

Historic Preservation Design Review

August 25, 2011

HP-11-21, Opera House Parking Lot (City)

I. THE REQUEST

Applicant: Julie Coker representing the City of Sumter

Status of the Applicant: Property Owner

Request: Design review approval for proposed redesign of the parking lot and landscaping for the existing parking lot behind the Opera House.

Location: N. Harvin & E. Liberty Sts.

Present Use/Zoning: Parking Lot/CBD

Tax Map Reference: 228-12-05-004, 228-12-05-005, 228-12-05-009, 228-15-05-011, 228-12-05-012, 228-12-05-015 through 228-12-05-022, 228-12-05-024, & 228-12-05-027

Adjacent Property Land Use and Zoning: North – E. Hampton Ave. & Parking Lot/CBD
South – E. Liberty St. & Commercial/CBD
East – N. Harvin St. & Commercial /GC
West – Commercial Buildings/CBD

II. BACKGROUND



Pictured Above: Proposed Project Area View from E. Liberty St. Looking North

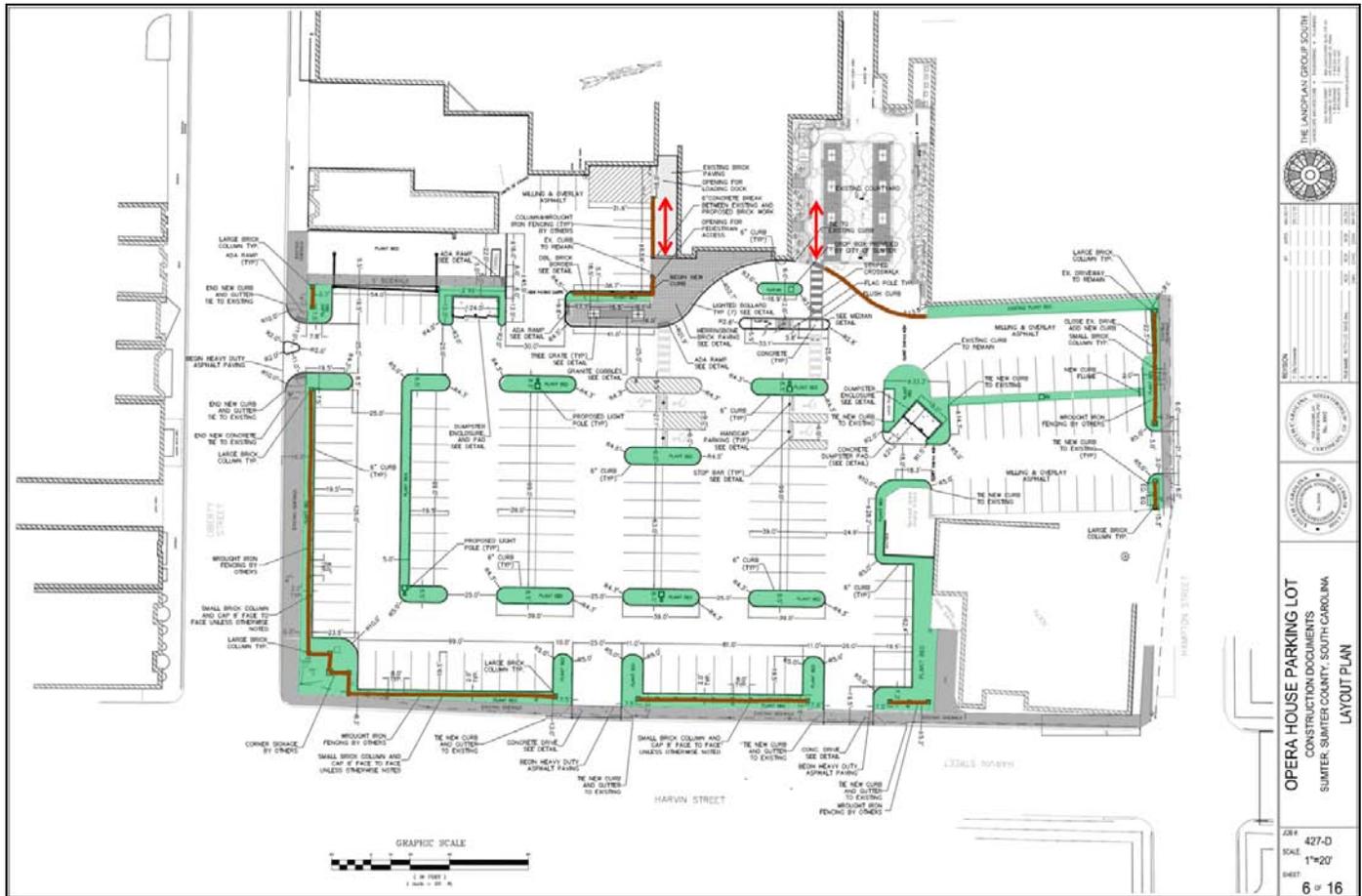
The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for redesign and rebuild of a 162 space parking lot and associated landscaping to be constructed at the northeast corner of the intersection of N. Harvin & E. Liberty Sts. The current parking layout is inefficient with poor access.

The project area is comprised of 15 separate parcels and will affect the areas outlined in the graphic to the right. The development site is located partially inside the designated National Register District and entirely within the boundary of the Downtown Review District. Any new parking lot developments must be reviewed by the Board for compliance with landscape and site design criteria.



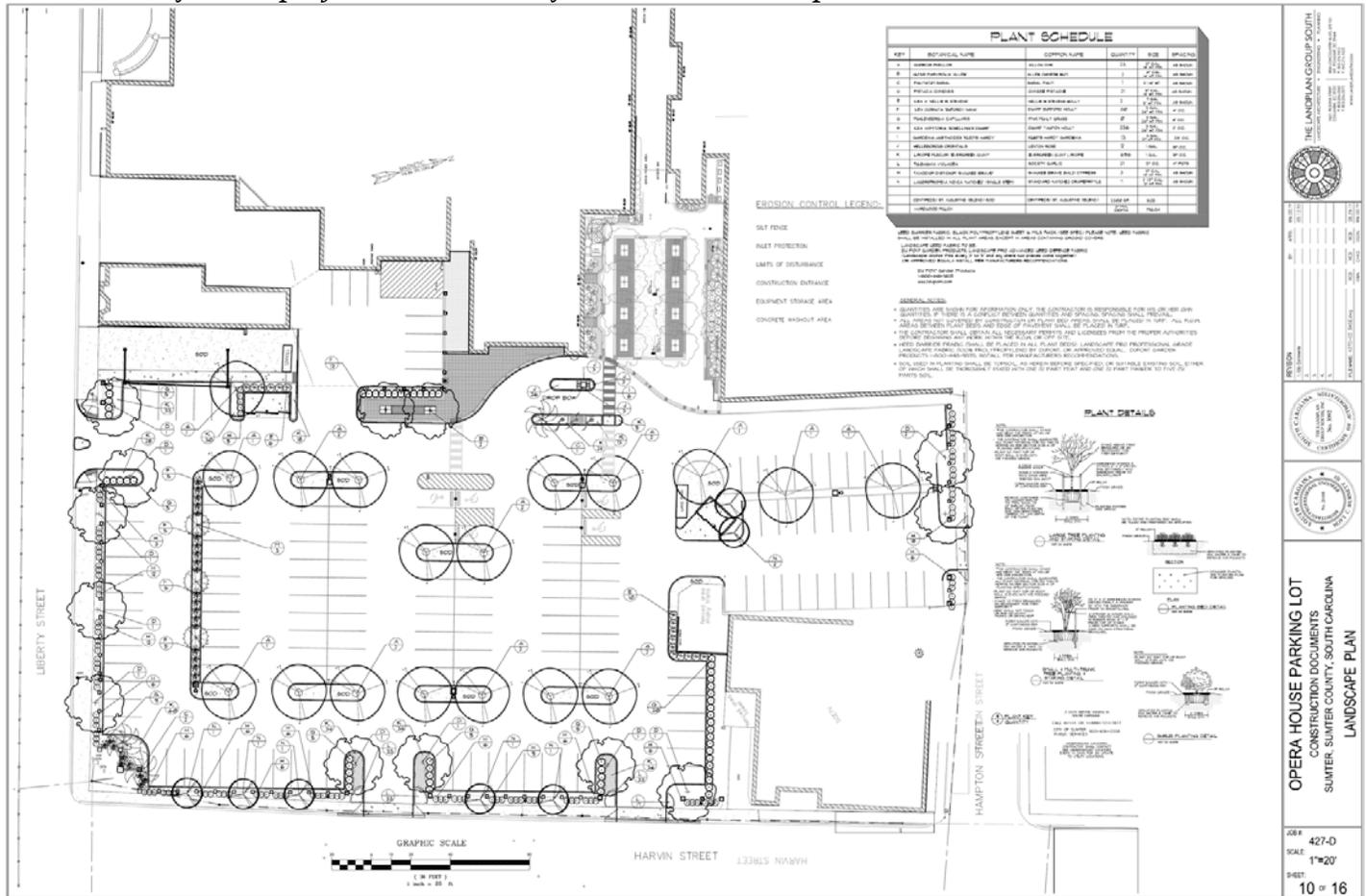
The Proposal:

The site plan below shows the proposed layout for the parking lot. There are bufferyards proposed on all three street frontages a minimum of 5 ft. in width and integrated landscape islands are planned inside the parking lot—these areas are indicated in green. Additionally, as part of the landscape bufferyard, brick column and wrought iron fencing similar to that at the parking lot at N. Sumter & W. Hampton Ave. is to be provided around the parking lot in the locations indicated by the brown lines. Sidewalks exist on all three street frontages, shown in gray; and there is pedestrian access from the parking lot to N. Main St. in two locations indicated by the red arrows.



As shown on the following page a full landscape plan has been submitted that addresses canopy trees, understory trees, and shrubbery.

Because of the proposed reorientation of the parking lot and removal of existing landscape islands, the trees currently in the project area will likely be removed and replaced.



Design review is required prior to undertaking the proposed parking lot development.

The *Design Review Guidelines Manual* states:

#1) PARKING LOTS SHOULD BE SCREENED FROM PEDESTRIAN VIEW

Normally Required

a. Parking lots in Sumter shall follow the minimum landscaping requirements as set forth in the Zoning Ordinance. Landscaping beyond that which is required is encouraged.

As shown in the landscape plan above and the site plan on page 2 of this report, a combination of canopy trees, understory trees, shrubbery and brick and wrought iron fencing will be used to screen the proposed parking lot on all three street frontages. In addition, the submitted landscape plan exceeds Zoning Ordinance landscaping requirements for parking lots.

#2) PARKING LOTS SHOULD MAINTAIN SETBACK

Recommended

a. Parking lots should repeat the general setback found along each block in the downtown area. Almost all blocks have buildings flush with the sidewalk level. This rhythm should not be broken by a parking lot or park area which does not continue this setback. This rhythm can be maintained along parking lots' and sidewalks through landscape elements such as trees, hedges, or brick and wood fences.

The proposed parking lot design maintains the building rhythm through landscape elements and street front brick and wrought iron fencing.

#3) LANDSCAPING SHOULD COMPLEMENT RATHER THAN DETRACT FROM BUILDINGS

Recommended

a. Trees of limited height and dimensions should be considered for the downtown area. Historic commercial areas such as downtown Sumter often had numerous shade trees to shelter pedestrians. With the coming of the automobile many of these trees were removed to make way for parking. The introduction of new trees into the downtown area is appropriate as long as the trees selected are of limited height and dimension. When mature, trees should not overly mask buildings and make signs and details difficult to observe. Trees should be spaced at least 30 feet from each other and have planting beds of at least nine square feet.

b. Low plants and shrubs at sidewalks are appropriate. The introduction of low hedges or planters with flowers or other decorative plants is appropriate. These may be desired as part of an overall streetscape program by the city or added on an individual basis by property owners.

The tree and shrubbery selection for this plan are based on the location of the parking lot. This parking lot is visible from three street frontages and to the rear of the buildings fronting N. Main St. The selected plant species have been chosen to complement the existing and proposed streetscape improvements within the Downtown. All planting beds and tree separation meet the above referenced criteria.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff has reviewed this request in accordance with the design guidelines. Staff recommends approval of this request.

IV. DRAFT MOTIONS

I move that the Sumter Historic Preservation Design Review Committee approve HP-11-21, in accordance with the materials, photographs, and construction details submitted and referenced in the Staff Report.

I move that the Sumter Historic Preservation Design Review Committee deny HP-11-21.

I move that the Sumter Historic Preservation Design Review Committee enter an alternative motion.

V. HISTORIC PRESERVATION – AUGUST 25, 2011

The Sumter Historic Preservation Design Review Committee at its meeting on Thursday, August 25, 2011, approved this request in accordance with the materials, photographs, and construction details submitted and referenced in the Staff Report.