

HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION (HAPC)
MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, May 8, 2024
6:00 P.M.

I. Call to Order

The April 8, 2024 meeting of the Oxford Historic and Architectural Preservation Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Dana Miller.

Those members present: Chris Skoglund, Dana Miller, Corey Watt, Alex French, Sean Wagner and Rémah Ding

Those members excused: Brad Spurlock

Staff members present: Sam Perry, Community Development Director

Staff members excused: None

II. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Perry requested to amend the agenda to change the order of New Business Items.

Mr. Watt made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Skoglund seconded the motion.
All were in favor.

III. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

IV. Approval of Minutes of April 10, 2024

Mr. Skoglund made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Ms. French seconded the motion. Ms. Ding abstained since she was not on the Commission at that time. All were in favor.

V. New Business

HAPC-2024-07, 21-23 E High Street, CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, mural of the east and west wall of the alley, Joseph Prescher, Applicant/Agent

Mr. Perry started his presentation by directing attention to Code Section 1152, which discusses the different levels of review. Mr. Perry explained since murals are very rare it was decided to be placed on the agenda for the Commission to review and discuss it. Mr. Perry recalled there were two murals previously approved, one that is installed on the Municipal Building, and while the other was approved but was never installed.

Mr. Perry explained the proposed mural would be installed on two building facades in the alley. Mr. Perry pointed out the building facades are already painted so this would not present an issue. Since it is an exterior change to a building in the Historic District, the Commission would review the proposal, added Mr. Perry.

Mr. Prescher started his presentation by explaining to the Commission that a few years ago he had been approached by a few property managers about street art in the Uptown area. Mr. Prescher stated the area, which is between Jimmy Johns and the U Shop, has been offered to him as a possible location to do a mural. Since Oxford has a rich history related to bees and apiaries, it would provide a great topic for a mural, added Mr. Prescher. The design is as if a person were inside one of Mr. Langstroth's bee hives surrounded by honeycombs and bees. Mr. Prescher explained that two other restaurants offered their exterior wall for the mural, CJ's, and Mac & Joe's. With this extension, educational material could be displayed on the walls such as blueprints, information about Mr. Langstroth, vintage photographs, illustrations and so on. Mr. Prescher noted that CJ's restaurant would like to preserve some of the exterior wall while Mac & Joe's offered the entire exterior wall.

Mr. Prescher further explained some ideas that could be done in this alley, such as chalk painting the alley road perhaps with community engagement and an overhead covering between the buildings. Mr. Prescher stated there are other ideas, for example, providing bee sounds and projection of bees moving. This could provide an immersive experience.

Mr. Miller inquired whether the top portion and the paint in the alley road would be permanent. Mr. Prescher said the chalk would easily wash away and the cover could be removed and placed back when needed. Mr. Skoglund noted it is good that the cover is removable because the power lines running in that alley provide electricity to the hospital and it would be in the way when Duke comes out for maintenance or any other reasons.

Mr. Skoglund thought the alley next to Fiesta Charra is a good candidate for public arts. Mr. Prescher said he presented his proposal to PACO and the Commission appreciated his efforts. Mr. Skoglund was concerned about vehicular traffic in the alley thus wearing off the paint. Mr. Prescher stated that is one reason why the painting would not be permanent on the alley road.

Ms. Dinç inquired what is shown on the screen how true to the color are. Mr. Prescher said this is a general idea, very approximate. Ms. Dinç stated she did not really like the lattice concrete on the U-Shop wall being painted. Mr. Prescher said he colored it to blend in, but he also talked to the owners who are thinking about removing it.

Mr. Watt emphasized how this proposal falls in line with the public art in the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Wagner pointed out the lattice could be used as a surface for some educational material or a plaque.

Mr. Watt inquired whether the educational material would be painted. Mr. Prescher said it would be. Mr. Watt also inquired how the mural would be lit up. Mr. Skoglund stated it would have to be such a way that it would not bother the tenants in the upper level. Mr. Watt was thinking more of the line of accents lights.

Ms. Dinç asked the applicant about the sounds and projections. Mr. Prescher said it would be event specific, but this option has not been researched further. Ms. Dinç also inquired about the time frame to paint the mural. Mr. Prescher was estimating between 3-5 weeks.

Mr. Wagner inquired about the financing and upkeep part. Mr. Prescher stated there is a tentative commitment from one of the owners. Mr. Prescher would also like to do a fundraiser for the project. Mr. Prescher added the maintenance of the paint is 10 years.

Mr. Skoglund made a motion to approve the mural as proposed with the condition that the applicant will work with the City to explore lighting options. Mr. Watt seconded the motion. All were in favor.

HAPC-2024-06, 110 E High Street, CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS Pre-Application, new four-story mixed-use building, Emily Lubbers, Applicant/Agent

Mr. Miller recalled at the November meeting this building was re-classified from Historic to Historic Non-contributing.

Mr. Perry reminded the Commission that the pre-application does not require a vote, rather it provides opportunity to offer comments and feedback to the applicant and designer. Mr. Perry pointed out that the Design Guidelines do not provide adequate information on new construction of this scale. It does have reference to vertical proportioning, added Mr. Perry. Mr. Perry and Mr. Moore had a meeting recently with the applicant to provide guidance.

Ms. Lubbers talked about the proposal, which is a new four-story mixed-use building with retail stores on the ground floor and multi-family housing geared towards Miami students. The developer does not intend to propose anything that would require conditional use, added Ms. Lubbers. Ms. Lubbers explained after meeting with staff, she found some things that require changes to the drawings to comply with the applicable Zoning Codes such as building height and square footage.

Ms. Lubbers further explained the market research her team did revealed that 3–4-bedroom units are most desirable. Because of that reason, the current plan shows mostly three-bedroom units and one four-bedroom unit on each floor. Ms. Lubbers mentioned there were discussions about the feasibility of having a basement for storage, as well as a roof patio. Mr. Lubbers explained the first floor is more of a box shape, but the floors above would create a U-shape that would allow each unit to have a window, which is required in the new building code. This design also opens the first floor's roof top that could potentially be occupied, stated Ms. Lubbers. Ms. Lubbers mentioned the feedback they received from students and parents revealed that the desire is to have the main entrance on High Street and not in the alley.

Ms. Lubbers explained the first floor would have the lobby, a mail room, and a package drop-off area with lockers. Ms. Lubbers also mentioned Follett's has the first opportunity to claim up to 3000 square feet of first floor. Starbucks is also interested in the space on the corner of High and Poplar Streets, and Target as well. However, Target would want the entire first floor, which would amount to more than 10,000 square feet requiring a conditional use, but the developer is not interested in applying for a Conditional Use permit.

Ms. Lubbers next talked about the exterior of the building. While adhering to the Design Guidelines, Ms. Lubbers is proposing different colors. The brick would still be in the reds shade but different from Miami's red brick, and 12x24 cast stones.

Mr. Skoglund liked the design but also commented on changing the vertical “striping” to horizontal thus creating an impression of smaller buildings instead of a one big building.

Ms. Lubbers commented that another feedback was to see more glass on the retail floor.

Mr. Watt agreed with Mr. Skoglund’s comments on the “striping” of the building. Ms. Lubbers also agreed. Mr. Watt encouraged the developer not to shy away from the Conditional Use.

Ms. Lubbers stated she would like to come to every HAPC meeting to garner approval as soon as possible and to obtain a building permit by the end of this year, therefore the target opening date, the 2026 Academic Year, would stay on track. Ms. Lubbers added there are conversations with Conger Construction about this project. Ms. Lubbers mentioned the first floor would most likely be a shell space when the permit application will be submitted, but hopefully by the time construction starts they will have plans.

Mr. Skoglund stated he would not like to see the first floor sitting empty as in the case of 45 E High St. Ms. Lubbers explained there are some challenges with 45 E High St because both the architect and engineer passed away and they cannot obtain a sign-off on the original drawings.

Ms. Dinç would like the doors to the residential units to be a little wider than normal to help with the move-in process and accessible with wheelchair. Ms. Dinç noted she would like to see the banding match to the building next door, muntins and/or mullions on the residential windows, dentil work on the cornices more elevated. Ms. Dinç encouraged the use of wood doors as well. Ms. Lubbers said they have not gone that far into the design and that is why currently aluminum doors are shown.

Mr. Watt thought incorporating recessing or cut outs on the front façade would help with the breakup, like what the Rossville Flats have in Hamilton. Ms. Dinç liked the sitting area on the N Poplar St side. Ms. Lubbers stated there is a 16.5 feet vacated right-of-way along N Poplar, and the High Street side has an oversized sidewalk as well. Ms. Lubbers would like to see how these spaces could be used the most.

Ms. Lubbers further explained that the developer is not going to do any balconies, but they are open to shift parts of the upper stories. Ms. Lubbers added the main entrance door to the residential part is 3’ 6” and there were discussions about making it 4 feet. The elevator is sized for what typically is in multi-family units which would accommodate furniture and wheelchairs.

Mr. Miller inquired about the survey that the developer did. Mr. Miller also commented on the fact that the building design might seem too modern to some people. Ms. Lubbers said they try to take the modern approach but at the same time respect the historic character of the surrounding area. Ms. French expressed she did not like the design first but with the feedback that the Commission is providing this could be a nice building. Ms. French also noted that the supporting pillar at the corner entrance is a little bit thick. Ms. Lubbers stated there could be ways to make this more appealing. By doing some shifting on the façade would give a better overall look to this building, added Mr. Skoglund in agreement with Mr. Watt. Ms. French pointed out the importance of making this building appealing to the community.

Ms. Dinç liked the stone element in the design which could be seen on other buildings in town.

Mr. Watt encouraged Ms. Lubbers to talk to staff about the utilization of the rooftop since the property is adjacent to two of the biggest bars, and what safety measurements can be taken.

Mr. Skoglund inquired where the refuse storage would be. Ms. Lubbers said the developer owns a site across the alley where the trash pickup would be. Mr. Watt mentioned a basement might provide some parking spaces. Ms. Lubbers said they are looking into this solution however, it is most likely to be cost prohibitive. Since they are close to the adjacent building, it is important not to undermine the foundation of that structure.

Mr. Watt inquired about the floor heights and the overall building height.

VI. Historic Tours Update

Mr. Spurlock was absent from the meeting therefore no update was provided on this topic.

VIII. Announcements and Communications

Mr. Miller welcomed the newest member, Ms. Dinç, to the Commission. The Commission members expressed they eagerly wait for the update of the Design Guidelines.

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. Watt made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Dinç seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.