



City of Aurora

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Legistar History Report

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File Name: The Community Builders, Inc. / 104 E. Downer / 32-34 S. Broadway / FCOA

Final Action:

Title: Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior improvements to the Coulter Courts Building at 104 E. Downer Place and 32-34 S. Broadway Avenue (The Community Builders, Inc. - 17-00366 / AU22/3-17.027-DST - ES - Ward 2)

Notes:

Agenda Date: 05/11/2017

Agenda Number:

Sponsors:

Enactment Date:

Attachments: LIHTC FCOA_permit_app_2014.pdf, NMTC FCOA_permit_app_2014.pdf, Coulter Court Exterior Work Narrative.pdf, Elevation Pages from Coulter Court Progress Set.pdf, West Elevation - 2017-04-27 - 2017.027.PDF, Coulter Court Vinyl Windows.pdf, Coulter Court Historic Photos.pdf

Enactment Number:

Planning Case #: AU22/3-17.027-FCOA

Hearing Date:

Drafter: esieben@aurora-il.org

Effective Date:

History of Legislative File

Version:	Acting Body:	Date:	Action:	Sent To:	Due Date:	Return Date:	Result:
1	FoxWalk Overlay District Design Review Committee	04/27/2017					
1	FoxWalk Overlay District Design Review Committee	05/03/2017	approved and appealed	Planning & Development Committee	05/11/2017		
Action Text: This COA was approved and appealed to the Planning & Development Committee meeting on May 11, 2017.							
Notes: Mr. Sieben said this is the second project for Community Builders. This is to approve a COA for certain exterior changes related to the renovation of the Coulter Courts apartment building, which is located at 104 E. Downer Place and 32-34 S. Broadway Avenue. There is a bank in the lower level and then Coulter Courts is above and in the back portion. Again a little background. Community Builders is a developer of affordable housing and other redevelopments. They are acquiring the Coulter Courts building from the Joseph Corporation, which is a 37 unit apartment complex and							

making certain improvements, including renovation of the existing units. Exterior improvements include removing panels on the north side of the building and restoring masonry and adding 6 windows on the upper floor on that north side. They will tuckpoint the east wall, match the masonry on the south wall, repair the terracotta and repaint. They will add a commercial tenant space at the east end of the Downer frontage and then finally they would like to replace the existing aluminum windows with vinyl windows. A little discussion, as in the staff report, the proposed new vinyl windows would not be permitted per the guidelines unless they were vinyl clad wood windows. This appears to be the only improvement that is not meeting the guidelines. Section 2.4-2 deals with the guidelines for windows and doors. I think importantly, and attached in your packet, is the COA report and project detail of the current windows that were installed in 2000. The original developer had proposed vinyl replacement windows, which was denied by the DRC in 1999. The original wood windows had been removed many years prior and replaced with aluminum framed windows and filler panels anchored into the masonry. So after lengthy discussion by the DRC in 2000, the Attachment B, which is in that packet, was most desirable because the existing metal panning frames would be completely removed and the overall scale and appearance of the original windows would be duplicated by maintaining a larger daylight window class opening. Also the damage to the existing masonry openings caused by the metal panning frames would be repaired and the new windows and infill panels at the arches would be anchored directly to the masonry resulting in a better structural installation. The aluminum windows that were approved and installed provided the appropriate overall appearance and also alleviated water damage concerns. In addition, the applicant installed aluminum exterior window trim to simulate the historic wood brick mold trim. This resulted in an additional \$75,000 cost to go with the windows that you see there now, the aluminum windows versus the vinyl as proposed. That additional \$75,000 cost of using the aluminum windows as installed versus vinyl was funded by grants by from SSA #1A and the City of Aurora. Just real briefly, as I referred to Section 2.4-2 Windows and Doors of the FoxWalk guidelines, it does state if new windows and doors are installed, the existing original material, design and hardware shall be duplicated. The review authority will consider allowing the use of vinyl clad or aluminum clad wood windows in punched window openings, not storefront systems, if they replicate the profile, detailing and appearance of wood windows, reveals and setbacks that would be appropriate for the architecture of the building undergoing rehabilitation or restoration. So unless there are any questions of me right now, I can turn it over to the Petitioners.

Mr. Albinson said to add some context, the Coulter Court building is a part of the overall development initiative that we have. In order to achieve the economies of scale that we need as an owner and operator of the residential, we needed to have more dwelling units. Because the Aurora Arts Center only accommodates 38 units, that's not enough to stand on its own from an operational standpoint. This building actually has, coincidentally, 38 units as well, but when we pull those two together then we are able to underwrite the project so we can keep it operational and profitable, or viable, over the long-term. So it gives you some context even though these buildings physically aren't touching, it is actually part of the same development initiative. I'm going to pass it to Therese to walk you through just some of the other improvements that we have to the outside of the building.

Ms. Thompson said actually I think Ed covered everything pretty well. Probably the most visible change is going to be the removal of those deteriorating and cracked cementous panels on the north side that have been collapsing under their own weight for years and have been pinned to the wall to keep them from falling. Those will be removed. The masonry is going to be checked for damage behind it. We expect to have to replace a fair bit of masonry at the base of the wall where moisture has just been accumulating and then we will be recladding the wall with fiber cement Hardi panel material. It is a commercial material with an aluminum reveal trim between the panels.

Mr. Truax said what size panels?

Ms. Thompson said I think it varies. I think these are probably about 4 by 5. I think they vary a little bit.

Mr. Truax said but they are fairly large.

Ms. Thompson said yes, they are fairly large. The panels come 4 by 8, 4 by 9, and 4 by 10, so we are not going to get anything wider, any dimension bigger, than the 4 feet in both directions. The scale of that pattern seemed appropriate for the length of the wall. We are also adding 6 new windows, 3 on each of the second and third floors and that's because on the inside of that wall is a corridor that is the entire length of the building and it is brutal. It is dark. Even with good lighting, it is a long corridor and we're just trying to make it a little less unpleasant. Those windows aren't in anybody's unit. They are just in the corridor. There is something actually I want to ask about because there was an updated elevation that included an entrance for the bank. Is that here? It was a separate sheet. It

was a replacement for the sheet that we just had up. There is another piece that is not showing up on this elevation. It wasn't part of the original scope. The space that we are building out at the southeast corner of the building, that is that commercial office space, we are eliminating a second means of egress from the bank space, so we need to replace that with another means of egress and we are solving two problems for the bank with the location of the space, which is not on this elevation. The decision was worked out after we made the submittal and I apologize, I thought I had replaced the sheet, but apparently I hadn't. As you are looking at the screen, to the right of the existing entrance on Downer, which is a residential entrance, we are creating an entrance/exit door for the bank. That's going to replace the exit that we are eliminating with the buildout at the southeast corner. It will be a single aluminum entrance door, glazed, with a side light, very much like what's at the residential entrance currently, but just a side light on one side and not on two sides.

Mr. Zine said what is that wall material right there? Is that drivit?

Ms. Thompson said no. It is stone. It is not original to the building, so part of the other work to the east, there was an area that originally had some display cases and looking at old drawings we figured out that it wasn't an ATM or a night drop through the wall, but there were display cases in the wall and the original plat where the cladding that clads most of the first floor was removed and what was patched back in when they got rid of those display cases was a different module, a different stone size and texture and appearance and so we are taking that out and we are going to patch back in with a stone that's closer, if not identical, to the module size and finish of the rest of the first floor. It is not drivit. It is a masonry wall and that's a modular masonry on the exterior now. The vinyl windows, there should be in your packet an elevation that shows the window at the typical window size. We've got a sample and it doesn't show very well because it is white. There are photos of vinyl casement windows from another project that was recently installed in a finish that you can see looks like a dark anodized aluminum. I thought there was in the packet also an elevation of the window. I have a paper copy of it.

Mr. Truax said does it look like that?

Ms. Thompson said well those are casements, so it is not quite the same configuration.

Mr. Albinson said I'll explain the reasoning why we are wanting to replace the windows. As a long-term owner of the property, first as Ed summarized, the windows that are currently in place were installed in 2001 approximately and part of our goal when we refurbish a property is to more or less set it up again to start the clock anew for the next 15 to 30 years. Although the current windows still have, we had them analyzed by Nano who goes through and analyzes all the current, they do a physical needs assessment of every single part of the project, or the property and they said with some moderate repairs, you could keep the existing windows, but after looking at both the cost for the ongoing repairs and also hearing feedback from the current residents and how the current windows work and then taking into consideration the energy efficiency that we are trying to obtain, that the current windows basically are obsolete relative to our long-term view of the property being able to be efficiently maintained without any significant capital expense over the next 15 to 30 years. We've developed over 25,000 units of housing. Although the windows currently look fine and they operate okay, this is a sensitive issues for us as an organization just because of the sheer capital expense that windows have on our properties. It is our interest to look for something that performs well in terms of energy efficiency, and in terms of sound rating, especially considering we have a busy road on one side and elevated tracks on the other and we look for something as well that fits within the capital budget that we have to perform the renovation work. What we are proposing, we are asking for a variance relative to the guidelines, but what we are proposing is a vinyl window, in terms of visually being in the spirit of an aluminum window, but also meeting or exceeding all of the performance characteristics that we would expect out of an aluminum window.

Mr. Truax said why did you pick vinyl rather than wood clad?

Mr. Albinson said cost.

Ms. Thompson said energy efficiency also. The vinyl windows are more energy efficient. Vinyl PVC doesn't transfer...

Mr. Truax said but wood clad, wood has a fairly decent...

Ms. Thompson said it is decent. It is certainly better than an all-aluminum window, an un-thermally broken window, but the vinyl is still...

Mr. Truax said and it is the cheapest.

Ms. Thompson said and it is the most cost effective, no question. So the elevation that I think maybe circulated around was just to demonstrate because the window sample that we were able to get is small and so the frame members look chunky relative to the size of the window, so I wanted to make sure that everyone had the opportunity to see what those frame members look like in one of our typical window openings at Coulter Court. That's one of the most common window opening sizes with these window members in it.

Mr. Truax said do you have any indication of what the historic windows looked like?

Ms. Thompson said we have a few photos that Kirk collected. Ed provided some others. It is really hard to see any level of detail, other than the fact you can tell there is single hung or they may have been double hung windows at the time and you can tell that there was a trim around them, but you can't really tell the profile of the trim because everything we've seen it looks like it was painted. It is hard to tell where the trim and where the masonry starts. I don't think we have an accurate picture. What we hope to do is to provide something that looks like what's there now.

Mr. Truax said I think staff described what the guidelines tell us, so it would have to be an exception. The Committee has been firm in the past about putting vinyl windows in the upper floors of commercial buildings. On the first floor we've got lots of flexibility because all of them have been changed so many times anyway, but the upper floors we've been pretty certain. As he described, if you leave them we don't have to approve anything, if you leave the windows that are there now, even though they wouldn't meet our guidelines either, but there is the grandfather clause, which lets you leave those and you don't have to do anything other than fix them up if they are not working.

Mr. Zine said I've heard the vinyl window argument many times before and I think we revised our guidelines in 2008 to allow for vinyl clad wood because maintaining wood windows on upper elevations is difficult and expensive and it usually means it doesn't get done so they deteriorate. I'm good with that compromise, vinyl clad wood. I don't know that we've ever approved vinyl windows. I don't think I've ever voted for the vinyl windows. I've seen vinyl windows that have aged. I don't like the way they age. I don't think I'm going to be supporting the vinyl windows.

Mr. Truax said by the way, I think the newer vinyl they use doesn't have some of the change in color that the stuff did 40 years ago, but we still don't have it in the guidelines.

Ms. Thompson said I understand and not that piling on more reasons is going to change anybody's mind, it is not going to make the windows anything other than vinyl, but there was another reason that I understood was one of the more operationally compelling reasons. What made me think of it was when you mentioned vinyl clad wood, perhaps suggesting that that would be a better compromise between aluminum and vinyl. There have been many, many complaints about the difficulty of opening these windows. Kirk can chime in here, but what I have been told by others at TVC recently is in recent meetings, community meetings, with the residents, it is sort of the worst thing about the building is that the windows are very, very difficult for people to open. With a single hung window that is not a terribly uncommon issue and I'm only bring it up because that would be something that needs to be fixed and it is uncertain whether it could be fixed with the existing windows. But if we were talking about replacing these with a clad wood window, whether it was vinyl or aluminum clad, it tends to be a bigger problem with those because the sashes are heavier. The sash weight is heavy and the seals tend to be tighter.

Mr. Truax said but the sashes have what used to be counter-balances, they are not anymore, but there are still ways to reduce the pressure you have to place.

Ms. Thompson said there may be, but when we are talking about accessibility, we've got 5 pounds and that hasn't been an issue that was discussed, just that they are difficult to open, but what we would be aiming for is to provide accessible windows, which means the force to operate them is 5 pounds and no more than that. That is difficult to achieve with any single hung window over a double hung window regardless of the material. The vinyl windows, because they are made for the commercial market more than for a single family residential market, they have done more to improve on that situation to where, I think, this window has a little bit of a spring assist when you open it. They are easier.

Mr. Truax said but so are wooden windows that have the spring assist.

Ms. Thompson said what we've found is none of the other manufacturers will commit to making a 5 pound force window. At any rate, that isn't the main issue.

Mr. Truax said it sounds like cost is the main issue.

Ms. Thompson said I think cost is certainly a main issue.

Mr. Zine said and the units are air conditioned, correct?

Mr. Albinson said correct.

Ms. Thompson said we knew we were asking for a variance on this and there was likely to be a lot of objection to it. I think we've made the best case we can.

Mr. Sieben said if I could just make a procedural comment. I did mention it off to the side last week, but whatever the decision is of the Design Review Committee, it is appealable to the Planning and Development Committee meeting either by a member of City Council or the Petitioner, so whatever the decision is tonight, if anyone would like to petition that decision to the P&D Committee, they could do that tomorrow and that could be placed on next Thursday, May 11th, Planning and Development Committee meeting. That would then be the final vote.

Mr. Truax said actually the City Council would be the final vote.

Mr. Sieben said yes, correct.

Mr. Zine said I just want to say I think it is a great project. I like the project. I'm not going to support the vinyl windows, but we do have the appeal process if you want to pursue that, but it is a good project and I'm glad you are here.

Mr. Sieben said staff would recommend conditional approval of the COA for the exterior improvements to the Counter Court building at 104 E. Downer/32-34 S. Broadway with the following condition:

1. The new vinyl windows proposed shall be replaced with new aluminum windows or the equivalent per the guidelines to match the existing if it is determined that the current aluminum windows are not functioning as intended to meet the needs of the current and future residents.

Mr. Truax said does anyone want to approve then conditional approval of the COA with the comment that the vinyl windows would not be part of that approval?

MOTION OF CONDITIONAL APPROVAL WAS MADE BY: John Jaros

MOTION SECONDED BY: Charlie Zine

AYES: John Jaros, Kevin Ream, Don Truax, Charlie Zine

NAYS: None

Mr. Sieben said the next step is if this wishes to be appealed, the Petitioner or whoever could, if they want to send me an e-mail tomorrow, and then we could put it on the agenda for next Thursday's Planning and Development and Committee meeting.
