River District Design Review

TO:	Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission and Applicant
DATE:	June 13, 2018 (meeting date)
PREPARED BY:	Stephanie Monson Dahl, Interim Planning Director Sasha Vrtunski, AICP, Urban Planner
APPLICANT:	**Jim Diaz**
OWNER:	**Riverlink**
SUBJECT:	Design Review for Jettie Rae's, 144 Riverside Drive, #19-03385

Summary Statement:
This is a request for the AARRC to consider whether or not the design of the applicant's project is in alignment with the intent of the River District Design Review guidelines.

Site - The project area consists of a single parcel with an area of 1.29 acres and street frontage on Riverside Drive. The project also fronts the new greenway and the French Broad River. The majority of the site is in the floodway, which severely restricts any development potential.

Overall Project Proposal - The applicant is proposing a two-story restaurant use on the site as well as an open-air pavilion, two airstream pop-ups and a shipping container structure for bathrooms and a bar. The proposal also includes approximately 36 surface parking spaces. The open air pavilion is proposed on part of the floodway. A small portion of the parcel is in the 100 year floodplain; it is in this area that the applicant proposes to build a two story restaurant.

Development Review process:
The applicant has applied for a conditional zoning to rezone from River Arts District Form Code Open Space/Public Facilities (RAD-OSP) to River Arts District Form Code River Conditional Zone (RAD-RIV CZ) which includes the plans for the restaurant, pavilion and airstream trailers.

Project Status - Currently, the project is being reviewed by the Technical Review Committee; the next meeting is June 17. The project will then be reviewed by the Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Commission and City Council. The project's review at P & Z and Council will include a list of conditions (that must be met by the applicant) that are tailored to the specific site and use. All approved conditional zonings return to Technical Review Committee for a final review of details before they can apply for building permits.

Staff Review
The review includes consideration of whether the project aligns with the intent of the River District Design Review Guidelines and the spirit of the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Master Plan and its updates in regards to four focus areas: Architectural Style and Materials; Landscaping and Site Plan; Sidewalks and Connectivity; and Other/Project Amenities (e.g public art, signage, lighting, outdoor furniture, trash).

Architectural Style and Materials

- The use of wood in the main building references previous structures that used to be located along the river, including the A-frame that used to sit where the Craven Street Boat Ramp is located, and to some extent, the public buildings at the historic Riverside Park. Note that within this same River Core review area there wooden structures (the former Stuart Plumbing building and the Asheville Greenworks Offices) located a five minute walk to the north.
- The other materials and colors function similarly, with the referential use of cor ten steel and perforated steel panels helping to tie together newer architectural investments like the Smoky Park Supper club and tie the trailhead at Craven Street with the east side of the River Arts District. The guidelines state that new buildings should "reinforce by a style and look in the area, that although allowing for fairly broad individual expression, also conform to a look and feel which, if lost, will lessen the perception of the space as a unified whole" and states that the use of influence from character buildings shown in the guidelines or other nearby architecture should help any new building be a "springboard for new and creative approaches that respect the historical character of the area, be complementary to the surroundings, and reflect the authenticity of the Riverfront." Staff feels that the style and materials of this building align with the guidelines.
- Guidelines for windows in the River Core area encourage originality while promoting a unified image of the district, and include a statement that a unified color scheme incorporating the window sills, frames or mullions is encouraged. Staff believes the design strongly aligns with those guidelines.

Landscape/Site Plan:

- This site is adjacent to the river, and the proposed species and design are either recommended in the riparian species list of otherwise appropriate for the riparian environment. Staff believes that the attention to landscape architecture through artistic plantings and use of native species aligns with design guidelines.
- The City's current RADTIP construction project provides the needed landscaping- primarily street trees- along Riverside Drive.
- While landscaping suggestions in the guidelines are somewhat limited to screening of service areas, promoting high quality design, and encouraging the use of native species, the more recently adopted riparian guide provides a more specific vision for the use of landscaping between this proposed use and the river to promote water quality and other environmental benefits. While it is not necessary for the applicant, who does not have site control of the riverfront right of way, to implement that community vision, the applicant and site owner could improve the project by pursuing opportunities to partner with the public sector and other not for profits to do so.
- The site design of the project embraces its riverfront location, with much of its site plan oriented to both the French Broad River and Riverside Drive.
- Parking is located on the southern section of the site and is landscaped to city standards. The large shrubs will screen the parking lot from Riverside Drive over time.

- The applicant may have an opportunity to work with RiverLink, the property owner, to shift the parking from this riverfront site across the street to an undeveloped parcel that RiverLink currently owns. Doing so would increase this project's alignment with the design intent for this area suggested in the Wilma Dykeman Plan and other more recently adopted plans.

Sidewalks and Connectivity

- The guidelines intend for each site to develop pedestrian connections "in such a way as to create internal, non-linear pedestrian connections (sidewalks, paths, etc.) from structure to structure and from property to property." In this case, the public sector is currently building (as part of the RADTIP project) a riverfront greenway as envisioned in the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Master Plan. Additionally, the urban sidewalk and streetscape provided by RADTIP will provide the needed connectivity along Riverside Drive. The applicant is providing internal sidewalks that connecting their buildings to the street and greenway. The driveways and their locations are part of the RADTIP project.

Other

- *Lighting* **-** The lighting along the sidewalk and the greenway are being provided by the RADTIP project. The applicant is not planning on providing additional site lighting, but will provide building lighting, which is encouraged to align, from a design standpoint, with fixtures used in the RADTIP project.
- *Service and Delivery Areas* - While the trash/dumpster area of this development is, ***"***aggressively screened from neighboring views by the abundant use of vegetation" as per guidelines, the location of the trash area for this restaurant is of concern from a design standpoint. Because it is adjacent to the public sidewalk, it has the potential to emit strong and/or noxious odors into the public realm. The applicants have relayed that all trash and recycling will be picked up on a daily basis. Because the location adjacent to the sidewalk might encourage loading/unloading that blocks the public right-of-way, the applicant is encouraged to manage this area in the public interest.
- *Signs and Murals*- The guidelines for signs states that "originality is encouraged. The use of tiles, color, sculpture, paintings, mosaics, etc. is encouraged as is the use of materials, and goods produced in the Riverfront District." Plans show a hand-painted sign - similar in style to the "Good Vibes" mural across the street - on the tin siding on the Riverside Drive facade, and reference a plan for creating a folk art inspired mural on site. This approach is in alignment with the intent of the guidelines, especially if the applicant takes care to use local artists that can support maintaining the authenticity of the legacy of mural work and street art in the district.

  The design review guidelines and other more recent adopted documents stress the use of local art and artists whenever possible. Staff recommends that the developer consider this guideline as an opportunity as this as the project evolves over time. Applicant has not indicated if there would be signage on the river-facing elevation. Staff may have

recommendations about any signage proposed that could be visible from the greenway/river frontage.

Planning & Design Review Committee (P&DR) Review

- The P&DR Committee met on May 30, 2019 for a final review of the project materials that were submitted. The Committee had also seen this project during previous meetings on August 27 and October 8, 2018. A letter from the design team sent in response to comments and questions from the P&DR Committee is attached.
- At the May 30, 2019, the Committee voted 2-1 against recommending approval of the design of the project. It was felt that the design did not meet the design guidelines which call for the primary use of masonry in the core area west of the railroad tracks. The dissenting member felt that there was more flexibility in the guidelines than was being interpreted and that the design proposed by the applicant was creative, and met the intent of the guidelines. Notes from the meeting are attached.

Staff Recommendation

- Staff has consistently approached the use of the current design guidelines- which were adopted in February 1998, and by consensus of staff and the Commission need updating - by focusing on the intent of the guidelines given the current community vision for the area and the current development context. This means noting whether or not the project is in alignment with the major goals of the guidelines (creating a harmonious and recognizable district, infusing local art and the use of artists in the site, embracing the riverfront location) and to some extent considering how the project aligns with more recently adopted plans and visions, and the current development context.
- Staff recommends the AARRC approve the design of the project as it meets the intent of the guidelines for the following reasons:

    1) The guidelines allow for and encourage new and creative use of design for new projects, which in recent years has included materials used in this project.
    2) The project aligns with the intent of creating pedestrian connections from site to site along the riverfront
    3) The project's design does not lessen the impact of the core district being experienced as a unified whole, bound by certain design elements.
    4) The project meets the intent of using native and riparian appropriate landscaping in a creative and aesthetic manner.

Suggested Motions

Suggested Motion if *approving*: I move to recommend approval of the Jettie Rae's project as presented based on site plans, elevations and materials submitted and discussions heard during this review and find that the project meets the intent of the River District Design Review Guidelines (including the following conditions if any).

Suggested Motion if *denying*: I move to deny approval of the Jettie Rae's project as presented based on site plans, elevations and materials submitted and discussion heard during this review and find that the project does not meet the intent of the River District Design Review Guidelines for the following reasons (include reasons for denial).

Attachments

1) Design Review Final Submittal for Jettie Raes (includes plans, narrative, precedent pages, guideline excerpt)
2) October 2018 Response Letter to P&DRC
3) Notes from the May 30, 2019 P&DRC meeting