

Development Activities Meeting Report (Version: 06/24/2020)

This report created by the Neighborhood Planner and included with staff reports to City Boards and/or Commissions.

Logistics	Stakeholders
Project Name/Address: 2204 E Carson Street (Façade)	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident):
Parcel Number(s): 12-L-00003	South Side Community Council (RCO)
ZDR Application Number: DCP-ZDR-2021-14489	Local Review Committee for the South Side Friends of South Side Park
Meeting Location: Zoom	Residents
Date: January 20 th , 2022	Applicant Team Other applicant teams presenting their own projects at the DAM series on 1/20/22
Meeting Start Time: 6:00pm (this specific presentation occurred as the second among multiple presentations)	City Planning
Applicant: Jordon Rooney (Founder/CEO of NFBG), Richard DeBlasio, and Andre Jones	Approx. Number of Attendees (at start of presentation): 41
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Historic Review Commission	

How did the meeting inform the community about the development project?

Ex: Community engagement to-date, location and history of the site, demolition needs, building footprint and overall square footage, uses and activities (particularly on the ground floor), transportation needs and parking proposed, building materials, design, and other aesthetic elements of the project, community uses, amenities and programs.

Jordon Rooney presented some background information on his organization. He shared that he is not in city planning or architecture and so relied on many different resources in relation to the storefront painting, as he has not previously rebuilt a storefront.

Their space is called Nudge. There are two different marketing agencies inside. Their goal is to give people the nudge to start a brand and business and provide resources to help people transition what they're doing into the digital age. Jordon showed a visual of the previous storefront/façade, and said it was a dream for him to have a storefront on E Carson Street. He previously lived on South Side Slopes, and now lives in Station Square.

There are two agencies with the same people – Built Different (creative agency that helps transition firms to digital age) and Jaster (works with professional athletes creating content). He showed headshot photos of his team. He also shared about their work with Vlog U, a non-profit where Pittsburgh public high school youth work for them running social media campaigns, including a campaign now on Tik Tok for the Andy Warhol Museum. He stated that this exemplifies his organization's consideration of workforce development and helping youth. He found that resources within creative fields were inaccessible with high barriers to entry when he first started and built his career. It was expensive to use equipment or studio space. So he has wanted to provide creative people with free access to the studio. The key is providing talented people access to resources. Art and creativity are very important to them.

This is Jordon's first time doing a storefront, but he said he has always wanted to follow rules and do it the right way. He said he thought they were following the rules. He presented screenshot excerpts of emails with Doug Donaldson of

Kolano where Jordon was told that “...painting won’t affect the permit as long as whatever you do is a pattern **without words or text.**”

Jordon stated that he was told by the sign company and his landlord that as long as the façade was hand painted, they would be perfectly fine. Jordon stated that his plan therefore had been to figure out how to hand paint the façade. He said he has since learned that this is not under code but that he didn’t know that at the time. He said he wants to be involved with the community and do the right thing, and he expressed that he wanted to better understand the subjectivity that goes into deciding the color scheme.

Jordon shared a visual of the currently painted façade, recognizing it could be considered “loud,” but that they’re proud of it and they see people who stop and take pictures of it as they walk past, and that creative people like being a part of it. Jordon stated that they see art as freedom of expression. He also didn’t want to do something that’s sloppy. He said the lines are concise and they developed a strict design of how they did it. Acknowledging the need to scale back the façade design, he stated he is interested in what they are allowed to do, and any expression they are allowed. Jordon also showed visuals of the inside open work space area (about 15 people who go in and out).

Jordon shared on the Zoom screen what he called some potential different scaled back versions of design (4 additional options), and emphasized he wants to learn and understand the subjectivity of what can get approved for artistic design behind a façade and what would not be approved.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants [Jordon Rooney]
<p>You raise great questions. I appreciate the overview and what you’re doing. Welcome to Carson St. I’m sympathetic in that if you were outside the district, you could do this, and it is creative – it’s loud, for sure, and every business in the district would like to make this kind of noise visually and have in the past on various occasions. But the historic district guidelines say that the use of original color schemes in the painting of wood and metal elements is encouraged, but ordinarily the HRC does not prescribe colors. There is not an approved palette, but they do look for historic colors, and there are paint producers who have historic color lines or one can determine what the original historic colors on the building were...They tend to be muted colors, but that’s a big generalization. The masonry on this building was painted many years ago. Thinking back to the Lava Lounge days, I don’t recall them ever going to HRC to paint their paint colors, so I’m not sure the status of the paint scheme before you came into the building. That would be up for debate.</p> <p>We’re advisors not deciders, as to what would be approved. You painted it without a Certificate of Appropriateness and so whoever was advising you gave you bad advice. Any exterior change to a façade or to the exterior of a building in the district needs a review. If you’re fixing something in-kind or replacing same colors</p>	<p>Got it.</p>

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<p>already there, you would not need to go through a lengthier neighborhood process but could do it Over The Counter. But for something as dramatic as this, you would have to go through the fuller process, and this emerged because someone filed a 311 complaint against the facade. We've seen something similar in various other businesses over the years, treating their facades like an art canvass, and doing it with best of intentions mostly, where do something dramatic calling out their business as unique and different to stand out in the district. We've had to go to HRC and get them overturned and brought back to what is of an historic nature and in keeping with district. Most of those have been done on Sundays or at night or without permits and that is the issue --- doing something without a review and getting dragged down into the process. That's where you are now.</p>	
<p>There are others on the LRC here tonight who can chime in. The sign board above your doorway with "Nudge" could probably stay, but other parts of the storefront would likely need to change. We could debate if the tile and overhanging cornice could stay. Even black often comes across as heavy and is often considered not historic in this district, but that is up for debate and the HRC members themselves may debate it. It's difficult to prescribe exactly what you need to do. But there is a problem from the get-go given that you have loud colors all over the façade and it is one big canvass.</p>	<p>One important piece of context: as part of the lease agreement, the landlords said they would rebuild the façade and make it all windows [extend the windows all the way to the ground], leaving only the sides and behind the sign board [available for painting/design]. I'm not sure exactly their process for that but that was part of the lease agreement.</p>
<p>So they would have to make an application to the HRC in the process, come through a DAM like this, come through with a proposed design, and review the guidelines.</p> <p>I don't think the storefront façade was original...Others here may also be able to share their thoughts. Please go back to existing conditions image when it was Lava Lounge.</p>	<p>[Showed visual of façade when the applicant first came into the space]</p>
<p>Yeah, my guess is that was not original. I don't know what others (John or Jody) think.</p>	
<p>Yeah, I was involved in this project many years ago before it became Lava Lounge. Basically the brick on the left and right of the double doors was all there. I'm trying to remember because it was probably about 40 years ago [before the district], and I added the double doors because there was a terrible door there, and I cleaned up the windows, but otherwise left everything else alone. One thing for Jordon to consider, is that if the storefront were open to more glass that would be great. And one thing the</p>	<p>Yes [white interior walls for filming, etc.]</p>

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<p>district does not have control over is what happens behind the glass. You could repeat the decorative design you have on the front but put it behind the glass and there would be no control from us or the city as to what goes on there. I noticed from your graphics that your interior is white, which may be necessary for filming etc.?</p>	
<p>But close to the storefront as part of your entrance lobby or whatever, you could repeat the strong graphics inside that space.</p>	<p>Got it. One question I had: If you look at the case of La Bodega, it's white and then they have blue halfway up. Is there any version of that which might be doable, where you can have varying color schemes and it doesn't have to be a flat color throughout?</p>
<p>Yes, there is a certain kind of multi-color scheme that is possible. It is not unusual to have 2 or 3 colors on historic storefronts. There is a specific methodology to having multiple colors within historic approach, and we can talk about that option outside of this meeting.</p> <p>In the case of La Bodega, I'm not aware of a 311 coming through for that, but that was not reviewed or approved as far as I know, and there bad examples. There are several other businesses in the district that do paint schemes without permits or review and we cannot necessarily endorse. But to your point, it's a bit of a fine line and discussion, and ultimately depends on where HRC wants to go with it, and how loud community wants to voice their opinion about things like this.</p> <p>In the past 2 years there have probably been 2 or 3 storefronts with very similar color schemes to this, and very dynamic graphic presentation of the business who have been asked to strip and remove artwork and repaint the storefront. And issue is when one business wants to do it, many businesses do, and that changes whole nature of the district, and historic guidelines are trying to do is to maintain historic integrity and feeling of the district.</p>	
<p>As a side note, La Bodega was Lesvos before it became La Bodega. I don't know how much the color scheme changed. It was repainted but I don't know how much of a change in color scheme there was from Lesvos and I believe that the problem in that particular location pre-dates the current tenant.</p>	
<p>When the owner did go to the HRC for approval, it was packaged with the other place -- Bedford Square and East Carson across from 1210 -- and I believe that was approved, but I'm not sure if what was done is what would have been approved. Because that was to come to us and then it did not need to come to us because it was just some painting, but whether or not the kind of painting</p>	

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<p>that occurred would have been approved, I'm not sure about that.</p>	
<p>Well, regardless, let's focus here. If there weren't 5 [presentations], I'd let you dwell.</p>	
<p>I think that was a bit important because you don't want to take that as a model of something you can do, if that would not have been approved by HRC had it gone to them. We want to show other examples that we would say are good models for Jordon to look at.</p>	
<p>I'm glad you mention that. We were chatting about this earlier today at the office. My partner who has left for the day is on the HRC -- she cannot speak for the commission, but there were some observations about what is a good precedent.</p> <p>Obviously the design is trying to convey energy and splash, which is great, and how does that coexist with historic guidelines. A successful example of that is one that is no longer with us is, which is Beehive, which had a very tuxedo exterior and a very mannered frieze with their signage there. That was the outside signal. And then all the glass and the way they configured their interior was an inside signal -- so those two kind of worked together to convey that energy. That might be something to look at in this case to try to get a more historic version of the exterior and like John M. mentioned earlier, take some of the energetic graphics and put it inside, which you would still get through the windows, especially if you get large windows.</p>	<p>That makes sense, and I'm looking to learn. I understand the historic nature considerations and trying to preserve historic society. What I'm trying to understand as we try to bridge this and find something that would be approved that we would also be proud of, the thing is that it seems arbitrary to me. There is something historic in nature, things get altered and changed. Is there a version that we can develop that meets the guidelines you're saying but also is something we can be proud of on the street and we believe there is energy to it? We see people coming by and loving it and coming to see it. And I'm not sure where historical starts or finishes. Can something be historical but doesn't have to be like everything else and can also convey energy that people like to travel past?</p>
<p>Tonight is not the night to arbitrate that because we could go around and around on what is historic and all the details.</p>	<p>Got it.</p>
<p>It's a back and forth. If you could come to LRC on Tuesday night we could explain all that more and point you in a direction perhaps that we could work out together in more detail.</p>	
<p>Jordon, to save you some energy and time...and we're not dictating this...but the suggestion I had and Peter had...once you get your all-glass façade, you could easily have a show-stopping, picture-taking, selfie experience with those strong graphics immediately inside the space and won't take away from that. But façade is the façade. I've been involved here since 1974 probably before you were on this earth, and once we start this thing, we have precedents. Rite Aid decided overnight to paint their brick façade gray to match their corporate color scheme. We</p>	<p>Yes. Because it was corporate in nature is that why?</p>

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had to have them remove all that gray paint. Gray was not garish or traffic-stopping but it was against the guidelines.	
Yes, and also...	
Also not allowed to paint the brick -- that was the other thing.	
Come to talk to us. We'll help guide you through this.	Sure, I want to find a way to still be inspired and proud of our façade in general, and also make you all proud when walking past and I don't want you to be mad at me.
We welcome young energy, as communities need all of that, and we were all there at one time.	
Some of us still are...	
I had a storefront on Carson Street when I first came here. So I know the experience.	
Thank you.	
Barbara R., SSCC lead: Any other questions or comments? Will leave it up to Local Review Committee. You're in good hands, Jordon.	Sounds good.
Thank you, Jordon.	Thank you.
Barbara R., the SSCC lead: [shared information on next steps, opportunities for more public comment.] Once the Local Review Committee (LRC) meets with Jordon, there should be follow-up by email so that the community is made aware of what will be shared with the Historic Review Commission (HRC), so that the community can make public comments to HRC.	
Bob Russ of the LRC: I'll add that HRC usually posts the applications 10 days before the hearing, and so the public could see that on their website as well. This would probably be for the hearing the first Wednesday in March.	

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Barbara R., the SSCC lead: the presentation at HRC would likely reflect what the applicant and LRC had worked on together, so that is a good point.	

Other Notes

Planner completing report: Thomas Scharff