



Minutes
Architectural Review Board
January 25, 2021
Electronic Meeting

Members Present

Jonathan Gerlach, Chair
Karen Irvin, Vice Chair
Helen P. Ross
Sabina Weitzman

Members Absent

Adriana Moss
James Whitman

Staff

Kate Schwartz
Mike Craig

Chairman Gerlach called the Architectural Review Board meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

OPENING REMARKS

Chairman Gerlach stated that the meeting was being held electronically through the “GoTo Meeting” application, pursuant to City Council Ordinance 20-05, An Ordinance to Address Continuity of City Government during the Pendency of a Pandemic Disaster. The members participating were Jonathan Gerlach, Karen Irvin, Helen P. Ross, and Sabina Weitzman. Members of the public have been invited to access this meeting by public access television Cox Channel 84, Verizon Channel 42, online at www.regionalwebtv.com, or on Facebook Live at www.facebook.com/FXBGgov.

Chairman Gerlach determined that a quorum of 4 members was present, and asked if public notice requirements had been met. Ms. Schwartz confirmed that they had.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Weitzman motioned to approve the agenda as submitted. Ms. Irvin seconded. The motion carried 4-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

- A. Discussion of UDO Text Amendments modifying the Commercial Downtown zoning district to permit project-based residential density within the Old and Historic Fredericksburg Overlay District, clarify the rules on mixed-use projects, and to permit and better define active retail/entertainment uses.

Mike Craig, Senior Planner, provided a presentation reviewing the proposed amendments and how they represent an implementation step for the Area 7 Downtown small area plan.

Ms. Weitzman noted that increased density for small structures would be a positive change that could increase reuse. However, demolition and new construction is the ARB’s biggest challenge. If all projects are by-right, it could increase pressure on the ARB during a review process. She also noted the impact of parking and said that even when not required, there is often a desire to dedicate space to parking for marketability. Encouraging more, smaller units could be beneficial for downtown.

Ms. Ross clarified rules and review criteria associated with special use permits. She also asked about requirements for ADA accessibility and questioned whether the changes could encourage facadism, or the retention of historic facades only and the demolition of rear/interior portions of historic buildings.

Ms. Irvin said she was in support of the change and that it would provide greater flexibility to historic buildings. She confirmed that this was a change in density only, and not a change to floor area ratios, setbacks, height limitations, or any other increase in allowed building envelopes. Ms. Schwartz and Mr. Craig confirmed that no changes would be made to the ARB's review process and that context-driven and compatible design as approved by the ARB would still be the standard for all projects.

Chairman Gerlach asked for some additional details on form-based codes and whether they would be used in the district or in transitional areas. Mr. Craig noted that next steps include reducing the Commercial Downtown zoning district, stepping down the intensity of areas outside the CD, and applying form-based codes in those transitional areas adjacent to the historic district.

Chairman Gerlach said he was in support of the amendments and would like to see higher densities in mixed-use buildings. This may help to prevent demolition by neglect. The special use permit process is helpful for the ability to identify specific conditions to include.

All four members present said they were in support of the proposed ordinance amendments.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Gerlach adjourned the meeting at 7:57 p.m.

Jonathan Gerlach, Chair