

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE  
BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
September 16, 2014**



**Certificate of Appropriateness Application** (deferred from August)

BAR 14-07-03

503, 501, 425, and 421 W Main Street

Tax parcels 320175000, 320176000, 320177000, and 320178000

The Sutton Group, LLC, and Andrew Levine, Owners/

Southern Cities Studio, Agent, Applicant

New mixed-use complex

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**Background**

503 W Main Street known as "Paxton Place," is a contributing Federal style structure in the Downtown Architectural Design Control (ACD) District. It was built c 1824 as a dwelling by a Presbyterian clergyman on 33 acres. Federal era buildings are infrequent in Charlottesville.

In 1889 William Wheeler purchased the Paxton Place. In 1893 he built 501 W Main Street and the former 425 W Main Street as two identical brick dwellings east of the main house for use as rental properties. In 1924 Dr. J. C. Coulter added two rooms as his office to 501 W Main Street, using brick from an old Catholic church. The historic surveys and photos are attached.

August 18, 2009 - The BAR denied (8-0) an application for demolition, after the fact, of two chimneys and connecting brick curtain wall. The BAR also stipulated that the applicant shall submit an application to the BAR to rebuild the demolished portion of the two chimneys and skirt wall...to attempt to match as closely as possible what was removed. The City Attorney's office opined that the BAR does not have the authority to require the property owner to rebuild the demolished chimneys and wall.

The applicant submitted a letter requesting an appeal, but later deferred the request. The applicant did not reschedule the appeal. Staff requested that the City Attorney's office take the applicant to court to pursue the maximum civil penalty for illegal demolition of a historic structure.

May 18, 2010 - The BAR appreciated the applicant's willingness to reconstruct the chimneys authentically and with attention to detail. The BAR approved (7-0) the reconstruction of the west chimneys and curtain wall as submitted with the condition that the mortar shall be [lime mortar or] high lime content; and that the chimney width in the north-south direction is aligned and based upon the old chimney stack; the chimney will be rectilinear in its proportion to match what originally existed. And the applicant shall look at the Dinsmore House [1211 West Main Street] coping on top of the parapet wall; for the skirt in between the chimneys; as well as the other reconstruction for similar details. And shall match the color of the brick as closely as possible [in case the paint is removed in the future]. And shall look at the original chimneys on the photographs.

July 19, 2011 - Approved (7-0) with same conditions and recommendations as previous approval. The conditions of the previous approval still need to be confirmed/submitted before the applicant can obtain a building permit:

1. The mortar shall be [lime mortar or] high lime content;
2. The chimney width in the north-south direction is aligned and based upon the old chimney stack;
3. The chimney will be rectilinear in its proportion to match what originally existed.
4. The applicant shall look at the Dinsmore House [1211 West Main Street] coping on top of the parapet wall; for the skirt in between the chimneys; as well as the other reconstruction for similar details, and shall look at the original chimneys on the photographs.

5. The applicant shall match the color of the brick as closely as possible [in case the paint is removed in the future].

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May 20, 2014 - The BAR held a preliminary discussion about the proposed new building. No action was taken.

July 15, 2014 – The BAR held a preliminary discussion about the proposed new buildings. No action was taken.

August 19, 2014 – The BAR accepted (7-0) the applicant’s request for deferral.

### **Application**

The applicant has had two preliminary discussions, and a deferment, and is now requesting approval of massing.

Demolition of two contributing buildings, a small barber shop at the rear of 425 W Main Street, and the Atlantic Futon buildings at 421 W Main Street will require BAR approvals.

### **Criteria, Standards and Guidelines**

#### **Review Criteria Generally**

*Sec. 34-284(b) of the City Code states that,*

*In considering a particular application the BAR shall approve the application unless it finds:*

- (1) That the proposal does not meet specific standards set forth within this division or applicable provisions of the Design Guidelines established by the board pursuant to Sec.34-288(6); and*
- (2) The proposal is incompatible with the historic, cultural or architectural character of the district in which the property is located or the protected property that is the subject of the application.*

#### **Pertinent Standards for Considering Demolitions include:**

*The following factors shall be considered in determining whether or not to permit the moving, removing, encapsulation or demolition, in whole or in part, of a contributing structure or protected property:*

*(a) The historic, architectural or cultural significance, if any, of the specific structure or property, including, without limitation:*

- (1) The age of the structure or property;*
- (2) Whether it has been designated a National Historic Landmark, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register;*
- (3) Whether, and to what extent, the building or structure is associated with an historic person, architect or master craftsman, or with an historic event;*
- (4) Whether the building or structure, or any of its features, represent an infrequent or the first or last remaining example within the city of a particular architectural style or feature;*
- 5) Whether the building or structure is of such old or distinctive design, texture or material that it could not be reproduced, or could be reproduced only with great difficulty; and*
- (6) The degree to which distinguishing characteristics, qualities, features or materials remain;*

*(b) Whether, and to what extent, a contributing structure is linked, historically or aesthetically, to other buildings or structures within an existing major design control district, or*

*is one of a group of properties within such a district whose concentration or continuity possesses greater significance than many of its component buildings and structures.*

*(c) The overall condition and structural integrity of the building or structure, as indicated by studies prepared by a qualified professional engineer and provided by the applicant or other information provided to the board;*

*(d) Whether, and to what extent, the applicant proposes means, methods or plans for moving, removing or demolishing the structure or property that preserves portions, features or materials that are significant to the property's historic, architectural or cultural value; and*

*(e) Any applicable provisions of the city's Design Guidelines*

*1. The criteria established by the City Code.*

*See above.*

*2. The public necessity of the proposed demolition.*

*3. The public purpose or interest in land or buildings to be protected.*

*4. The existing character of the setting of the structure or area and its surroundings.*

*5. Whether or not a relocation of the structure would be a practical and preferable alternative to demolition.*

*6. Whether or not the proposed demolition would affect adversely or positively other historic buildings or the character of the historic district.*

*7. Whether or not there has been a professional economic and structural feasibility study for rehabilitating or reusing the structure and whether or not its findings support the proposed demolition.*

### **Pertinent Standards for Review of Construction and Alterations include:**

*(1) Whether the material, texture, color, height, scale, mass and placement of the proposed addition, modification or construction are visually and architecturally compatible with the site and the applicable design control district;*

*(2) The harmony of the proposed change in terms of overall proportion and the size and placement of entrances, windows, awnings, exterior stairs and signs;*

*(3) The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation set forth within the Code of Federal Regulations (36 C.F.R. §67.7(b)), as may be relevant;*

*1. A property will be used as it was historically or will be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.*

*2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*

*3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectured features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.*

*4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.*

*5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.*

*6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials.*

*Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.*

*7. Chemical or physical treatment, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.*

*8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.*

*9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale, proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*

*10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

*(4) The effect of the proposed change on the historic district neighborhood;*

- (5) The impact of the proposed change on other protected features on the property, such as gardens, landscaping, fences, walls and walks;*
- (6) Whether the proposed method of construction, renovation or restoration could have an adverse impact on the structure or site, or adjacent buildings or structures;*
- (8) Any applicable provisions of the City's Design Guidelines.*

## **Pertinent Guidelines for New Construction and Additions include:**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

#### *e. Multi-lot*

*Often new commercial, office, or multiuse buildings will be constructed on sites much larger than the traditionally sized lots 25 to 40 feet wide. Many sites for such structures are located on West Main Street and in the 14th and 15th Street area of Venable Neighborhood. These assembled parcels can translate into new structures whose scale and mass may overwhelm neighboring existing structures. Therefore, while this building type may need to respond to the various building conditions of the site, it also should employ design techniques to reduce its visual presence. These could include varying facade wall planes, differing materials, stepped-back upper levels, and irregular massing.*

### **B. SETBACK**

*5) In the West Main Street corridor, construct new buildings with a minimal (up to 15 feet according to the zoning ordinance) or no setback in order to reinforce the street wall. If the site adjoins historic buildings, consider a setback consistent with these buildings.*

*6) On corners of the West Main Street corridor, avoid deep setbacks or open corner plazas unless the design contributes to the pedestrian experience or improves the transition to an adjacent residential area.*

*7) New buildings, particularly in the West Main Street corridor, should relate to any neighborhoods adjoining them. Buffer areas should be considered to include any screening and landscaping requirements of the zoning ordinance.*

*8) At transitional sites between two distinctive areas of setback, for instance between new commercial and historic commercial, consider using setbacks in the new construction that reinforce and relate to setbacks of the historic buildings.*

### **C. SPACING**

*Spacing between buildings depends on the size of the lot, the size of the building, and side-yard setback requirements. Consistent spacing between a row of buildings helps to establish an overall rhythm along a street.*

*1) Maintain existing consistency of spacing in the area. New residences should be spaced within 20 percent of the average spacing between houses on the block.*

*2) Commercial and office buildings in the areas that have a well-defined street wall should have minimal spacing between them.*

*3) In areas that do not have consistent spacing, consider limiting or creating a more uniform spacing in order to establish an overall rhythm.*

*4) Multi-lot buildings should be designed using techniques to incorporate and respect the existing spacing on a residential street.*

### **D. MASSING & FOOTPRINT**

*While the typical footprint of commercial building from the turn of the twentieth century might be 20 feet wide by 60 feet long or 1200 square feet per floor, new buildings in the downtown can be expected to be somewhat larger. Likewise, new buildings in the West Main Street corridor may be larger than this district's historic buildings. It is important that even large buildings contribute to the human scale and pedestrian orientation of the district.*

*1) New commercial infill buildings' footprints will be limited by the size of the existing lot in the downtown or along the West Main Street corridor. Their massing in most cases should be simple rectangles like neighboring buildings.*

*2) New infill construction in residential sub-areas should relate in footprint and massing to the majority of surrounding historic dwellings.*

*3) Neighborhood transitional buildings should have small building footprints similar to nearby dwellings.*

*a. If the footprint is larger, their massing should be reduced to relate to the smaller-scaled forms of residential structures.*

*b. Techniques to reduce massing could include stepping back upper levels, adding residential roof and porch forms, and using sympathetic materials.*

*4) Institutional and multi-lot buildings by their nature will have large footprints, particularly along the West Main Street corridor and in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Street area of the Venable neighborhood.*

*a. The massing of such a large scale structure should not overpower the traditional scale of the majority of nearby buildings in the district in which it is located.*

*b. Techniques could include varying the surface planes of the buildings, stepping back the buildings as the structure increases in height, and breaking up the roof line with different elements to create smaller compositions.*

## **E. HEIGHT & WIDTH**

*1. Respect the directional expression of the majority of surrounding buildings. In commercial areas, respect the expression of any adjacent historic buildings, which generally will have a more vertical expression.*

*2. Attempt to keep the height and width of new buildings within a maximum of 200 percent of the prevailing height and width in the surrounding sub-area.*

*3. In commercial areas at street front, the height should be within 130 percent of the prevailing average of both sides of the block. Along West Main Street, heights should relate to any adjacent contributing buildings.*

*Additional stories should be stepped back so that the additional height is not readily visible from the street.*

*4. When the primary façade of a new building in a commercial area, such as downtown, West Main Street, or the Corner, is wider than the surrounding historic buildings or the traditional lot size, consider modulating it with bays or varying planes.*

*5. Reinforce the human scale of the historic districts by including elements such as porches, entrances, storefronts, and decorative features depending on the character of the particular sub-area.*

*6. In the West Main Street corridor, regardless of surrounding buildings, new construction should use elements at the street level, such as cornices, entrances, and display windows, to reinforce the human scale.*

## **F. SCALE**

*1. Provide features on new construction that reinforce the scale and character of the surrounding area, whether human or monumental. Include elements such as storefronts, vertical and horizontal divisions, upper story windows, and decorative features.*

## **G. ROOF**

### **1. Roof Forms and Pitches**

*a. The roof design of new downtown or West Main Street commercial infill buildings generally should be flat or sloped behind a parapet wall.*

*b. Neighborhood transitional buildings should use roof forms that relate to the neighboring residential forms instead of the flat or sloping commercial form.*

*c. Institutional buildings that are freestanding may have a gable or hipped roof with variations.*

*d. Large-scale, multi-lot buildings should have a varied roof line to break up the mass of the design using gable and/or hipped forms.*

*e. Shallow pitched roofs and flat roofs may be appropriate in historic residential areas on a contemporary designed building.*

*f. Do not use mansard-type roofs on commercial buildings; they were not used historically in Charlottesville's downtown area, nor are they appropriate on West Main Street.*

### **2. Roof Materials**

*Common roof materials in the historic districts include metal, slate, and composition shingles.*

*a. For new construction in the historic districts, use traditional roofing materials such as standing-seam metal or slate.*

*b. In some cases, shingles that mimic the appearance of slate may be acceptable.*

*c. Pre-painted standing-seam metal roof material is permitted, but commercial-looking ridge caps or ridge vents are not appropriate on residential structures.*

*d. Avoid using thick wood cedar shakes if using wood shingles; instead, use more historically appropriate wood shingles that are thinner and have a smoother finish.*

*e. If using composition asphalt shingles, do not use light colors. Consider using neutral-colored or darker, plain or textured-type shingles.*

*f. The width of the pan and the seam height on a standing-seam metal roof should be consistent with the size of pan and seam height usually found on a building of a similar period.*

### **3. Rooftop Screening**

*a. If roof-mounted mechanical equipment is used, it should be screened from public view on all sides.*

*b. The screening material and design should be consistent with the design, textures, materials, and colors of the building.*

*c. The screening should not appear as an afterthought or addition the building.*

## **H. ORIENTATION**

1. . New commercial construction should orient its façade in the same direction as adjacent historic buildings, that is, to the street.

2. Front elevations oriented to side streets or to the interior of lots should be discouraged.

## **I. WINDOWS & DOORS**

1. The rhythm, patterns, and ratio of solids (walls) and voids (windows and doors) of new buildings should relate to and be compatible with adjacent historic façades.

a. The majority of existing buildings in Charlottesville's historic districts have a higher proportion of wall area than void area except at the storefront level.

b. In the West Main Street corridor in particular, new buildings should reinforce this traditional proportion.

2. The size and proportion, or the ratio of width to height, of window and door openings on new buildings' primary façades should be similar and compatible with those on surrounding historic façades.

a. The proportions of the upper floor windows of most of Charlottesville's historic buildings are more vertical than horizontal.

b. Glass storefronts would generally have more horizontal proportions than upper floor openings.

3. Traditionally designed openings generally are recessed on masonry buildings and have a raised surround on frame buildings. New construction should follow these methods in the historic districts as opposed to designing openings that are flush with the rest of the wall.

4. Many entrances of Charlottesville's historic buildings have special features such as transoms, sidelights, and decorative elements framing the openings. Consideration should be given to incorporating such elements in new construction.

5. Darkly tinted mirrored glass is not an appropriate material for windows in new buildings within the historic districts.

6. If small-paned windows are used, they should have true divided lights or simulated divided lights with permanently affixed interior and exterior muntin bars and integral spacer bars between the panes of glass.

7. Avoid designing false windows in new construction.

8. Appropriate material for new windows depends upon the context of the building within a historic district, and the design of the proposed building. Sustainable materials such as wood, aluminum-clad wood, solid fiberglass, and metal windows are preferred for new construction. Vinyl windows are discouraged.

9. Glass shall be clear. Opaque spandrel glass or translucent glass may be approved by the BAR for specific applications.

## **J. PORCHES**

1. *Porches and other semi-public spaces are important in establishing layers or zones of intermediate spaces within the streetscape.*

## **K. STREET-LEVEL DESIGN**

1. *Street level façades of all building types, whether commercial, office, or institutional, should not have blank walls; they should provide visual interest to the passing pedestrian.*

2. *When designing new storefronts or elements for storefronts, conform to the general configuration of traditional storefronts depending on the context of the sub-area. New structures do offer the opportunity for more contemporary storefront designs.*

3. *Keep the ground level façades(s) of new retail commercial buildings at least eighty percent transparent up to a level of ten feet.*

4. *Include doors in all storefronts to reinforce street level vitality.*

5. *Articulate the bays of institutional or office buildings to provide visual interest.*

6. *Institutional buildings, such as city halls, libraries, and post offices, generally do not have storefronts, but their street levels should provide visual interest and display space or first floor windows should be integrated into the design.*
7. *Office buildings should provide windows or other visual interest at street level.*
8. *Neighborhood transitional buildings in general should not have transparent first floors, and the design and size of their façade openings should relate more to neighboring residential structures.*
9. *Along West Main Street, secondary (rear) facades should also include features to relate appropriately to any adjacent residential areas.*
10. *Any parking structures facing on important streets or on pedestrian routes must have storefronts, display windows, or other forms of visual relief on the first floors of these elevations.*
11. *A parking garage vehicular entrance/exit opening should be diminished in scale, and located off to the side to the degree possible.*

#### **L. FOUNDATION and CORNICE**

1. *Distinguish the foundation from the rest of the structure through the use of different materials, patterns, or textures.*
2. *Respect the height, contrast of materials, and textures of foundations on surrounding historic buildings.*
3. *If used, cornices should be in proportion to the rest of the building.*
4. *Wood or metal cornices are preferred. The use of iron may be appropriate where the location is not immediately adjacent to pedestrians.*

#### **P. ADDITIONS**

##### **1. Function and Size**

- a. *Attempt to accommodate needed functions within the existing structure without building an addition.*
- b. *Limit the size of the addition so that it does not visually overpower the existing building.*

##### **2. Location**

- a. *Attempt to locate the addition on rear or side elevations that are not visible from the street.*
- b. *If additional floors are constructed on top of a building, set the addition back from the main façade so that its visual impact is minimized.*
- c. *If the addition is located on a primary elevation facing the street or if a rear addition faces a street, parking area, or an important pedestrian route, the façade of the addition should be treated under the new construction guidelines.*

##### **3. Design**

- a. *New additions should not destroy historic materials that characterize the property.*
- b. *The new work should be differentiated from the old and should be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

##### **4. Replication of Style**

- a. *A new addition should not be an exact copy of the design of the existing historic building. The design of new additions can be compatible with and respectful of existing buildings without being a mimicry of their original design.*
- b. *If the new addition appears to be part of the existing building, the integrity of the original historic design is compromised and the viewer is confused over what is historic and what is new.*

##### **5. Materials and Features**

- a. *Use materials, windows, doors, architectural detailing, roofs, and colors that are compatible with historic buildings in the district.*

##### **6. Attachment to Existing Building**

- a. *Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to existing buildings should be done in such a manner that, if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the buildings would be unimpaired.*
- b. *The new design should not use the same wall plane, roof line, or cornice line of the existing structure.*

## **Discussion and Recommendations**

501 and 503 W Main Street are significant buildings. Additionally, Commerce Street has a wealth of historic structures, including the Individually Protected Property Jefferson School; contributing structures including Dr. Jackson's residence and attached commercial structures near 4<sup>th</sup> Street, the

Ebenezer Baptist Church on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, the former C&R Auto building, and the Bell Funeral Home; and other Starr Hill residences and structures including the former Bethel Baptist Church that was the original home of Barrett Day Care, and is currently being restored and remodeled as two apartments.

**Current comments:**

The applicant is requesting massing approval. The BAR should make decide if the massing is appropriate, so that the applicant can proceed to final design of other elements.

Removal of the contributing building at the rear of 425 W Main Street, a small barber shop, and removal of the Atlantic Futon buildings at 421 W Main Street will require demolition approvals. The BAR must approve these two demolitions before approving the new construction.

Since the last review, the applicant has responded to the BAR's comments:

*Pedestrian street should be an opportunity; not a tunnel.*

There is now an open-air walkway with stairs and planted areas that connects Main Street to Commerce Street. It may now be possible to catch a glimpse of Jefferson School from West Main Street looking through this site.

*Commerce Street building should not be horizontal; but should be broken up into narrow widths (storefront module) with more verticality.*

The Commerce Street elevation is now broken up into five "storefronts."

*Cars parked on top of commercial is totally inappropriate.*

All parking on levels -1, 0, and 1, have been concealed from Commerce Street. Parking on level 1 is practically not visible from West Main Street.

*Are appurtenances calculated correctly?*

The appurtenance level may be 25% of the roof area. The Zoning Administrator must determine what is correctly considered roof area. The only question is whether the lower roofs and terraces may be counted toward total roof area, or just the highest roof? It is possible that the appurtenance level may need to be reduced in area.

*Line up garage entrances opposite street intersections; not buildings.*

Both the West Main Street and the Commerce Street garage entrances are now located opposite 5<sup>th</sup> Street SW and 5<sup>th</sup> Street NW, respectively.

*Wrapping of back of historic houses not supported.*

The new building on levels 1-5 is now set back 15 feet from the historic buildings at 501 and 503 West Main Street. In addition, the garage on levels -1 and 0 does not encroach closer than the rear wall of the historic buildings.

*No red flags on West Main Street side.*

The West Main Street elevation has been improved and remains appropriate. There is still a 6 foot side setback from the abutting Eloise property; the new building forms have been simplified; and there is now an open view through the site to Commerce Street.

*Outsides spaces, courtyards needed on W Main Street.*

There are now open spaces around the historic buildings; and an open, landscaped pedestrian plaza now provides a connection through to Commerce Street.



*No gables. Clean it up; eliminate busy-ness. Shaded boxes would be more helpful way to show massing.*  
These comments have all been addressed.

**Suggested Motion**

Having considered the standards set forth within the City Code, including City Design Guidelines for New Construction and Additions, I move to find that the massing of the proposed new mixed-use complex satisfies the BAR's criteria and guidelines and is compatible with this property and other properties in the West Main Street ADC district, and that the BAR approves the massing only, as submitted. The applicant must return to the BAR for approval of the demolitions of (the rear buildings) at 421 and 425 West Main Street, and for details of the new buildings and site design.