

November 7, 2011

City of Asheville Planning and Economic Development Committee
Attention: Councilman Jan Davis, Chair

Re: River District Design Review Committee - Proposed Revisions to UDO

Dear Chairman Davis and Committee Members:

In 1989, the Asheville City Council adopted the Riverfront Plan which became the official policy document of the City of Asheville with respect to development within the Riverfront. As an actionable tool of this policy, The River District Design Review Committee (Riverfront District Design Committee) was formed by Ordinance of the Asheville City Council in 1997. The Committee review function is for the purpose of providing guidance with respect to design matters for development within the River District. This review is a mandatory requirement of the UDO, yet relies on voluntary compliance by the applicant.

From the Design Guidelines for the River District, which is the Committee's reference guide, the intent and purpose of the Committee's activities is stated in part as follows. "The ability to discern the existing cluster of uses as a district is reinforced by a style and look in the area, that although allowing for fairly broad individual expression, also conforms to a look and feel which, if lost, will lessen the perception of the space as a unified whole. This loss would be detrimental to the ability of the area to market itself....." Given this intent and seeing some imperfections within the process to meet this charge, our Committee has been considering how we might be more effective in meeting our responsibilities.

We continue to believe in the review process and we concur that compliance with this review should continue to be voluntary. It is not our intent to saddle development with unreasonable delays nor to contribute to additional costs. To the contrary, we see a real opportunity to be collaborative and provide guidance which will result in a more successful redevelopment initiative. There have been many changes since the adoption of the Riverfront Plan, both in redevelopment trends, and zoning. With these changes, we are seeing a number of properties which could be a significant contributor to the "look and feel" of the District, but because of their zoning classification or project size, do not fall within the jurisdiction of review by the RDDRC.

I have attached two draft documents which we wish to present to City Council for consideration as an amendment to the UDO relative to our review jurisdiction and responsibilities. We have previously presented this draft to the Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission and are now presenting it to the PED as informational and to ask for your constructive input.

It is our honor to serve along with the Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission and the Planning and Economic Development Committee in promoting Asheville's riverfront as a vital economic development area for Asheville and western North Carolina and ask for your informed support for this proposal.

Sincerely,



Terry Meek, AIA
Chair, River District Design Review Committee

DRAFT PROPOSAL

To amend the Unified Development Ordinance of the City of Asheville

Sec. 7-5-18. - River district design review.

(b) *Major works.*

- (1) *Purpose.* River district design major works review for compliance with the river district design review guidelines is required for those projects which involve a substantial change in the appearance of a building or structure or landscape. Major works also include the demolition of a building or structure, relocation of a building or structure, new construction over 500* square feet in size and rehabilitation where the structure has been substantially altered and signage, landscaping, site design, and exterior illumination of said new construction and rehabilitation.

(c) *Jurisdiction.***

- (1) *Boundaries.* The boundaries for jurisdictional review by the City of Asheville's River District Design Review Committee are identified on the map entitled "Geographic Boundaries of Review, River District Design Review Committee". This map shall be retained permanently in the office of the planning and development department of the City of Asheville.

* Currently 5,000

** Proposed added subparagraph