

City of Sugar Hill
Planning Staff Report
CBD Design Review 20-00703



DATE: August 12, 2020
TO: Mayor and Council, Design Review Board
FROM: Planning Director
SUBJECT: Central Business District (CBD) Design Review
Lidl US – NW corner Nelson Brogdon Blvd. and Sycamore Road

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Denial. However, should the council find it necessary to approve the design concept in material and architectural detail as shown on the attached Exhibit 1 the following conditions should be considered:

1. Site development and buildings shall be constructed to substantially resemble the attached Exhibits _ - _ except where modified by these conditions.
2. Loading dock, service access and dumpster shall be screened from public street and sidewalk view by a privacy fence or landscaping. Screening materials shall be arranged in such a way so as to avoid any public safety for traffic, nor shall it impede any pedestrian or automotive access.
3. The same ornamental streetlights approved by GA Dept. of Transportation for Highway 20 shall be installed along the entire length of the Sycamore Road frontage.
4. Landscaping along Sycamore Road shall be arranged to screen the building panels in no less than 20' increments. Landscape strip shall consist of at least two staggered rows of evergreen and semi-evergreen trees and shrubs native or adapted to the area. Trees shall be 6' tall at time of planting. Plantings shall be arranged to provide an effective visual screen of at least 20' in height at maturity. Landscape strip must not contain more than 1/3 of a single species and must be shown on a landscape plan to be approved by the city manager prior to receiving any permits.

REQUEST The City of Sugar Hill has received an application from Lidl US requesting design review approval and variances pertaining to setbacks, facade, and entry requirements for a Lidl grocery store to be located at the northwest corner of Nelson Brogdon Boulevard and Sycamore Road, within the Central Business District Overlay.

DISCUSSION

- The proposed grocery is part of a larger mixed-use development concept (including for-sale active adult residential, office and general retail uses) which was approved for inclusion into the CBD earlier this year.
- A grocery store is a critically important use within walking distance of the downtown core and is an important element of this village-style development typology.
- The application requests relief from the following design standards associated with the CBD overlay:

- 1) A maximum building setback rather than a minimum setback to shift buildings toward the street and promote a pedestrian oriented streetscape which forces off street parking to the side or rear;
 - 2) A maximum dimension in the façade articulation to protect against the dulling effect of blank walls adjacent to the streetscape and other pedestrian areas surrounding the building;
 - 3) A minimum window and door coverage along street-facing facades to provide a visual connection from the building and its uses to the streetscape promoting a sense of welcome and security; and
 - 4) A second public entrance to provide adequate access from the street when off-street parking is situated to the side or rear.
- While the project team has made a good faith effort to adapt their standard prototype, the proposed site and building designs do not fully adhere to the CBD design standards pertaining to physical relationship with streetscape and pedestrian experience.
 - The building's proximity and orientation to Highway 20 may be valid reasons to deviate from those standards. However, the applicant's choice of interior building layout and operations are driving the need to request variances related to the transparency and entrance requirements.
 - As proposed, the concept plan and elevations do a nice job of enhancing the pedestrian feel of the building entry while maintaining a convenient connection to the off-street parking along-side the building and presenting an enhanced landscaping concept for the outer edges of the building. There is also a decent network of proposed internal pedestrian pathways among the other elements of the master site plan.
 - There may be opportunities to mitigate the plan's inconsistencies with the design standards through additional placement of streetscape and public art elements.

BACKGROUND

APPLICANT: Lidl US c/o Sinh Bui

PROPERTY OWNER: Franklin Investments Group, LLC

EXISTING ZONING: General Business District (BG) and Central Business District (CBD).

REQUEST: Design review approval and variances for building and site improvements for Lidl grocery.

PROPERTY SIZE: ± 2.641 acres

LOCATION: Northwest corner of Nelson Brogdon Boulevard and Sycamore Road

DESIGN REVIEW CRITERIA

1. *Is the proposed project consistent with the adopted design guidelines for the type of development, and/or the proposed use?*

Yes. The proposed project is mostly consistent with the intent of the adopted guidelines. The applicant is, however, seeking relief from the maximum setback, maximum building segment horizontal length, minimum fenestration, second public entrance requirements and relaxed dumpster screening requirements.

2. *Is the proposed project consistent and compatible with the nature and character of the surrounding areas?*

Yes. The proposed development is consistent with the emerging character of this part of the Highway 20 corridor and the recommendations in the Aspire Hwy 20 plan.

3. *Are the site design, landscaping, general design, character, arrangement and scale of buildings, texture, materials and colors of the project similar to or compatible with features or structures in the area.*

Yes. The site design is compatible with the emerging character of the area and promotes pedestrian access to the site. The landscaping exceeds minimum standards using non-invasive species. The general design, character and arrangement of the building creates a space which is focused on the internal pedestrian experience as well as safe and convenient accessibility. The scale of the building is appropriate, though, the lack of fenestration on the street-facing facades and a single parking-side public entrance may present opportunities for improvement in the design.

4. *Will the interior arrangement or use have any effect on exterior architectural features and otherwise complies with the standards of this ordinance?*

The criteria of variance 3 and 4, a request to reduce the amount of transparency on the façade and provide a single public entrance are each a result of the interior design.

5. *Does the project contribute or resemble the following criteria for considering a design inappropriate?*

No. The design does not contribute to any of the five criteria.

BOHLER //

211 Perimeter Center Parkway NE, Suite 425
Atlanta, GA 30346
678.695.6800

July 27, 2020

City of Sugar Hill
Mayor and City Council
Planning and Development Department
5039 West Broad Street
Sugar Hill, GA 30518

RE: Letter of Intent – Design Review (CBD)
Highway 20 & Sycamore Road
Property ID #
R730647
R730648
R730649
R730650

Honorable Board Members,

Please accept this Letter of Intent for a Design Review Request that includes the parcel location(s) above. Lidl US, LLC is proposing to develop a portion of the 10.79-acre parcel with a proposed grocery store at the northwest corner of Nelson Brogdon Blvd and Sycamore Rd. This entire 10.79-acre parcel (owned by Franklin Investment Group) has recently been rezoned to be included in the CBD (Central Business District) Overlay within the City of Sugar Hill under the project name 'Sycamore Square'. Lidl is under contract to purchase the +/-2.64-acre southeastern corner of the 10.79-acre parcel. The proposed grocery store use is permitted by-right but will require approval via Design Review Application and Variance Application processes. This letter is intended to explain why the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

The subject property is currently vacant and heavily wooded. The proposed improvements will include the clearing and grading of the site and the construction of a +/-28,179 SF Lidl grocery store with associated site facilities. Access to the site will be provided via a proposed right-in/right-out driveway and deceleration lane along Hwy 20 and a proposed full access driveway along Sycamore Road. Internal cross access points and pedestrian connectivity will be shared with the 'Sycamore Square' master development to the north and west.

The proposed project promotes a walkable, pedestrian-oriented development and revitalizes a vacant and underutilized property as was purposed for the CBD Overlay. The proposed design is in alignment with the criteria and standards spelled out within Article 10 of the zoning ordinance with the exception of a few variances, which have been submitted at the time of this application. To provide an urban pedestrian experience, a vibrant plaza space has been proposed along the Hwy 20 frontage near the intersection to act as a gateway into the 'Sycamore Square' development. The plaza will include streetscape elements such as dining tables, chairs, bike racks, benches and lamp posts. An integrated system of sidewalks and crosswalks has been provided throughout the development to enhance the overall pedestrian experience.

BOHLER //

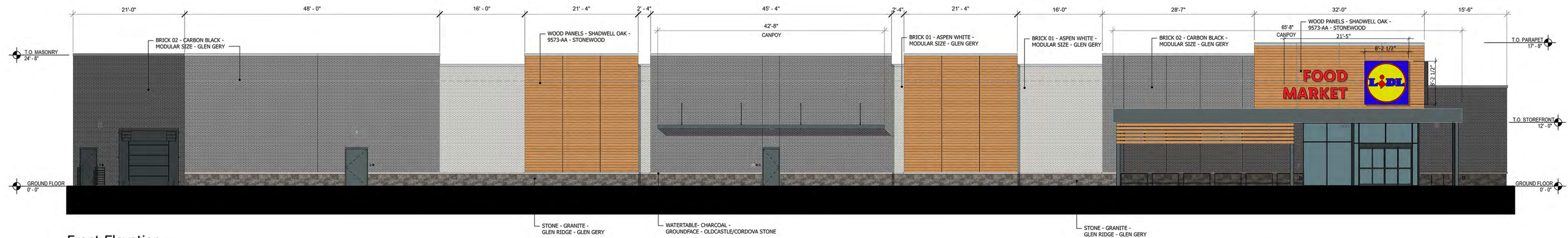
As described above, the applicant proposes a development that shares the vision and essence of the CBD Overlay. Therefore, the applicant is pleased to submit this application for your review and respectfully request approval as proposed.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact our office at (678) 695-6800.

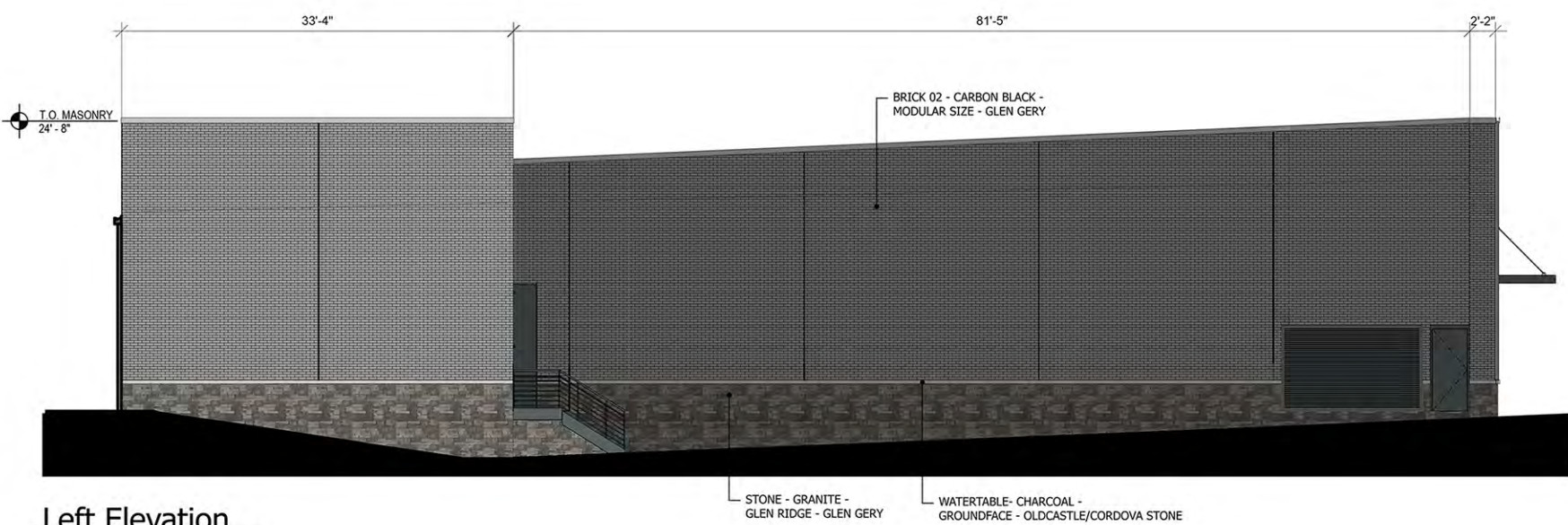
Sincerely,
BOHLER ENGINEERING GA, LLC



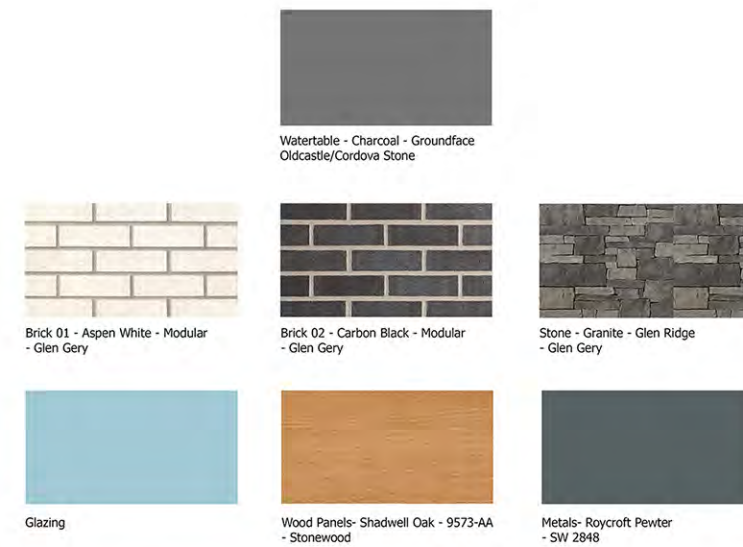
Joel R. DelliCarpini, RLA
Principal



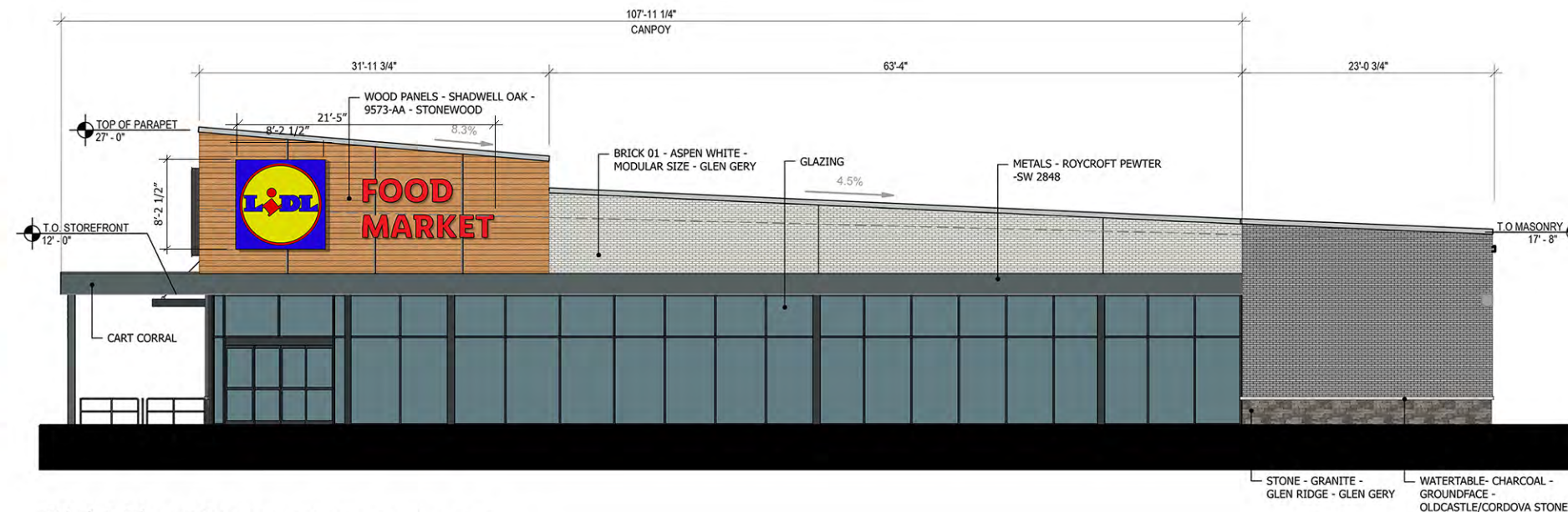
Front Elevation



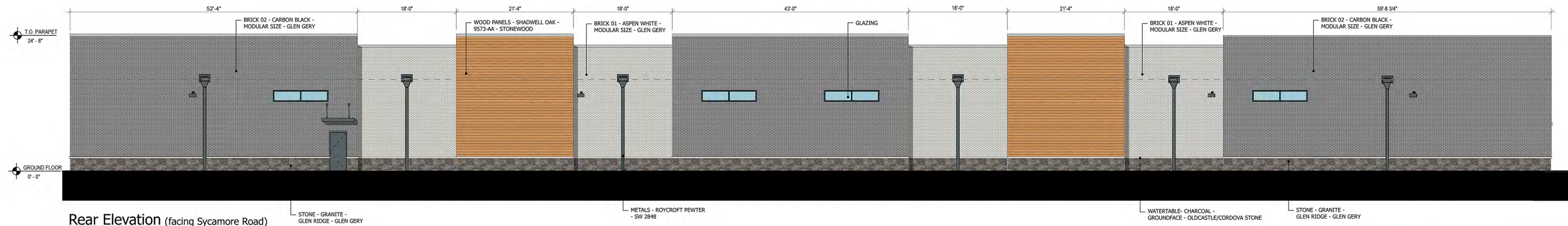
Left Elevation



Material Legend



Right Elevation (facing Nelson Brogdon Blvd)



Rear Elevation (facing Sycamore Road)

