

Downtown Commission Review

TO: Downtown Commission Members and Applicant
DATE: February 10, 2017 (meeting date)
PREPARED BY: Sasha Vrtunski, AICP, Urban Planner II
APPLICANT: Asheville Art Museum
SUBJECT: Design Review for Asheville Art Museum, 2 South Pack Square (#17-00454PZ)

Summary:

The applicant is requesting review of site plans for the renovation and re-construction of an existing structure, the Asheville Art Museum, located in the Central Business District (CBD). This project is considered a Level II review pursuant to Section 7-5-9.1 of the UDO.

Review:

Site: The project site consists of three parcels totaling .9 acre. The site fronts Pack Square and is on the SE corner with Biltmore Avenue to the west. Both street frontages are Key Pedestrian Streets. There is access to S. Market Street via a recessed loading dock. The site is in the Traditional Downtown Core, and is in the Intermediate Height Zone.

Overall Project Proposal: The project proposed to build a 4-story museum building with a total of 68,750 square feet. Building height is 37'4", to the floor of the top habitable story. Overall height including roof elements is approximately 49 feet (measured from Pack Square). The Art Museum shares some functional/utilitarian spaces with the Diana Wortham Theatre (DWT), but this project addresses the art museum alone. Construction phasing and demising is providing for DWT access and egress and has been approved under a separate permit.

Access, Sidewalks, Parking

The primary pedestrian entrance is on South Pack Square. There is another door on Biltmore Avenue (limited access). The sidewalk along Biltmore is shown at varied widths between 9 and 16 feet wide. Parking is not provided as a part of the project.

Landscaping & Open Space

Plans show 1 street tree on Biltmore Avenue. The frontage along Biltmore is approximately 58 feet. The Pack Square frontage was planted according to the Pack Square master plan and additional trees along this frontage are not required. Open space is not required in the CBD.

Required Reviews

This project will be reviewed by the Downtown Commission for compliance with the Downtown Design Review Guidelines on February 10, 2017. Pending a recommendation from the Downtown Commission, the Planning & Zoning Commission will conduct a ministerial review at

the March 1 meeting and their approval is required. Review by the Downtown Commission and/or the Planning & Zoning Commission may be delayed if additional information as noted below, or as required is not supplied by the applicant. A Final TRC meeting is required as this development is in the CBD.

Demolition: The Downtown Commission reviewed the demolition of the Core building on January 13, 2017 and approved the demolition.

UDO Compliance:

Design organization: There is a clear, compositional organization of the building design.

Street Wall & Stepback: The project is located in the Traditional Core, where street walls are required to be between two and four stories. The three stories of glass establish the street wall for this project, and there is a 10 foot stepback provided. As the building façade is 4 stories, a stepback is not technically required.

Pedestrian entrances: There is a primary pedestrian located at the front of the building on South Pack Square.

Windows, doors and other openings: Building meets or exceeds the openings requirement along the two facades (Pack Square and Biltmore).

Screening of Mechanical Equipment and Dumpsters: The architect has chosen to screen the mechanical equipment behind the roof lines along the front of the building. There is one unit shown toward the middle of the roof, and a stair tower, and unit on the east side behind the roof line. Staff has asked the applicant to verify that the equipment will be screened in some way on the sides.

Materials:

Materials shown on plans are primarily glass, composite zinc panels and perforated metal siding. The zinc panels are used on the “ribbon” on top of the building that runs down onto the Biltmore façade, and also on the door canopy on Pack Square. Limestone veneer is used along Biltmore Avenue for the lower wall, and the southern, vertical section (stair tower) on Biltmore. The applicant will bring materials to the Commission meeting.

Signage/ lighting are not considered under this review.

Design Guidelines:

The proposed buildings meet most aspects of the Downtown Design Guidelines that are applicable.

- Incorporate canopies at the pedestrian entrance and doors with large areas of glass (11B/C, pg9)
- Three-dimensional articulations added to plane to provide variations and visual interest (13A)
- Rooftop equipment should be anticipated at the design and approval stage. (14A)
- Appropriate façade width rhythm is maintained in the width of a new building (1F).
- Materials that have matte finishes and muted colors similar to brick and stone are used for large surfaces. (2F)
- Authentic materials are encouraged and other simulated finished systems should not be used (2G).
- Rooftop terraces are encouraged (Other Rec., B).
- During construction, creative screening of the site is encouraged (other Rec., G).

The Secretary of Interior also has standards for additions to historic buildings which may be useful for evaluation of the design:

- Design new additions in a manner that makes clear what is historic and what is new.
- Constructing a new additions that there is the least possible loss of historic materials and so that the character defining features are not obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

Staff Recommendation:

The Asheville Art Museum's design is a strong modern design and the building will present a compatible but differentiated building in contrast to the historical buildings around it without overwhelming those structures. Staff recommends approval of the design for the building as shown as the project meets the goals of the UDO and the intent of the design guidelines.

Suggested Motion if approving:

I move to recommend approval of the Asheville Art Museum, as presented based on site plans, elevations and materials submitted and discussion heard during this review (and any other conditions if any, can include items related to the other variances).