

3/11/2019

Agenda Item No. C)

Presenter

Christopher J. Looney, Planning and Community Development Director
clooney@nbtexas.org

SUBJECT:

Discuss and consider an appeal of the Non-Residential and Multifamily Design Standards, Exterior Building Material requirements for a proposed expansion to the Comal County Landa Building in the "C-2" General Business District addressed at 199 Main Plaza.

BACKGROUND / RATIONALE:

Case No.: CS-19-003

Council District: 5

Applicant/Agent: Robert Cline
1001 Fannin Suite 525
Houston, TX 77002
robert.cline@hdrinc.com

Property Owner: Comal County
150 N. Seguin Ave.
New Braunfels. TX 78130
(830) 608-2090
rabthh@co.comal.tx.us

Staff Contact: Katherine Crowe, Planning Technician
(830) 221-4086
kcrowe@nbtexas.org

The subject property comprises approximately 1.85 acres, currently addressed at 199 Main Plaza. The post-modern brick building, constructed in the 1970's as a bank or savings and loan, sits on or very near the site of the former Landa Mansion, and is known as the Landa Building or the Commissioners Court Building. It is located in the Downtown Historic District, but is considered a non-historic age building that is a non-contributing structure to the historic district.

The County is expanding and renovating the structure and has received approval of a Certificate of Alteration from the Historic Landmark Commission (see detail in the Committee Recommendation section below). The applicant is proposing some alternatives to the City's commercial and multifamily building design standards, which must be considered by City Council.

New Braunfels' building design standards are intended to improve the quality and aesthetics of the

built environment, to help provide human scale to buildings, and to create more interesting façades. Expansions over 10,000 square feet may be exempt from the building design standards when the expansion is no more than 20% of the existing building area. The existing area of the subject structure is 42,217 square feet; the proposed expansion is 20,548 square feet equating to 48.67% of the existing structure, thereby triggering compliance.

Two building design standards are pertinent to the applicant's proposal:

1. 80% of facades, excluding doors and windows, are to be clad in "primary materials". Primary materials for this requirement include masonry, glass, tile, stucco, textured concrete materials, or fiber cement.
2. The lower four feet of all walls are to be clad in either brick, stone, cast stone, rock, marble, granite, split-face concrete block, pour-in-place concrete or tilt-wall concrete.

Regarding number 1 above, based on the applicant's calculations, the building façade of the proposed expansion area would consist of 63% primary finish (brick and glass), and 37% secondary materials (metal panels). Regarding number 2, the applicant is proposing the bottom four feet of the walls be clad in a variation of either brick or metal panels.

The applicant states that with their proposed design, they are attempting to continue with brick on the new additions. They explain that numerous brick vendors were contacted, visited the site, and submitted samples of both different brick medleys and finishes in an effort to match the brick. Due to the existing brick façade's exposure to the elements for almost 50 years, when placed side by side with new brick samples none of the submitted samples were acceptable. The applicant is proposing an alternative material for areas of the building that would provide a visual buffer between the existing brick and new brick. They state this will allow the existing and new brick to be in proximity but not directly adjacent, mitigating the differentiation. They describe the proposed alternate material chosen to provide separation as bronze metal panels complementary to the existing and new brick, and complementary to other metal used Downtown as decorative accents.

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use:

North: C-2 / Office

South: Across Main Plaza, C-2 / Commercial, office

East: C-2 / Commercial

West: C-2 / Comal County offices

ADDRESSES A NEED/ISSUE IN A CITY PLAN OR COUNCIL PRIORITY:

City Plan/Council Priority: Envision New Braunfels Comprehensive Plan	Action 2.8: Establish or expand architectural standards for quality of design across the city. Action 3.4: Revitalize the core of New Braunfels to ensure balanced development. Action 5.30: Ensure public projects are built as demonstration projects that set the example for private developers.
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FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

As the subject structure lies in a historic district, the Historic Landmark Commission (HLC) had to consider a Certificate of Alteration (C-of-A). The HLC approved the applicant's C-of-A application on November 9, 2018, noting:

1. The proposed changes require minimal alteration to the historic district and are of an appropriate size and scale so as to not detract from the character of the district.
2. The current non-historic structure is not architecturally or historically significant and does not contribute to the district.
3. The proposed design is compatible with the district.
4. Since the building does not contribute to the district, any additions to the building are not predicted to contribute to the district. Thus, the existing building/additions could be removed without compromising the district's integrity.

Staff informed HLC and the applicant that should the proposed expansion not meet the building design standards, the applicant would need to seek approval from City Council, or return to HLC with revisions.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The subject site is in a highly visible location on Main Plaza. Downtown is presently dominated by structures with masonry and wood facades with some metal accents. Some new structures are including metal components as the variety of metal materials available is increasing. While exempting expansions in their entirety from the non-residential design standards is not routine, staff does recognize the predicament presented by the weathered brick. Staff also appreciates the applicant proposing a mix of materials to blend the architectural façade in a way that would improve the existing aesthetics overall.

Staff recommends approval as requested, however if City Council would prefer to consider an alternative, one option might be to include decreasing the amount of secondary materials (closer to the 20% maximum rather than the proposed 37%) while still allowing for separation of the new and old brick. For example, add more "store-front windows", or maybe more brick to the north facing side.

Attachments:

1. Aerial Map
2. Application
3. Site Plan
4. Future and current images
5. Metal Specifications
6. Section 5.22-4 Exterior Building Materials