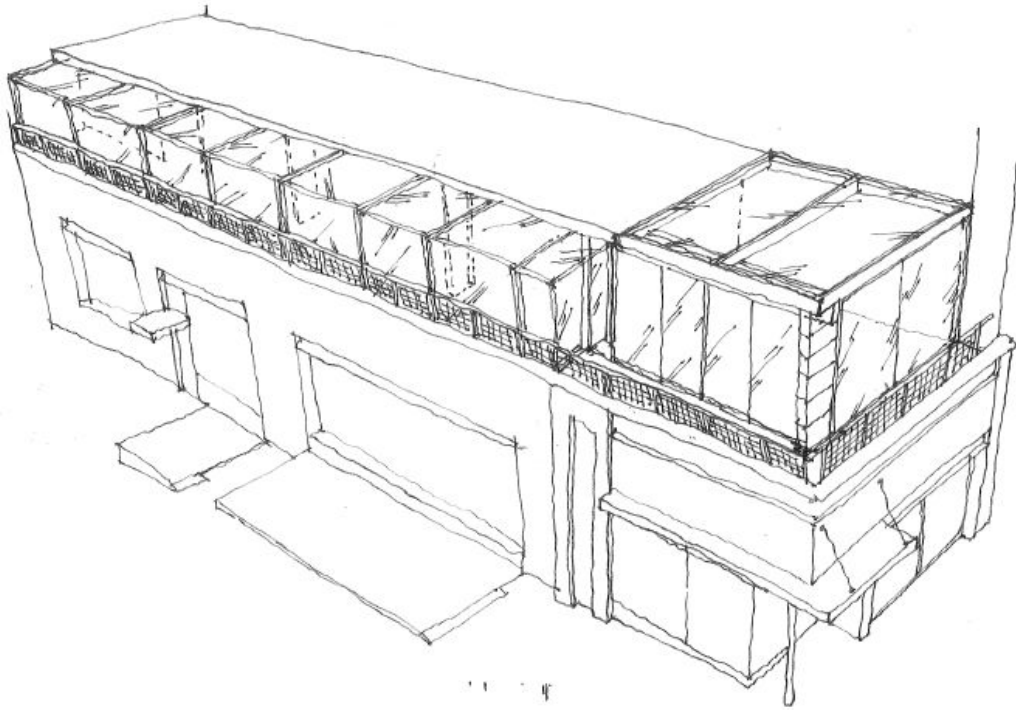


Charlottesville BAR approves enclosure for SkyBar
written by Newspark Team | October 15, 2013



SKYBAR TRELLIS
AERIAL VIEW - PHASE 2
COMMONWEALTH TEMPORARY ROOF ENCLOSURE
ROWEN BARDON STUDIO 5/24/13

When is a tent not a tent? When it's a "temporary roof enclosure," according to Charlottesville's Board of Architectural Review.

On Tuesday, the Commonwealth Restaurant and SkyBar on the Downtown Mall finally got the approval it had been seeking for more than a year.

"This structure is arguably not a tent and may be reviewed as an addition to the building," said Mary Joy Scala, the city's preservation planner.

The owner of the Commonwealth, Alex George, asked for permission last October for a temporary tent that would allow the open-air bar on the roof of the renovated A&N building to be open year-round.

However, he was told at the time that the tent he sought to erect would not meet the BAR's guidelines. George was given permission to keep the tent up throughout last winter season while the city straightened out its guidelines.

BAR members Tim Mohr and Michael Osteen consulted with George to come up with a more permanent structure that would not seem like a tent.

George also worked with architect Marthe Rowen to work on a design.

A painted steel frame will span the Fifth Street side of the roof and will be bolted to the existing railing.

Vinyl panels can be inserted and removed as needed. A new beam and post will be installed to match the existing copper wall at the front of the building.

"Clear vinyl panels with black edges would enclose the sides and top and could be removed when they are not in use," Scala said.

"In staff opinion, this structure is complementary to the newly renovated building and will continue to function as a festive addition to the east end of the mall," Scala added.

Rowen said the elements of the enclosure would match other architectural features present in the restaurant's exterior.

"The basic idea here is that the vinyl would go inside the structure rather than outside the structure and as such it would recede and not present itself as clearly," Rowen said. "That's the main conceptual difference."

The vote by the BAR was unanimous.

"I think this is a very nice response to a difficult problem," said BAR member Brian Hogg. "It ultimately will function as the second story to the building."

"It retains some of the festive nature of the tent and it will be nice in the summer as a scale break," Mohr said.

"This is exactly what we are asking for," BAR member Melanie Miller said. "Hopefully, it will inspire other restaurants to come up with something more along these lines that suits their space rather than turning to pop-up tents."

However, after approval, George's lawyer asked the BAR if it would support an extension of a grace period that would allow the previous tent to be erected until the more permanent structure is fabricated and installed.

"We're in the season now where temporary structures are becoming [necessary]," said attorney Mike Derdeyn with the firm Feil, Pettit and Williams.

After some discussion about whether the request would set a precedent for other temporary tents, the BAR voted to approve the extension.

"I will try to do everything ... to get it up and get it finished," George told the BAR.

The City Council is expected to vote on new guidelines for tents at its meeting Monday.