

**Stationmaster's note:** *The following excerpts are from Design Review Committee columns originally published on the [Magic City Post](#) in 2012. We've re-posted them here to provide context for [Rebecca's July 25 Design Review Committee recap](#) as it pertains to [Harbert Realty and the sign atop Two North Twentieth](#). Clicking on the dates will take you to the original piece.*

#### [Design Review Committee Meeting: September 26](#)

"The Harbert Realty representative was to speak on the status of the rooftop sign on Two North 20th. The committee was given a "heads up" on the project by a current tenant (and committee member). Apparently, the sign is in need of expensive repairs. Until the time comes to decide on the status of the sign, Harbert would like to wrap it in vinyl. The committee will make decisions and recommendations on this project once it is presented by Harbert."

#### [Design Review Committee Meeting: October 10](#)

"Keith Rouss of Harbert Realty brought the company's intentions for the existing sign at the top of Two North Twentieth to the committee. Due to the existing economic climate, it is no longer cost effective or affordable to continue maintenance on the 40-year-old sign. Harbert intends to wrap the sign in a pre-printed vinyl that would contain advertising. The committee expressed concerns that the sign would become "the world's largest billboard" and no longer blend with the city's skyline. The plans presented to the committee included a national advertising campaign for Pepsi, proposed by a New York advertising firm and local bottler Buffalo Rock. In addition to the billboard concerns, the committee took issue with the nature and look of the signage. Acknowledging the interim nature of this plan (the advertising contract would be for 18 months), the committee requested Harbert find another way to meet both the advertising and the design concerns. Despite Harbert's concerns that the advertising plan would fall through, the committee tabled the discussion to the next meeting."

#### [Design Review Committee Meeting: October 24](#)

"Keith Rouss of Harbert Realty returned to the committee with what he hoped would be a clearer iteration of the company's intentions for the existing sign at the top of Two North Twentieth. With Rouss was Jimmy Lee from Buffalo Rock Company, the potential advertiser for the wrap of the electronic sign atop the building. The committee discussion revolved around the plans to wrap the sign being contradictory to current design standards. Rouss again argued that the uniqueness of the sign would preclude setting any precedents, but the committee still voted to deny the request.

The committee acknowledged the corporate citizenship of both Harbert Realty and Buffalo Rock Company, but despite its status as a "legal, non-conforming sign" the wrap still constitutes a billboard rather than something more akin to an artwork. In an interesting twist, a potential protestor to the wrapped sign idea attended the meeting. His concern was that this would open the opportunity to put billboard-style signs on every building in the city's skyline, thus ruining it. Since the committee denied the request, the protestor had no need to provide comment."

#### [Design Review Committee Meeting: November 14](#)

"Tab Bisignani of Harbert Realty returned to the committee with yet another iteration of the company's intentions for the existing sign at the top of Two North Twentieth. The new proposal was of a blue sky with the word "Pepsi" formed by clouds and the Pepsi logo. Once again the committee denied the request with the explanation that the wrap still constitutes a billboard rather than something more akin to a work of art. It is interesting that most people who attended the committee meetings for each of the Harbert presentations seem to understand that the committee is asking for art and an acknowledgement of the history of Buffalo Rock and the city. Yet Harbert continues to

present advertising (and continues to get denied). A simple solution thrown around after one of the meetings included running an art contest that includes a sponsorship logo - two birds with one stone, so to speak. The most uncomfortable thing about this recent presentation was the attitude of the Harbert representative. While his, and Harbert's, frustration is understandable, Harbert has the opportunity to communicate more with the city and the committee to make this something meaningful to everyone - since it is everyone in the region who will see it at one time or another. However, whether or not he meant it this way, Bisignani's implied threats to go to the city or another higher authority over this issue and throwing around the "weight" of the money Harbert provides to the city's tax base are not displaying a positive image of Harbert's corporate citizenship. At this meeting, Bisignani acted more like a corporate bully."