City of Jacksonville

July 15, 2021

Downtown Development Review Board

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CITY OF JACKSONVILLE
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

MEETING

Proceedings held on Thursday, July 15, 2021, commencing at 2:30 p.m., Jacksonville Public Library, Multipurpose Room, 303 North Laura Street, Jacksonville, Florida, before Diane M. Tropia, FPR, a Notary Public in and for the State of Florida at Large.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

TREVOR LEE, Chairman.
CHRISTIAN HARDEN, Board Member.
CRAIG DAVISSON, Board Member.
WILLIAM J. SCHILLING, JR., Board Member.
BRENNA DURDEN, Board Member.

ALSO PRESENT:

GUY PAROLA, DIA, Operations Manager. LORI RADCLIFFE-MEYERS, Redevelopment Coordinator. SUSAN GRANDIN, Office of General Counsel.

Diang M. Tropia, Inc., Post Office Box 2575, Jacksonville, FL 52205 (904) 521-0500

Chairman Lee.

My name is Lori Radcliffe-Meyers with the Downtown Investment Authority and I'll be presenting the staff report for the Ambassador final approval.

So, again, DDRB application 2021-007 is seeking final approval for the renovation and adaptive reuse of the building known formally as the Ambassador Hotel.

Again, just to familiarize yourselves, it is on the corner of Church Street and Julia Street. So the building was completed in 1923 for \$300,000 and the design style reflects Georgian Revival with light-colored limestone and English-bond red brick.

In 1924, this building was described as Jacksonville's first big downtown apartment building. It was named the Ambassador Hotel in 1955 and was placed on the National Register for historic sites in 1983.

A redevelopment agreement among the City of Jacksonville, the Downtown Investment Authority and Axis Hotels, LLC, was made to support the renovation by the developer of the Ambassador Hotel building.

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PROCEEDINGS

July 15, 2021

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2:30 p.m.

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THE CHAIRMAN: I'll go ahead and call the meeting to order, of the DDRB, Thursday, July 15th meeting.

We'll start with the approval of the meeting minutes.

BOARD MEMBER SCHILLING: Move to approve. THE CHAIRMAN: I've got a motion to

approve the meeting minutes.

Do I have a second?

BOARD MEMBER DURDEN: Second.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have a second by

Ms. Brenna.

All those in favor, please say aye.

BOARD MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any opposed?
BOARD MEMBERS: (No response.)

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Okay. The

motion passes.

We'll move on to DDRB 2021-007, the

Ambassador final approval.

Ms. Radcliff-Meyers, could we have a staff

24 report?25 MS

MS. RADCLIFFE-MEYERS: Yes. Thank you, Diane M. Tropia, Inc., Post Office Box 2375, Jacksonville, FL 32203

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The developer proposed to renovate the existing structure, maintaining its historic facade to house what is expected to be a nationally flagged brand hotel. Upon completion, the hotel will feature approximately 100 rooms, a restaurant and lounge, meeting space, a fitness center and guest laundry area.

The project has received NPS approval for the exterior work and has received a Certificate of Appropriateness.

To ensure conformance of the ordinance, the developer is adding two additional street trees along Julia Street and placing four new double-acorn streetlights along Church and Julia Street.

The current plan does not show the required benches or trash receptacles within the amenity zone. However, based on the foregoing, the Downtown Development Review Board staff recommends final approval of DDRB application 2021-007 with the following condition: Placement of benches and trash receptacles within the Amenity Zone shall be submitted to DDRB staff for review and

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required.

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1 approval. 2 This concludes the staff report. The 3 staff is available for questions.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms.

6 Radcliff-Meyers.

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Could we have an applicant presentation, please?

(Ms. Trimmer approaches the podium.) MS. TRIMMER: Thank you.

Cyndy Trimmer, 1 Independent Drive, Suite 1200, on behalf of the applicant, Axis Hotels.

We have been working on this project for a very, very long time and working with historic consultant Paul Weaver to navigate SHPO and NPS. And I know that the package doesn't have all of the pretty pictures that we would normally have for you, but that's because we have, in painstaking detail, worked all of the architectural elements out with those two agencies, so I'll kind of walk you through the negotiations with them and where we've landed.

But the crux of what we're focusing on today is bringing the streetscape up to the current code which was adopted since we

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streetscape, if you come down Hogan, the first block to the east of us, you will see where that one has been brought up to the current streetscape standards with brick pavers and all of those things. This one has not yet, but we are fortunate that we've got the room to at

least comply with all of the new zones

9 We're not quite there yet on shade with 10 the existing trees. So, as Lori mentioned, we're going to be adding additional cathedral 11 live oaks to the frontage and we will be 12 complying with the minimum pedestrian clear 13 14 zone. And, again, we'll be bringing each of the corners up, as shown on the next one, to 15 the urban standards for all of those pavers. 16

We have not shown the actual placement of the acorn lights and the garbage receptacles and the street furniture, but those are going to be put on. We will confirm the exact placement with staff before we get the final ten-set approval so that those are all consistent with the existing standards.

For the elevations themselves, it's -- I'm going to be repeating the same thing over and Diane M. Tropia, Inc., Post Office Box 2375, Jacksonville, FL 32203 (904) 821-0300

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originally came through with the project.

We're all super familiar with the area, and the entity has acquired the old Independent Life across the street.

The project itself has kind of this iconic (inaudible) shape when it was originally done as the apartment buildings. In the 1920s it was done that way so that each of their interior rooms had its own window, which was unique at the time.

It's a six-story brick and limestone structure, and one of the other main features of the building is this front right here (indicating). It's a large, rusticated, ashlar stonework entrance that we are agreeing to restore as part of this project as well.

Just for context, the entity does own the entire block. We'll be back later to go through different projects. Tom Hurst came through and you guys talked about the new multifamily and garage that are going to go on the western portion of the block, and we'll be coming back on the old mercantile building that's on the southeast corner later. So running through the existing

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over, basically. We're replacing and

repairing. So on the main frontages, we're

going to be replacing the parapet caps at the

top of the building. The next line down, we're

going to be replacing and repairing the

cornice, which is your next level. And then

the third tier down, we'll be replacing and

8 painting the molding at the top of the

building. 9

10 Same things on these (indicating). The 11 main north entrance and then the eastern 12 entrance is where you have the large sheet metal parapet. Most of that is being restored 13 or replaced, but it will be with the 14 appropriate elements. 15

There is a new stair that is going to be done on the exterior to match the prior stair. That is a metal staircase. And then on the ground floor, we had originally proposed a sliding glass door entrance and NPS and SHPO came back and said it wasn't historically accurate enough, so we have defaulted back to a double swinging door that is consistent with the prior awning that existed and then the two [sic] glazing of the front door.

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The floor plans have required a lot of 1 2

- back and forth. The original SHPO and NPS
- 3 comments were that they wanted them to keep all
- of the original corridors intact, with all of 4
- the original door openings, to restore all of 5
- 6 the interior hallway handrails. And with the
- 7 deterioration of the interior of the building,
- 8 from it being open to the elements all this
- time it's been abandoned, since '98, I believe, 9
- 10 the mold and everything has just been too much,
- so we have agreed, working through the powers 11
- that be, that they're going to restore it to 12
- the original door openings, to the extent 13
- 14 possible, so that the actual corridors will
- 15
- still resemble the original apartment and then
- 16 hotel corridors.

Any entrances that existed that are not going to be there, they're supposed to come through and do basically a facade entrance and then have it closed off on the interior so it still preserves the look of the corridors with,

again, restoring the handrails and all of those 22

23 elements.

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Those will be done through a separate final approval through SHPO and NPS, so we have

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conditional approval. They just have to show that they have done all of these elements.

There was also a lot of debate about the 3 windows. What was originally proposed didn't 4

- have all of the elements that SHPO and NPS were 5
- looking for, so we have now come back with a 6
- new package that has an offset sash and the 7
- 8 appropriate brick molding that they were
- looking for and the muntins. I can use that 9
- 10 word. I don't know what a muntin is. I know
- 11 it was important and I know that we have them
- 12 and everybody's happy about it now.

And on my last -- which was not in the 13 original package that was given to you, but it 14

- is an updated rendering of the structure, that 15
- it look, basically, the way it did in the 16 17 picture that's on the cover. It will just be
- 18 restored to the prior glory. This one doesn't
- show the updated streetscape, but, again, there 19
- will be additional trees, street furniture, 20
- 21 lights and the paving added to it.
- 22 So, with that, I will pause and can answer 23 any questions about the prior negotiations.
- 24 But we are not asking for any deviations, so we
- 25 hope it will be short and sweet.

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1 Thank you.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Trimmer.

Appreciate that presentation.

4 Mr. Chisholm, are there any public

5 comments?

6 MR. CHISHOLM: To the Chair, I don't have 7 any speaker request cards. I don't see any 8 hands raised on Zoom.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Great. Thank you.

10 Okay. We'll turn to board comments.

Mr. Davisson.

BOARD MEMBER DAVISSON: I guess I'd be 12 13 revealing my age if I said that I used to work 14 right next door when this was a functioning building. There was a package store and a 15 Sheik on the bottom level. So I've seen it in 16

17 years and years of disrepair and I think this is a great project and good luck. 18

19 MS. TRIMMER: Thank you.

20 BOARD MEMBER DAVISSON: It's good to see 21 this finally happen.

MS. TRIMMER: Hopefully bringing back a 22 speakeasy to honor that package store on the 23

24 bottom corner, so fingers crossed that pans 25 out.

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> > 12

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Harden.

> 2 BOARD MEMBER HARDEN: Thank you,

3 Mr. Chairman.

I don't have any real major comments, but 4 I echo what Mr. Davisson said and applaud the

applicant's tenacity and perseverance to see 6

this project through. I think it's really 7

8 exciting.

And I hope we see more of these buildings 9 10 and -- come through, and have a good road map

11 to get this done. Hopefully, that -- it'll

12 take a shorter period of time in the future,

but thank you for the application. Thank you 13 for your time. 14

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Schilling.

15 BOARD MEMBER SCHILLING: I'll echo what's 16 17 already been said. This looks like a great project and I'm excited to see it come forward 18 and come to fruition. 19

20 I do have just one clarification question, 21 through the Chair to staff. I noticed on the 22 black and white plans and elevations, they do

23 show signage or signage is shown. And I was going to ask, so is the approval today, does 24

25 that include signage or is that something that

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1 they would -- that the applicant -- y'all would 1 THE CHAIRMAN: Action Item C has been 2 be coming back for, to have that reviewed at a 2 withdrawn. The ordinance will not be reviewed 3 future time? 3 at this time. I wanted to make that 4 MS. RADCLIFFE-MEYERS: Board Member 4 announcement at the beginning, but we rushed 5 5 right to Item A. So there's no more action Schilling, through the Chair, you're correct. 6 They would have to come back. 6 items. 7 7 So per NPS, they would have to go through We'll move into old business. Does any 8 8 Historic first for any signage, to get board member have any old business or does 9 9 approval. If the signage also was a -- let's staff? 10 say that it was a roof sign as -- which is 10 (No response.) 11 shown on the plans, that would have to come 11 THE CHAIRMAN: None. Great. 12 back to DDRB for approval. 12 New business, anybody? 13 So currently the plans that you see are 13 (No response.) 14 not approving any signage at all. The signage 14 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Chisholm, do we have 15 will, again, have to go through NPS, Historic, 15 any public comments? 16 for approval and then through us if need be. 16 MR. CHISHOLM: To the Chair, we do not. 17 BOARD MEMBER SCHILLING: Okay. Thank you. 17 THE CHAIRMAN: Wonderful. I'll move to 18 No further comments. 18 adjourn. I thank everybody. 19 THE CHAIRMAN: Ms. Durden. 19 Thank you very much. 20 BOARD MEMBER DURDEN: I just want to say 20 (The foregoing proceedings were adjourned 21 how much I appreciate the applicant working 21 at 2:47 p.m.) 22 through all the steps that have been necessary 22 23 for this to happen and appreciate staff working 23 24 with them to make it happen. 24 25 I think it's just -- just going to be a 25 Diane M. Tropia, Inc., Post Office Box 2375, Jacksonville, FL 32203 Diane M. Tropia, Inc., Post Office Box 2375, Jacksonville, FL 32203 (904) 821-0300 (904) 821-0300 16 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER 1 great project and so happy that the Ambassador, 2 which everybody that I -- you know, anybody 2 3 that's lived in Jacksonville for a long time 4 always talked about the Ambassador. Looking STATE OF FLORIDA) 5 out of council, you know, windows, you see the 6 COUNTY OF DUVAL) Ambassador, so it's fantastic, and thank you so 4 5 7 much. 6 8 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Durden. 7 I, Diane M. Tropia, Florida Professional 9 I don't have any further comments either. 8 Reporter, certify that I was authorized to and did 10 I congratulate the applicant on getting this stenographically report the foregoing proceedings and 9 11 far. I know it was a ton of work, so 10 that the transcript is a true and complete record of my 12 congratulations. 11 stenographic notes. 13 And I'll take a motion for approval. 12 13 14 BOARD MEMBER HARDEN: So moved. 14 BOARD MEMBER DURDEN: Second. 15 15 DATED this 26th day of July 2021. 16 THE CHAIRMAN: I have a motion from 16 17 Mr. Harden, a second from Ms. Durden. 17 18 All those in favor, please say aye. 18 19 BOARD MEMBERS: Aye. Diane M. Tropia 19 20 THE CHAIRMAN: Any opposed? Florida Professional Reporter 20 21 BOARD MEMBERS: (No response.) 21 22 THE CHAIRMAN: Great. You have your 22 23 approval. 23 24 Thank you, Ms. Trimmer. 24 25 MS. TRIMMER: Thank you very much. 25 Diane M. Tropia, Inc., Post Office Box 2375, Jacksonville, FL 32203 Diane M. Tropia, Inc., Post Office Box 2375, Jacksonville, FL 32203 (904) 821-0300 (904) 821-0300

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