about the height of the buildings. The current design does not include the areas for elevator overruns and the height of the towers within the bonus story. The Board believes, however, that today they have seen a design that warrants some consideration based on the changes from the previous Part I approvals. The Board discussed that the Historic District is fragile and is becoming evermore so because of the intrusions within the district. Even, though, this project lies just outside the National Landmark District, it is directly visible from every aspect. Therefore, it has a visual direct impact. It is contingent upon the Review Board to see that some mitigation to the scale and massing are done to make this project more visually compatible. The Board has major concerns about the many large hotels that are now being built in Savannah. This building needs to be built on a smaller scale. The bonus story is earned and is not a given right.

Mr. Merriman informed Mr. Shay that he has heard the Board's comments. He asked him if he would ask for a continuance or wanted the Board to vote on this project.

Mr. Shay answered that they would accept a continuance today and take what they have heard from staff, the public, and Board and go back to the drawing board.

Board Action:

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review
does hereby continue the petition for Part 1: Height

and Mass of a new nine-story parking garage at 630 East River Street as requested by the petitioner in order to address the following:

1. Reduce the height of the southeast portion of the building along General McIntosh Boulevard to step down two stories as was previously approved to be more compatible with the smaller scale buildings in the Trustees' Garden.
2. Redesign the prominent curved element at the transition between River Street to General McIntosh Boulevard to better function as the primary façade element in relation to the pedestrian entrances.
3. Revise all square openings to have a more vertical character and meet the 5:3 ratio.
4. Restudy the solid to void pattern in the second and third floors which creates the appearance of a single story but the proportions of this combined story result in a much greater height than the first story. Additionally, this combined story has a solid to void pattern within the openings themselves which is not visually compatible.
5. Incorporate voids into the stair towers which anchor the ends of the buildings.
6. Incorporate voids into the first three floors of the east façade, which faces the Marriott and away from the Historic District.
7. Redesign the open entrance on the south façade to be more pedestrian-oriented. - PASS
8. Redesign the parapets to not exceed four feet in height.
9. Eliminate the diagonal sloped parapet in favor of a stepped parapet.
10. Ensure the parapet has a stringcourse and coping.
11. Redesign the first floor interior configuration to ensure that both the parking spaces and drive aisles be setback 30 feet to meet the standard.
12. Ensure the curb cuts do not exceed 20 feet in width and that the sidewalk serves as a continuous uninterrupted pathway.
13. Provide location of refuse storage area.

14. Revise the location of the mechanical and access structures to be contained within the additional story.
15. Redesign the office space along River Street and General McIntosh Boulevard to be greater in depth, length and size, and provide a more active use for the space in order to meet the criterion for a bonus story.

Vote Results

Motion: Jennifer Deacon

Second: Tess Scheer

Debra Caldwell	- Aye
Jennifer Deacon	- Aye
Justin Gunther	- Aye
Keith Howington	- Not Present
Becky Lynch	- Aye
Stephen Glenn Merriman, Jr.	- Abstain
Tess Scheer	- Aye

4. [Petition of Gunn Meyerhoff Shay | 16-006851-COA | 620 East River Street | New Construction Hotel: Part I, Height and Mass](#)

Attachment: [Submittal Packet- narrative and drawings.pdf](#)

Attachment: [River Street East Rendering.pdf](#)

Attachment: [16-006851-COA Staff Recommendation.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Aerial.pdf](#)

Attachment: [New Franklin Ward Wharf Lots MAP B.pdf](#)

Attachment: [2012 COA and Submittal Packet.pdf](#)

Mr. Patrick Shay was present on behalf of the petition.

Ms. Ellen Harris gave the staff report. The applicant is requesting approval for New Construction: Part 1B, Height and Mass for a seven-story hotel building to be located on the vacant parcel at 620 East River Street.

Ms. Harris stated that due to the size and significance of this project, it was previously decided (in 2012) by the Review Board that the Part I, Height and Mass review would be considered in two phases. Phase A would consider height, proportion of structure's front façade, rhythm of structures on the street (setbacks and any parking standards that affect setbacks), massing including recesses and scale. Phase B would consider proportion of openings, rhythm of solids to voids, entrances and balcony/porch rhythm, any parking standards that may affect these openings or entrances, walls of continuity, and roof shape. Directional character would be considered by both the building form and openings, and

applies to both Part I reviews.

Ms. Harris said that this building is in the northeast corner of the property and the Savannah Historic District. It is, roughly, rectangular-shaped and features several recesses and projections on all sides with a plaza area to the west where the main entrance will be located. The building has a two-story entrance and lobby section. The building features roof top amenities, with a seven-story section located at the northwest portion of the building.

Ms. Harris stated that an architectural tower element, stair and elevator penthouses, mechanical yards, and a roof terrace are proposed on top of the building. The total height, including the tower element, is 142 feet (155 feet above MSL) above grade. The height of the two-story portion is 37 feet to the top of the parapet with architectural elements creating additional height. The building spans 219 feet along the river front, east-to-west, and is 215 deep from north-to-south for a footprint of 36,600 square feet.

Ms. Harris explained that this development first came before the Review Board in 2012 [File No. H-120719-4727-2] after the applicant petitioned City Council for a change to the Historic District Height Map in this area of the Savannah Historic District. The Height Map was subsequently changed, in June 2012, to permit 3-stories or 45 feet above Bay Street in this building's location, (measured at the datum of City Hall which is 42 feet above MSL, allowing 87 feet above MSL).

Now known as Hotel 1, or the Hilton Hotel, in the previous COA it was known as Hotel 2. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

December 2012 Meeting (continued):

General Comments:

1. Lower heights will allow greater views in the spirit of open structures along River Street. Preserve as much of the River view as possible.
2. River Street is an organic element that follows the shape of the river and Factors' Walk is the primary context.
3. Cupolas and rooftop features have a better place at the end or beginning of River Street, as you enter General McIntosh Boulevard, not the centerline of the road.
4. Continue the connections between the pedestrian spaces and the River.

Building Specific Comments:

1. Break up the massing of the two-story segment along the river front. Reconsider the vertical element [tower] at the far western end of the structure.
2. Increase the north setback of the western half of the hotel segment along the waterfront to be consistent with the line of continuity established by the proposed development along the waterfront.
3. The height should not exceed two-stories forward of the adjacent Marriot Hotel in order to be compatible with neighboring structures to which it is visually related and to continue the one- and two-story character of new development adjacent to the river walk.
4. The height on the north blocks view from Emmett Park.

January 2013 Meeting (approved with conditions):

1. Parapet heights not exceed four feet, and
2. Approval of the additional story provided that the ground floor active use standard is

met and verified through submittal of entrances and openings with the Part I, Phase B application for the Certificate of Appropriateness.

The height and mass of this proposed hotel has further been revised as follows:

1. The overall building footprint increased to 36,600 square feet; the previous footprint size was approximately 35,000 square feet. It was previously 196 feet-6 inches wide along the river and is now 219 feet wide. The recesses have also been revised.
2. The height of the building, not including the tower element was 99 feet above MSL; with the tower element, it was approximately 120 feet above MSL. It is now proposed to be 103 feet-6 inches to the top of the parapet (above MSL) with the tower element extending to 155 feet MSL.
3. The building was previously two-stories (30 feet) in height along the length of the river front on the north façade. The taller portion of the building was setback 39 feet to align with the Marriott. The two-story portion is now only along the west side of the building and is 37 feet high. The building is six and seven stories on the north east quadrant of the building along the River.
4. The north façade was previously setback 33 feet from the River and is now setback 27 feet from the river itself (45 feet forward of the Marriott façade).

These changes and conditions have been re-evaluated under the Part 1 review standards.

Ms. Harris reported that staff recommends:

Continue the request for New Construction: Part 1, Height and Mass for a seven-story hotel building to be located on the vacant parcel at 620 East River Street in order for the applicant to consider the following:

1. The portion of the building along the River Walk which is greater than two stories, is setback to the same depth as the adjacent Marriot, to be compatible with the height, rhythm, and scale of adjacent building and similar historic buildings and to retain the one- and two-story character of the river front.
2. Reduce the height of the tower element significantly or eliminate entirely.
3. Further break down the width of the west façade.
4. Revise the square windows to be vertical in character and have a 5:3 ratio.
5. Restudy the relationship of the very tall first story with the shorter, second story, on the west, two-story portion of the building.
6. Revise the 12 foot wide bay spacing.
7. Reduce the width and depth of the porte-cochere significantly.
8. While a Part II Design Detail, redesign the formal decorative, Art Deco parapet towers and other elements to be more visually compatible with the industrial nature of the surrounding historic context.
9. Incorporate a wall of continuity along River Street to create a sense of enclosure where the building does not extend to the street.
10. Ensure that a minimum of 10 feet is provided along the river's edge to meet the standard.
11. Contain the mechanical and access structures within the additional story.

12. Redesign all parapets to not exceed four feet high.
13. Reduce all curb cuts to a maximum of 20 feet wide.
14. Where intersected by a new driveway, ensure the sidewalk shall serve as a continuous uninterrupted pathway across the driveway in materials, configuration, and height.
15. Provide information regarding the visibility of the roof HVAC units from Trustees' Garden.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Shay introduced the team members accompanying him at the meeting. He explained that the massing the Board sees today is the massing they are proposing. Working with their client, a decision was made that this be a full-service hotel. Having a full service hotel is much better for the entire riverfront. The floor to floor height has been decreased from 24 feet to 23.4 feet. Because the overall height constraint is 45 feet above Bay Street from City Hall, they have sacrificed the entire level of guest rooms. To qualify for such a designation, they had to increase the mass getting closer to the river.

Mr. Shay said the actual compatibility factors that they had to relate to were the contributing buildings. They want to step down the massing and do what they have described to articulate it so they will not have a big block like the building they are being asked to relate to. He said with regards to the overall height, when they were studying this with the benefit of the model and some of the earlier versions of physical models, it appeared that the scale made more sense if it related to the scale of the overall development than just the scale of the building. They chose a form reminiscent in some ways of a beacon. They are willing to study the other expressions. But, they will keep coming back until they get something that the Board is satisfied with. They will seek a variance if necessary. They will look at the porte cochere. The curb cut will be a continuous path curb. They will fix the square windows and the HVAC units will be addressed in the bonus story.

Ms. Deacon asked the petitioner if the first floor height is continuously the same height throughout. She asked if the height was decreased, would it change the hotel?

Mr. Shay answered that the building would be gravely compromised to meet the standards that the Hilton has for a full-service hotel.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Danielle Meunier of the Historic Savannah Foundation (HSF) stated that height will be at 87 feet above MSL. It is proposed that a 103 feet for the hotel with the bonus story. The height to the top of the tower is 155 feet above MSL. Ms. Meunier said the HSF recognizes that this a single portion of the design. However, they believe that it is a substantial feature and has a significant overall impact on the height. The HSF suggested that consideration be given to this. The number of the overall stories have not changed from what they saw in 2012. The HSF's biggest concern is where the stories are; by extending the taller portions of the building all the way out to River Street, they are tying up a significant change on the perception of the building which is increasing the mass substantially overall. They agree with staff that 6 and 7 story portions of the building along the River Walk need to be significantly setback to be compatible with the height and scale of the adjacent building and similar historic buildings, but most importantly to retain the one and two story character on the Riverfront.

Ms. Meunier said that the HSF is aware that the design comes in Part II, but the overall design with the art deco does not fit in the context of Factors Walk. They believe that the inspiration could be restudied in Part II. Consequently, the HSF believes that there is substantial room for improvement in the height and mass. She said the HSF questions why the staff recommended a continuance instead of denial as there is a lot to be restudied.

Mr. Gary Radke came forward and stated that they are against the proposed large tower.

Mr. Shay, in response to the public comments, stated that what they did in 2012 and 2013, they believe was appropriate for this area. He said that the most character defining feature about River Street is that although it runs parallel to the river for a mile, it bends and comes back.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board was in agreement with the staff and the other comments that were made. The biggest concern is that this is a huge development and thus being so large it had to be presented as a master plan. The massing presented in 2012 was more pleasing. They agreed with the Historic Savannah Foundation regarding the style. The Art Deco details appear to be out of place with the overall character. All the hotels and buildings had to be considered holistically as well as individually. The tower is out of scale. It pulls you away from City Hall. This needs to be restudied. Green space is a significant portion to the master plan. No wall of continuity is needed. Too much mass is fronting the river and the Board is aware that having this much mass visually disrupts the entire character area of River Street. The low scale character along the riverfront needs to be preserved. The building mass needs to be pushed back as initially proposed in the original massing that was presented in 2012. It was much more effective in preserving the visual character. The Board understood the need to add more rooms, but maybe they can be added in different parts of the building massing and not along the riverfront.

Mr. Merriman asked Mr. Shay if he was requesting a continuance.

Mr. Shay answered that they understood what their challenges are and will carefully consider what they can do. He requested a continuance.

Board Action:

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review does hereby continue the petition for Part I: Height and Mass of a new seven story hotel at 620 East River Street as requested by the petitioner in order to address the following:

1. The portion of the building along the River Walk which is greater than two stories, is setback to the same depth as the adjacent Marriot, to be compatible with the height, rhythm, and scale of adjacent building and similar historic buildings and to retain the one- and two-story character of the river front.

2. Reduce the height of the tower element significantly or eliminate entirely.
3. Further break down the width of the west façade.
4. Revise the square windows to be vertical in character and have a 5:3 ratio.
5. Restudy the relationship of the very tall first story with the shorter, second story, on the west, two-story portion of the building.
6. Revise the 12 foot wide bay spacing.
7. Reduce the width and depth of the porte-cochere significantly. - PASS
8. While a Part II Design Detail, redesign the formal decorative, Art Deco parapet towers and other elements to be more visually compatible with the industrial nature of the surrounding historic context.
9. Ensure that a minimum of 10 feet is provided along the river's edge to meet the standard.
10. Contain the mechanical and access structures within the additional story.
11. Redesign all parapets to not exceed four feet high.
12. Reduce all curb cuts to a maximum of 20 feet wide.
13. Where intersected by a new driveway, ensure the sidewalk shall serve as a continuous uninterrupted pathway across the driveway in materials, configuration, and height.
14. Provide information regarding the visibility of the roof HVAC units from Trustees' Garden.

Vote Results

Motion: Tess Scheer

Second: Jennifer Deacon

Debra Caldwell	- Nay
Jennifer Deacon	- Aye
Justin Gunther	- Aye
Keith Howington	- Not Present
Becky Lynch	- Aye
Stephen Glenn Merriman, Jr.	- Abstain
Tess Scheer	- Aye

Construction Part 1 Height and Mass

Attachment: [Submittal Packet- narrative and drawings.pdf](#)
Attachment: [River Street East Rendering.pdf](#)
Attachment: [16-006850-COA Staff Recommendation.pdf](#)
Attachment: [Aerial.pdf](#)
Attachment: [New Franklin Ward Wharf Lots MAP B.pdf](#)
Attachment: [2012 COA and Submittal Packet.pdf](#)

Mr. Patrick Shay was present on behalf of the petition.

Ms. Ellen Harris gave the staff report. The applicant is requesting approval for New Construction: Part 1B, Height and Mass for a four story hotel to be located on the vacant parcel at 602 East River Street. The proposal also requests a two story variance from the Height Map.

Ms. Harris said that due to the size and significance of this project, it was previously decided (in 2012) by the Review Board that the Part I, Height and Mass review would be considered in two phases. Phase A would consider height, proportion of structure's front façade, rhythm of structures on the street (setbacks and any parking standards that affect setbacks), massing including recesses and scale. Phase B would consider proportion of openings, rhythm of solids to voids, entrances and balcony/porch rhythm, any parking standards that may affect these openings or entrances, walls of continuity, and roof shape. Directional character would be considered by both the building form and openings, and applies to both Part I and II reviews.

Ms. Harris stated that the building is in the northeast corner of the Savannah Historic District. It is rectangular and has frontage along both River Street and the River Walk. The building is four stories tall and features a one-story walkway from River Street to River Walk in the center of the building. The fourth story is limited in size and features a covered roof terrace, bar, pool, sun deck, restrooms and other amenities. The upper stories of the building cantilever out to the north, towards the river, creating a "pedestrian arcade" below. To the east of the building is a plaza, separating this building from the adjacent Hotel 1, or Hilton Hotel. The building height is 39 feet to the top of the parapet and 50 feet, ten inches to the top of the peak of the structure. The footprint of the building is 21,246 square feet.

Ms. Harris explained that this development first came before the Review Board in 2012 [File No. H-120719-4727-2].

The conditions of the approval (and previous continuances) were as follows:

December 2012 Meeting:

General Comments:

1. Lower heights will allow greater views in the spirit of open structures along River Street. Preserve as much of the River view as possible.
2. River Street is an organic element that follows the shape of the river and Factors' Walk is the primary context.
3. Cupolas and rooftop features have a better place at the end or beginning of River Street, as you enter General McIntosh Boulevard, not the centerline of the road.
4. Continue the connections between the pedestrian spaces and the River.

Building Specific Comments:

1. The two-story retail buildings are not compatible. Long, two-story buildings with greater open space is recommended.
2. Extend the gable roof to the south end of the building to be more compatible with buildings in the historic district. The exterior of the building should echo the change in design provided in the broken roof shape which may help break up the massing of the structures.
3. Reduce the overall height of the structures. The second floor should not exceed the height of the first floor.
4. Eliminate the bridges between the structures. If the bridges are determined to be appropriate the roof should be eliminated to be compatible with the bridges in the Factors walk area and to reduce the physical and visual obstructions to the river view.
5. Reduce the height of the center elevator projection as much as possible; consider a flat roof.

January 2013 Meeting:

1. Parapet heights not exceed four feet, and
2. Verify location and dimensions of stair tower on reduce and reduce height to the extent possible.

The height and mass of this proposed hotel has further been revised as follows:

1. The previous two building configuration has been revised to a one building configuration;
2. The building height has been revised from two stories (30 feet) to four stories (50 feet).
3. The buildings were previously set 44 feet apart; the current proposal has a 41 foot wide walkway in the center.

These changes and conditions have been re-evaluated under the Part 1 review standards.

Ms. Harris reported that staff recommends a continuance in order for the petitioner to address the following:

1. Reduce the height of the building to two stories to meet the Height Map requirements, ordinance, and be visually compatible.
2. Reduce the width of the building significantly, or break into multiple buildings, to be visually compatible and allow additional views of the river.
3. Restudy or eliminate the rounded element on the east façade.
4. Eliminate the one story walkway through the center of the building.
5. Eliminate the building cantilever on the north facade.
6. Do not encroach into Morrell Park.
7. Reduce the width of the balconies on the north façade. Eliminate the encroachment into the River Walk, if an encroachment exists.
8. Add voids to the blank wall areas on both the east and west sections of the south elevation, on the south end of the east elevation, and on the north end of the west elevation.
9. Eliminate the rounded and stepped elements on the roof to be visually compatible.

10. Provide additional information on the six foot, six inch element at the roof top, and locate refuse storage area.

Ms. Harris additionally reported that staff recommends denial of the variance to allow two stories above the Height Map and vary the Factor's Walk Character Area standard which states, "*New construction north of River Street shall be placed perpendicular to the river and shall not exceed two stories in height, unless otherwise indicated on the Height Map as amended June, 2014,*" because the variance criteria have not been met.

Ms. Deacon stated that one of the recommendations is to break the mass into two buildings. Is this the opposite of one of the recommendations from the master plan?

Ms. Harris replied that the original submittal of the master plan at the December meeting actually included four separate structures. The Board recommended that there be a more horizontality. Therefore, this was changed to the two - two story buildings. Consequently, this is what was approved on the last reiteration of the master plan. She explained that the staff recommendation now is consistent with that proposal.

Ms. Deacon asked if the encroachment contains the balconies.

Ms. Harris answered that it appears to be balconies as well as an entrance. But, it was not completely clear.

Ms. Lynch asked how large is the parcel. Does it includes portions of the other or is it a single parcel?

Ms. Harris answered that it is her understanding that the petitioner intends to subdivide into three separate parcels; currently it is one parcel. She stated that this is a question the petitioner can answer when he makes his presentation.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Shay stated that as they approach the third element of what they are presenting today, it is their clients' intention that each of the hotels that are proposed for this area are intended to be completely different from a guest experience and also ascending [getting taller] in quality. The second hotel will be a single hotel and will be much more deliberately and a much contemporary looking hotel and also a LEED Platinum hotel in retrospect to overcome the environmental challenge that was the old SEPCO building that was contaminated. He explained that in order to be able to start these, they needed to provide some structural parking. The wrought iron and the other industrial buildings from the waterfront were demolished in the early 1960s, a surface parking lot took its place. Just as the designing ordinance was in 1960, everything has to be suburban in character. Therefore, they will have a suburban office park with a big parking lot.

Mr. Shay stated that the building is intended to remind them of the ships that were at one time here, but certainly not the ships that go by now as they are container ships. They wanted to do something that would be reviewed as a part of the nautical period. The previously approved master plan presented the first time actually had four narrow passages on the riverfront. The Board at that time said that it would be better if these were consolidated into the relatively wide space so that when you walk along River Street you will be able to see through and out into the river. He explained that the comment in the staff report about the 2012 comment regarding being reduced from four to two in the overall width. This was increased because of the reason as described. Therefore, what was approved then has actually been retained in what is being proposed now. What has happened in the meantime is because the SEPCO building which was actually within eight feet of the Homewood Suites was demolished because of the contamination, they were able to hold that

new building off by approximately 41 feet. They envision a garden being here.

Mr. Shay said today they are asking to get feedback from the Board. They will ask for a continuance and at a later time, seek a variance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Danielle Meunier of the Historic Savannah Foundation (HSF) stated that the building needs to maintain height and rhythm. The context should be two stories. The building is extremely wide and essentially the height and mass do not meet the ordinance. Therefore, the request should be denied.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board's discussion centered around the height and the design. The pedestrian spacing did not appear to have an open feeling. They need to be particular about meeting the criteria along the north edge of River Street. The Board believes that keeping the height low, will continue to allow views of the river. They agreed with the staff's recommendations, but the massing now is more contextual than in 2013. The massing and design do not meet the ordinance. The design has to be reconsidered and taken back to two stories.

Board Action:

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review does hereby deny the petition for a four-story building at 602 East River Street because the project does not meet the design standards and is not visually compatible as outlined in the findings.

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review does hereby recommend denial to the Zoning Board of Appeals of the variance to allow two stories above the Height Map and vary the Factor's Walk Character Area standard which states, "New construction north of River Street shall be placed perpendicular to the river and shall not exceed two stories in height, unless otherwise indicated on the Height Map as amended June, 2014," because the variance criteria have not been met. - PASS

Vote Results

- Motion: Tess Scheer
- Second: Justin Gunther
- Debra Caldwell - Aye
- Jennifer Deacon - Aye
- Justin Gunther - Aye
- Keith Howington - Not Present
- Becky Lynch - Aye
- Stephen Glenn Merriman, Jr. - Abstain

IX. REQUEST FOR EXTENSION

X. APPROVED STAFF REVIEWS

XI. WORK PERFORMED WITHOUT A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

XII. REPORT ON ITEMS DEFERRED TO STAFF

XIII. NOTICES, PROCLAMATIONS, and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Notices

6. [Next Regular Meeting - Wednesday, February 8, 2017 at 1:00 p.m. in the Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room, MPC, 112 E. State Street](#)

XIV. OTHER BUSINESS

XV. ADJOURNMENT

7. [Adjournment](#)

The Board discussed their review of projects with multiple components. First, they need to review the master plan and then review the projects independently. Today, it felt as if they were completely reviewing a master plan concept. The massing and scaling of the projects reviewed today changed. Maybe the process could be revised for future such projects.

Ms. Harris said the idea of process is vital as they do not really have in place a formally process to review a master plan, then review parts 1A and 1B. This was done ad hoc. This was done prior to her being in her present role. She did not understand why the Board wanted to review the project as Part IA, Part IB and review the master plan. As far as she is aware, this has never been done before. But, because of the scale of the project and all that it encompassed, it was felt that it needed to be done that way.

Ms. Harris explained that the Kessler project on the other end of River Street was an all day event and was reviewed as one gigantic petition for all the buildings. At a subsequent Board retreat, the Board said it was too much and not fair. Therefore, anytime that there are multiple buildings, it needs to be reviewed in multiple stages; one application per one building. You cannot have five buildings under one application and spend six hours on it. It must be broken up. The application process was changed to show that each building requires its own separate review so that it is easier to track.

The Board asked if a master plan was submitted for the project they just reviewed. Ms. Harris stated that she is not aware of what criteria the Board would have looking at a master plan. It is not in the ordinance. Maybe they can develop this; maybe it needs to be presented as such. The Board discussed the bonus story process and at the same time the petitioner is asking for a variance to allow a story on top of the bonus story. Mr. Merriman said if the

Review Board votes to deny the bonus story, the petitioner still has the right to seek a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The Board talked about the staff's recommendation when there are 10 or more conditions associated with a petition. Ms. Harris explained that if a petitioner has submitted a completed application, the Board has to hear the petition. Sometimes, however, some petitioners when they have that many conditions, will ask her to condition their request. However, this is left to the discretion of the petitioner.

Ms. Caldwell said she remembers Ms. Harris saying at one time that the Metropolitan Planning Commission meets one hour early in a pre-meeting to hear items on the agenda for that meeting. Maybe if they had a pre-meeting, it might assist them in their meeting.

Ms. Harris explained the pre-meeting purpose. If the Board wants to try the pre-meeting process, she will setup such meeting for the February 8, 2017 meeting. The Board asked the staff to setup the pre-meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Review Board, Mr. Merriman adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Ellen Harris, Director
Urban Planning and Historic Preservation

EIH:mem