

**Historic District Commission
Minutes Of May 18, 2022**

151 Martin Street, City Commission Room 205, Birmingham, MI

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission ("HDC") held Wednesday, May 18, 2022. Chair John Henke called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1) Rollcall

Present: Chair John Henke; Board Members Gigi Debbrecht, Keith Deyer, Natalia Dukas, Dustin Kolo, Patricia Lang, Michael Willoughby; Student Representatives Meghan Murray, Charlie Vercellone

Absent: Alternate Board Members Steven Lemberg, Cassandra McCarthy

Administration: Nicholas Dupuis, Planning Director
Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist

2) Approval of the HDC Minutes of April 20, 2022 and May 4, 2022

05-31-22

Motion by Ms. Lang

Seconded by Mr. Kolo to approve the HDC Minutes of April 20, 2022 and May 4, 2022 as submitted.

Motion carried, 7-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Henke, Deyer, Lang, Debbrecht, Willoughby, Kolo, Dukas

Nays: None

3) Courtesy Session

4) Study Session

A. CLG Grant – Design Guidelines Interviews

The order of the interviews was selected at random.

1. H2A Architects

Jackie Hoist, Partner with H2A Architects, presented H2A's response to the RFP.

HDC discussion occurred during Item 7A.

2. Kraemer Design Group

Lillian Candela, Project Architect and Architectural Historian with Kraemer Design Group (KDG), and Cassandra Talley, Architectural Historian with KDG, presented KDG's response to the RFP.

HDC discussion occurred during Item 7A.

5) Historic Design Review

**A. 148 Pierce – Telephone Exchange Building – Request for Wall Art Installation
(Postponed from May 4, 2022)**

PD Dupuis presented the item.

Mr. Deyer questioned whether the design counted as wall art.

PD Dupuis noted that wall art installation requests are reviewed by the Public Arts Board (PAB) to ensure submissions meet the intent of the wall art ordinance before being advanced to the HDC (in cases where review by the HDC is required). He confirmed that this submission was reviewed by the PAB. He stated that approved wall art applications do not guarantee approval of any future proposed changes for the rest of the building.

Mr. Deyer said the item would be easier to approve if the proposal was for a canvas to be hung on the building instead of being painted onto a historic building.

In reply to Mr. Willoughby, PD Dupuis said the artist had indicated to the PAB that they were set on the proposed design.

Mr. Kolo confirmed that his research had indicated that the proposed paint was suitable for historic brick. He asked whether there was an exterior primer available that might make removal of the paint easier in the future.

PD Dupuis said he could ask the applicant whether an exterior primer was available.

It was noted the City requires that building owners maintain their buildings' wall art.

Ms. Dukas said the white background seemed like an attempt to cover the wall. She also questioned the intent to make the area photographable, since trash receptacles are currently located on the ground in front of the art.

PD Dupuis said it was possible the trash receptacles would be moved since they are located in a private alley.

In reply to HDC request, PD Dupuis said he would ask the applicant to submit dimensions and elevations.

05-32-22

Motion by Ms. Lang

Seconded by Mr. Willoughby to approve the Wall Art application and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for 148 Pierce – Telephone Exchange Building. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation standard numbers 2 and 9 will be met upon fulfillment of these conditions:

- 1. The applicant must utilize breathable, mineral based paint that will permit the building to release moisture and retain the historic brick material and submit specification sheets for the paint to be used;**
- 2. The applicant must seek administrative approval for any maintenance work on the piece in order to ensure that appropriate materials are used; and,**
- 3. Provision of the dimensions and elevations to the Planning Department for administrative approval.**

Motion carried, 5-2.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Henke, Lang, Debbrecht, Willoughby, Kolo

Nays: Dukas, Deyer

B. 243 E. Merrill – La Strada – Request for New Outdoor Dining Platform

Chair Henke recused himself at 8:30 p.m. citing business relationships with both the business owner and the building owner.

Vice-Chair Deyer assumed facilitation of the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

PD Dupuis presented the item.

Ms. Dukas said the proposed platform complimented the aesthetics of the building.

05-33-22

Motion Mr. Willoughby

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to approve the Design Review application and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for 243 E. Merrill – La Strada – with the following condition:

- 1. The applicant obtain full approval from the City Commission prior to installation.**

Motion carried, 6-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Lang, Debbrecht, Dukas, Deyer, Willoughby, Kolo

Nays: None

C. 299 W. Maple – Serena & Lily – Request for Façade Renovation & Signage

Chair Henke returned and resumed facilitation of the meeting at 8:36 p.m.

PD Dupuis presented the item.

Chair Henke said that the HDC is accustomed to receiving paint specifications for proposals to paint brick.

In reply to comment from Mr. Deyer, PD Dupuis noted that an unmaintained exterior paint distracts from the Central Business Historic District. He said that the proprietors were present and being made aware of the expectation that the exterior paint be maintained.

05-34-22

Motion Ms. Dukas

Seconded by Mr. Kolo to approve the Design Review application and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for 299 W. Maple – Serena & Lily – with the following conditions:

- 1. The applicant must submit glazing calculations to demonstrate the transparent area on the storefront;**
- 2. The applicant must submit revised site plans demonstrating the location of all streetscape elements and the dimensions of a 5 ft. minimum clear walking path and submit and maintain a Special Treatment License pursuant to Article 2, Section 98-35 of the City Code;**
- 3. The applicant must submit revised plans indicating the planting types proposed in the storefront planter boxes, the dimensions of the planters, the maintenance plans for the planters, and the treatment during winter months; and,**
- 4. The applicant must commit to regular maintenance of the painted brick.**

Motion carried, 7-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Lang, Debbrecht, Dukas, Deyer, Willoughby, Kolo, Henke

Nays: None

6) Sign Review

7) Study Session

A. CLG Grant – Design Guidelines Recommendation to City Commission

PD Dupuis introduced the item.

Ms. Debbrecht said H2A seemed to have more experience in establishing the kind of guidelines the HDC was seeking. She said KDG's work seemed to be more commercially-oriented and focused on helping owners of old or historic buildings renovate within the confines of historic guidelines.

Mr. Deyer concurred. He added that residential homeowners will likely derive more benefit from the design guidelines than commercial owners, and that H2A seems to have more experience in that area. He said the communities H2A has worked in are very similar to Birmingham.

Ms. Dukas said she was impressed with both candidates and would be able to support either. She said her preference was for KDG because she felt they could bring a fresher perspective. She noted that KDG has done some residential work and said she wished they had highlighted it more in their proposal.

Ms. Lang said she appreciated the depth and detail in H2A's proposal, and said H2A would likely produce similarly detailed guidelines. She said KDG would likely do an excellent job as well.

Mr. Kolo said he was strongly in favor of KDG, concurring with Ms. Dukas' statement that they would bring a fresher perspective. He stated that the price was also more competitive and that KDG had a larger team and people dedicated to graphics. He noted that the HDC was aiming to produce guidelines that were graphics heavy and easy to understand, and said that KDG was more likely to produce those results. He said he did not dislike H2A.

Mr. Willoughby said he was concerned with the amount KDG was proposing to charge, saying that it reflected that they would be unlikely to propose guidelines as thorough as those requested in the RFP. He said that on paper KDG seemed very qualified, but that they would likely return a superficial product.

PD Dupuis said he was less concerned about KDG's lower proposed cost since some of Birmingham's historic design guidelines would likely draw on other cities' already extant versions. He said he was struck by the user-friendliness of KDG's proposal, stating that it was more visually appealing and resembled more of what he had been seeking with the RFP. He said he was pleased with both proposals, but that in the fine margins KDG excelled a bit more.

Chair Henke said KDG would be better suited for the project if the HDC could clarify whether they truly understood the true scope of work and could clarify what the costs would be. He said that KDG would be more forward-thinking in this project. He stated the guidelines require the simplicity KDG could produce. He said he felt that KDG focused on the graphic side of their presentation, since that was the focus of the RFP, over the written side of their presentation.

Ms. Dukas said she was impressed with the quality of KDG's photographs.

Mr. Kolo said KDG's recommendation to show well-done versus less well-done historic preservation would be helpful.

Chair Henke said it would be important to focus the graphics on the architectural element in question and not the whole building.

Mr. Deyer concurred with Chair Henke that he could support KDG if the HDC could get more clarification on the scope of work. He also was concerned that KDG would likely raise their price once they clarify they work to be done.

Chair Henke concurred about the likely price increase, saying that if KDG clarified their scope of work they would likely be closer to \$30,000 to \$40,000.

In reply to Ms. Lang, Chair Henke stated that the contract will require the selected bidder to comply with the terms of the RFP. He said that if KDG is willing to commit to that, then the HDC only had to explain to the City Commission why KDG was being recommended. He said that if the HDC could receive a not-to-exceed contract, time commitment, and maintenance commitment for the project he would feel more comfortable with KDG.

PD Dupuis stated that the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) confirmed that such a wide range in bids is common.

In reply to Mr. Deyer, Chair Henke concurred that H2A would provide great examples for the guidelines but less up-to-date graphic design. He said KDG would also be able to provide alternatives to the examples if necessary.

Mr. Kolo added that a homeowner owner looking for a lot of detailed examples could find those in the high-quality state and federal resources available. He said most people in Birmingham would need the graphical simplicity KDG can offer.

Mr. Willoughby said the \$20,000 estimate from KDG indicated that the HDC was likely to receive boilerplate guidelines.

Chair Henke said that if the decision were to be made just off the evening's presentations, with a focus on the level of detail to be provided in the guidelines, then H2A would be the appropriate choice. He noted that the general consensus also leaned towards H2A. He said he did not believe the City would receive a bad product either way.

Mr. Deyer concurred.

PD Dupuis said he did not believe that the RFP called for an extensively detailed set of guidelines. He said the aim was to produce more of a general document. He noted that the goal was to find the medium between too detailed and inappropriately simplistic.

Ms. Dukas said that while she agreed H2A would likely provide more detail, she questioned whether that would engage the target audience of the design guidelines.

Mr. Kolo said the HDC also needed to consider which bidder would provide a better text to build on as materials and guidelines change in the future.

Mr. Willoughby said KDG could produce a simple design guideline for \$20,000. He said that if the HDC were looking to for a guideline with more information regarding historical and old architecture around Birmingham, whether and how it should be preserved, and what historic preservation is about, it would take more time than what KDG seemed to be proposing. He said that KDG seemed to have more experience in historically preserving commercial buildings and H2A seemed to have more experience in helping cities interact with their residents.

Chair Henke proposed recommending KDG since this is the first step in developing the design guidelines. He said the HDC could then return to the Commission with the completed initial design guidelines to request funding to expand on the guidelines further, since the City has not had guidelines for 50 years.

05-35-22

Motion Mr. Deyer
Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to support H2A.

Motion carried, 5-2.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Lang, Debbrecht, Deyer, Willoughby, Henke

Nays: Dukas, Kolo

Ms. Dukas said she thought passing on KDG was a missed opportunity. Mr. Kolo said he also felt strongly about supporting KDG.

8) Miscellaneous Business and Communication

A. Pre-Application Discussions

B. Draft Agenda

C. Staff Reports

1. Administrative Sign Approvals

2. Administrative Approvals

3. Demolitions

4. Action List 2022

5. Open Meetings Act Memorandum

9) Adjournment

05-36-22

Motion by Ms. Lang

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to adjourn the HDC meeting of May 18, 2022 at 9:35 p.m.

Motion carried, 7-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Henke, Deyer, Lang, Debbrecht, Willoughby, Kolo, Dukas

Nays: None



Nicholas Dupuis
Planning Director



Laura Eichenhorn
City Transcriptionist