



City of Aurora

2nd Floor Council
Chambers
44 East Downer Place
Aurora, Illinois 60505
www.aurora-il.org

FoxWalk Overlay District Design Review Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday
July 29, 2021
6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Zine called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The following Committee members were present: Fernando Castrejon, Karen Christensen, Fawn Clarke-Peterson, Brian Failing, and Charlie Zine. Clara Diaz and Jeff Palmquist called in and excused themselves from the meeting.

OTHERS PRESENT

The following staff members were present: Jill Morgan and John Curley.

Others Present: Jason Morales (Mora).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

21-0488

Approval of the Minutes of the FoxWalk Overlay District Design Review Committee meeting of June 21, 2021.

A motion was made by Brian Failing, seconded by Fawn Clarke-Peterson, that the minutes be approved and filed. The motion carried.

COA REPORT

[21-0587](#)

FoxWalk Certificate of Appropriateness Report (COA's Approved by Staff - June 1, 2021-June 30, 2021)

There were no questions on the COA report.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

AGENDA

21-0586

Certificate of Appropriateness for the redevelopment of the building for a restaurant use that includes new windows, doors, and signage at 43 E. Galena Boulevard (City of Aurora- 21-0586 - AU22/3-21.227-FCOA - JM - Ward 2)

Mrs. Morgan said we are here to discuss a Certificate of Appropriateness for the redevelopment of the building for a restaurant use that includes new windows, doors and signage at 43 E. Galena Boulevard. Here are some of the current photos of the building. I think you are all pretty familiar with it. The property is zoned Downtown Core. It is an early 20th century commercial building. The building is characterized by some stairstep brickwork along the cornice, limestone lintels and sills, a limestone cornice running between the stories in the east elevation and some transoms. Based on historic photos, the staff believes the photos date about circa 1917. The existing first story doors and windows are not original to the building. The building originally appears to have had transom windows with a brick wall on most of the elevation facing Water Street. The large opening at the corner along Galena Boulevard also has been altered. The historic photos look to show possibly 2 doors, while a later photo shows similar openings as exist today with a central door and a large picture window. Here you can kind of see the postcard where it has just kind of the transoms and mostly brick along the bottom and it looks like you have the entrance at the corner onto Water Street and then an entrance as well onto Galena. Here is another photo a little later that shows, you can't see it too clear, but it looks like there is a central door and 2 windows on either side. By 1962 when this photo dates to, the building has been altered again with additional storefronts onto Water Street. The second story one over one double hung windows with the lintels do appear to be original. The building has been used for a variety of uses through the years, hotel, tavern, theater, restaurant, etc.

Jason Morales, the owner of Mora Asian Fusion restaurant, currently I believe in Plainfield, Bolingbrook and Oak Park has been working with the city over the last several years to open a restaurant in Aurora. He entered into a Redevelopment Agreement with the city in 2019. Mr. Morales has had an outdoor restaurant at this location in the past 2 summers for special events. The plans for the building include the redevelopment now of the first story and basement and then future plans include the expansion, possibly, to the second floor and possibly a rooftop as well is what he is considering. Interior work has begun this year, including complete interior demolition and they've been working on the elevator shaft currently. Mr. Morales is proposing to replace all the current openings with similar aluminum entrances. This includes new aluminum windows, transoms and doors, but keeping a similar look to the existing. One bay on the side facing Water Street Mall will be replaced with a glass garage door with a transom above. The transoms will be enlarged so that all the transoms on both elevations are the same height. If you noticed from the current photo, they are not exactly the same height, so he is going to make them all the same height. A transom will be added above the door as well. He is also proposing the addition of Juliet balconies on the second story. The rendering is showing a fascia sign and projecting sign on the second story facing Galena along with some small projecting signs along Water Street Mall. This is kind of a corner view. You can see how the storefronts are all kind of similar to what it looks like today, but they will be an all new aluminum storefront. That kind of second bay back on Water Street Mall is going to be a garage, but keeping the transom above. That garage door will open all

the way up to near the height of the ceiling inside. Here is a look of the front with the signs. He's proposing more on the river as the name and similar look. This elevation to the left of the door will be enlarged now. It is like half the windows only go half the width of the transom, so it is going to be one large opening. He did mention he is going to match all the muttons on all the windows so they will look the same. Here is the elevation to the side. You can see those little projecting signs he is proposing. This is the elevation on the river side. Staff met with the owner for a Development Services Team meeting where staff expressed that due to the façade and elevations not being original and not being historic storefronts, the guidelines, staff felt, would allow for some additional alterations. Staff expressed interest of keeping similar transom elements in the design as they were historically there and are currently there. It was an element that's kind of been kept through some of the years. The Juliet balconies do not appear to be historically appropriate for the style or period as staff notes. If the second story windows are being replaced, they should match our standard one over one aluminum clad wood windows. I didn't get to ask him whether or not he was replacing those. The projecting sign along Galena does not adhere to the guidelines as it extends above the windowsill of the highest story. However, the location of the sign does seem appropriate and similar to other projecting signs that we have allowed for other restaurants and entertainment uses. The size is not dimensioned, so the size adherence can't be determined without dimensions. The maximum size for these types of projecting signs is calculated by multiplying the allowable height by 3½ feet. So the allowable height would basically be like the height of that second story by 3½ feet is how it is calculated in the guidelines. Staff kind of feels just looking at the rendering that the size seems to kind of fit with the building.

Chairman Zine said Jill I have a question. So I've read that section several times. I'm still not sure how high the sign can go up.

Mrs. Morgan said the way I interpreted that is you can't go past the windowsill of the highest story. So for a 2 story building, it doesn't really work because the windowsill of the highest story is the second story, so it doesn't really apply very well for a 2 story building.

Chairman Zine said and we've approved others.

Mrs. Morgan said we have. Indiro has kind of a projecting sign as well. The Arts Center, the John Dunham Art Center, has that large projecting sign. That one's rather large, but it was also based on it historically had a very similar look and size, so that was why that one got a little larger than maybe others.

Chairman Zine said so do we know how big we are going to allow it? Have we figured that out?

Mrs. Morgan said no because I'm for sure the height of the...

Chairman Zine said from the ground to the sill?

Mrs. Morgan said yes.

Chairman Zine said but the way it is projected on the image is roughly what you think we would approve?

Mrs. Morgan said yes. I thought that it didn't look inappropriate in scale just based on

the rendering.

Chairman Zine said so this would be another one of those things that we could change the guidelines so that it reflects reality?

Mrs. Morgan said yes. When we do the update of the guidelines, I think that this needs clarifying. I think the whole sign section could use some updating and fitting things with a little more with what we see and what would fit more appropriately for sizes.

Mrs. Christensen said the sign that is at Indiro, there is a long history to that. The argument that was made at the time was the parking garage, the size of the sign for the casino and the parking garage and that, I think again, is why all of this needs to get updated. I also think there was not an anticipation that the 2 story buildings might host a restaurant or an entertainment venue. There wasn't a thought toward that. It was more maybe a commercial space on the first floor and then apartments on the second floor.

Mrs. Morgan said that's a good point.

Mrs. Clark-Peterson said you mentioned mutton and I was wondering what that is.

Chairman Zine said mullion you mean, right?

Mrs. Clark-Peterson said mutton.

Mrs. Morgan said I meant the muttons. They are the little pieces that separate a pane of glass where the mullion separates the actual windows. See in the one to the side, there's like little small panes in the top window that's facing Galena, it is just one piece of glass. He said he was going to make them all consistent. Does that make sense?

Mrs. Clark-Peterson said it does.

Mrs. Morgan staff also had some concerns with the small projecting signs onto Water Street. As of now, especially as one restaurant, maybe it would be better to just have one projecting sign on that side. We could see where having one on Water Street would be good to have for people who are kind of coming from that end to be able to see it.

Mrs. Clark-Peterson said what do those signs represent?

Mrs. Morgan said I'm not for certain. Maybe the Petitioner can describe his idea for those signs. I think that's really kind of my staff report. Are there any more questions for me?

I'm Jason Morales, 2408 W. Lockport Street, Plainfield.

Mrs. Morgan said I think one of the things they mentioned that I couldn't really answer, the small projecting signs that face Water Street Mall, what was the thought behind those?

Mr. Morales said so ultimately we'll have 4 levels, 3 different restaurants plus a rooftop. The signage along Galena doesn't really tell the people what we have there. So the

thought was the pedestrian blade signs is what they are. Each one would kind of tell people what each floor is. We are creating nicknames for each floor. Then on the bottom of it, the name it will in smaller letters tell them which floor it's on basically. The name Mora or even Mora on the River doesn't tell you what's going on in the basement, first floor, second floor. We expect that Water Street Mall to be, and it does get really busy with pedestrians, and we want them to know just from first glance what the building is all about.

Mrs. Christensen said what is your timeframe for developing all of this?

Mr. Morales said well the first floor we are shooting to open this fall. Because we are doing it in phases, we have to first build things that are common to each floor, so we don't want to, for example, finish the first floor and then work on future phases, the second floor for example, and interfere with the business on the first floor. We're right now addressing all the structures that are common to all the floors, the elevator shaft, the front and back stairwells. Then once those close out, we'll proceed with the first floor renovation. I expect to get the full building permit for the first floor probably in the next week and half, so timing-wise, it will be perfect. That's about when we will finish up with the core of work, if you will.

Chairman Zine said so your idea of a different sign for each of the 4 venues makes sense. Does the idea of having 1 sign with 4 segments going to work equally as well for you?

Mr. Morales said we could do that, like similar to like a monument sign perhaps for a strip mall where there is one sign that would kind of highlight what each tenant is in that strip mall. We could do something like that.

Chairman Zine said good and then staff can definitely help you with that.

Mrs. Morgan said are the entrances going to be different for each different level? Will people enter, like if they're going to in the future when you finish the second level, it's going to be like a different restaurant space, is there a different entrance?

Mr. Morales said right. When you walk in the main entrance, it is called like the vestibule. There will be 3 doors, 1 leading to the first floor, 1 going up to the second floor and then the other to the basement.

Chairman Zine said but they will be all inside the building?

Mr. Morales said yes. The elevator will be on the back end and it will have its own entrance too. We'll utilize one of the existing man doors.

Mrs. Christenson said you mentioned ultimately possibly having a rooftop. Have you done a study to understand what the structural integrity of the roof is for a load like that?

Mr. Morales said yes, we have a structural engineer. We actually removed more weight from the building through the demolition process than what we will be adding onto. We filled 14 dumpsters just on the second floor demolition. I think there were about 20 8 by 8 rows that were lathe and plaster. I was one of the guys doing the demo during the lockdown and we were like let's just do it.

Chairman Zine said so she had mentioned the second story windows. Do you intend on replacing the second story windows?

Mr. Morales said yes. I would say 60% to 70% of them are in really bad shape. You can't even open them and if you attempt to open them, they will fall apart. On the river side for years and years that roof has been leaking like a sieve, so there is some structural damage that we are also addressing. Last week the roof finally got fixed. A lot of the windows on the river side are all rotted out. We'd like to replace them with aluminum windows that are fixed. Right now they are double hung windows. I don't want windows on that side to open that much, for the same reason hotel windows can only open this much if they do open, right?

Chairman Zine said so a few years ago, we amended our window requirements so that you could have either aluminum or vinyl clad on out outside, which means you never have to paint them, but you could still have wood on the inside. Is that what you are thinking because you had mentioned aluminum. I don't know if you were thinking that or more of like commercial.

Mr. Morales said well the window framer was thinking of doing that, but when you are inside, we are trimming out around the windows with wood. But the windows themselves, I was thinking of just making them all out of aluminum as well.

Mrs. Christenson said and that's a violation of the guidelines, right?

Chairman Zine said that's what we're saying. They really have to be wood construction, but then the outside can be clad with a waterproof material. It has turned out to be a huge benefit for people who've done these. We did not use to allow that on the outside, but nobody ever painted their windows above the first floor and they rotted. So now with having them clad with fiberglass, aluminum or vinyl you never have to paint them. They always look good, but the inside you can match the historic design, I think we are talking about one over one. Whether they open or not I don't think is important. Is that right Jill?

Mrs. Morgan said as long as they look like a sash window. They don't have to be double. They could be like a single sash or if they need to be fixed and placed as well, but as long as they have that look of a division, like a movable sash window, that's fine. I don't want just one piece of glass.

Mr. Morales said okay, so we can make it look like a double hung window but non-operable?

Mrs. Morgan said yes.

Chairman Zine said and whenever you do select something, you'd be really smart to bring in a sample and show it to the staff and just have them say yes this will work.

Mrs. Christenson said that's my question Jill. If we recommend approval of this COA, but there's these conditions in terms of what the specifics are going to be of the building materials and so on, that gets built into your approval, right?

Mrs. Morgan said yes, if we need additional information, as long as the approval of the Committee covers that, or gives the staff the discretion, then we can do that.

Mrs. Christenson said because that would be important, the window appearance and the window material.

Chairman Zine said and these guidelines, I hope they don't seem arbitrary, because they're really not and some of us have worked on them like 15 or 20 years ago and we do have a small, but we do have relatively rich architectural context here and so we try to preserve that, so it's not like we're just setting up hurdles or anything. We are seeing the results now. Some of the buildings really look wonderful, even though they are 100 years old.

Mr. Morales said I agree. Just list the requirements and we'll adhere.

Chairman Zine said thank you.

Mrs. Christensen said so Jill, when I was reading the staff recommendations, you were suggesting that the Juliet balconies are inappropriate, which I would completely agree with. Mr. Morales understands that?

Mrs. Morgan said yes. I'm recommending not having the Juliet balconies. They're just not historically appropriate. Not that they look bad, but they're just not historically appropriate to the style and period of that building, or really of Aurora in general.

Chairman Zine said again, it goes back to we are trying to both give you the latitude to modify like the openings and the transoms, but then still be aware of what the original building was and then try and somewhat emulate that. The balconies just aren't part of that historic design, unfortunately.

Mrs. Christenson said I can't think of any building downtown that has that.

Chairman Zine said Jimi Allen's building on LaSalle Street has those.

Mrs. Morgan said John was thinking that they are actually French doors that open.

Mr. Curley said they are French doors on the second floors that open in. It is actually a guardrail.

Chairman Zine said so that's the difference there.

Mr. Morales said how about an actual balcony? Would you consider that?

Mrs. Morgan said isn't the floor not at the height of the window?

Mr. Morales said if it was one continuous balcony, if we needed 2 exists on opposite ends, we would probably have to cut down this much of window opening and convert those to doors or something.

Mrs. Morgan said I would probably not be supportive of that. The second story is about one of the few things that actually seems to be remaining from the historic look of the building, so I would want to probably keep that as windows.

Mr. Morales said okay.

Mrs. Morgan said maybe just going back to the sign, just so I'm kind of understanding,

is the Commission okay with the one facing Galena, as long as the size adheres to kind of what the rendering looks like?

Mrs. Christensen said yes, especially because he is adjacent to the Paramount.

Mrs. Morgan said and then for the ones on Water Street where he explained that's kind of the future, the small projecting signs are kind of the idea of the future growth of the building. Would the Committee want to maybe allow those once those future phases happen or does the Committee think that something else instead of the small projecting signs?

Chairman Zine said well I didn't understand that it was 4 signs for 4 different restaurants, and that is logical to me.

Mrs. Morgan said but do we want them now? I'm thinking that like it makes it look like there are multiple happenings and maybe allow once you have that expansion.

Chairman Zine said I'm okay with allowing them to add the sign as they open another restaurant.

Mr. Castrejon said approving them?

Chairman Zine said yes.

Mrs. Christensen said my only concern would be consistency. So what happens if the sign fabricator isn't around when the other restaurants open. I don't know anything about how those are made, but if it's something where you are trying to have a uniform look and design, maybe it makes sense to approve them and put them up now, even though the other phases aren't in place.

Chairman Zine said you don't even know the names of the other restaurants though.

Mrs. Christensen said I saw verbiage on there, so I thought there was.

Mr. Morales said placeholders.

Mrs. Christensen said well then we shouldn't be putting stuff up yet.

Mr. Failing said so you said the timeline for the first floor is this fall. What's the timeline for the basement and then the future phases?

Mr. Morales said ideally you want to open a floor every 6 months.

Mrs. Christensen said so then we're saying yes to that design, but don't install them until each restaurant opens?

Chairman Zine said Jill are you okay with that? Understanding now what his rationale was, it seems rational to me, but I don't know if that still works for you.

Mr. Curley said that makes the most sense with respect, if you considered obsolete signage ordinances that we have for, this is the good side of it, but it makes sense that the signage appear when the use appears.

Chairman Zine said and we are okay with 4 of them versus 1 sign with 4 different layers?

Mrs. Morgan said yes. I think 1 sign with 4 might end up being too big of a sign. I am okay with, I think, the 4 individuals because then you are giving basically 1 sign per restaurant.

Mrs. Christensen said and when I heard the word monument sign, I'm like no, because that doesn't work with this location.

Chairman Zine said so we are okay with the signs then, but putting them up as the restaurants open.

Mr. Morales said yes, that makes sense.

Chairman Zine said and consistent in design, just to be clear. So then of the 3 concerns that you had, I think we've talked about all of them, the signs, the second story windows being wood clad and then I don't know if we've come to resolution on the Juliet balconies yet. Are we still saying no to that even if makes the windows full length doors? Just to be clear.

Mrs. Morgan said it is up to the Committee. Staff, I don't think would recommend making them full length doors or keeping any type of balcony.

Chairman Zine said I think the openings now are reminiscent of original design, so that kind of speaks against making them doors. So those are the 3 issues. If we are resolved on those then I think we are all happy. I'd like to say personally that I sampled your food either last summer or the summer before, I forget now, but when they were open, and we're glad to have you and a restaurant of this stature here. We think your timing is excellent and if you were partly responsible for a 70 unit apartment complex down the road, then we are thanking you for that too.

Mr. Morales said we are excited to be here.

Mrs. Morgan said it looks like we need a motion. I will read staff's recommendation with the alterations that we discussed. Staff would recommend conditional approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness for the redevelopment of the building for a restaurant use that includes new windows, doors and signage at 43 E. Galena Boulevard with the following conditions:

- 1. That all replacement windows on the second story and west elevation should be 1 over 1 or double hung aluminum clad wood windows or fixed with the appearance of a double hung window.*
- 2. That the Juliet balconies be removed.*
- 3. That the small blade signs be put up as the restaurants open.*

MOTION OF APPROVAL WAS MADE BY: Brian Failing

Motion SECONDED BY: Fernando Castrejon

AYES: Fernando Castrejon, Karen Christensen, Fawn Clark-Peterson, Brian Failing, Charlie Zine

NAYS: None

A motion was made by Brian Failing, seconded by Fernando Castrejon, that this agenda item be approved. The motion carried.

PENDING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Zine said so the proposed apartment building over on the Dolan and Murphy lot, is that going to be run by the DRC at all, or is that outside of our limits? We've informally looked at other properties outside our limit, like River Street Plaza and RiverEdge Park.

Mrs. Morgan said we were just discussing that today and trying to determine that. Technically, I don't think it does need to come before the DRC. We might want to have it either brought before the DRC or the Riverwalk, so we are still internally discussing that.

Chairman Zine said the other question I have is I run through downtown weekly and went by the new sidewalk where we took out the little continental bridge right over here on the east side behind the United Way. Are the bricks the same color, the pavers, as the other ones? They look more reddish than the gold and we just had a meeting like 2 years ago about all the different varieties of bricks that we have for the Riverwalk pavers.

Mrs. Morgan said I have not noticed. I thought they were supposed to be the same as we've been currently using throughout the downtown. I'll take a look and see.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Karen Christensen, seconded by Brian Failing, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by voice vote. Chairman Zine adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

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