



Downtown Community Planning Council San Diego

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

### PRE-DESIGN SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING OF THE DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY PLANNING COUNCIL

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2015  
5:15 PM

CIVIC SAN DIEGO  
401 B STREET, SUITE 400  
SAN DIEGO, CA

1. Roll Call at 5:15pm. Members in Attendance: Luke Vinci, Cindy Blair, LC Cline, Dan Wery and Claudia Escala. Note: Marsha Sewell from Gaslamp Land Use Planning and Catalina Preskill, executive director of the Gaslamp Quarter Historical Foundation were invited to join DCPC members to review and comment on the AC Hotel project.
  2. No public comments on Non Agenda items
  3. No report from Chairperson.
  4. Action Items:
    - ❖ **Item 1** - 1919 Pacific Highway (east side of Pacific Highway between Cedar and Grape Streets) – Preliminary Design Review – Centre City Development Permit/Coastal Development Permit/Planned Development Permit – Little Italy Neighborhood of the Downtown Community Plan Area ~ Aaron Hollister
- \*Recusal by Claudia Escala, Dan Wery acted as Chairperson for this action item.

Design Issues and considerations brought up by Civic SD Staff:

- Streetwalls - Does the streetwall along Pacific Highway with an average streetwall height of 33 feet, eight inches where 40 feet is required create a significant streetwall along Pacific Highway as intended in the CCPDO? Does the rooftop open space exceeding 50 feet in length above a height of 30 feet compromise the streetwall experience?
- Ground Floor – Does the break in the streetwall with a 17-foot recess at the southerly end of the ground floor enhance the public/private interface as defined in Section 2.1.4 of the DDGs by enlivening and improving safety of the public realm?
- Treatment of Rear Massing – Does the rear massing provide adequate architectural expression in terms of materials, finishes and articulation? Does the proposed design for the east elevation meet the CCPDO and DDGs goals for prevention of blank walls through the use of architectural detailing?
- County Administration Center (CAC) Overlay Compliance – Does the proposed design reflect the goals of the CAC overlay, and furthermore, does the façade of the upper stories facing Pacific Highway reflect an adequate amount of verticality? Civic SD staff believes random openings don't seem to comply with regularity to accompany the CAC.

Presentation by Architect (Carrier Johnson + CULTURE):

The project presents both a challenge in trying to pay homage to Little Italy and the (CAC) as well as an opportunity to create a distinctive building along the waterfront. Since the CAC guidelines were written several developments have come through with the most important being the Waterfront Park. The proposed project has an L shaped form that follows the shape of the north wing of the CAC. Its southwest façade steps down to embrace the east elevation of the CAC. The base of the project is distinguished by vertical forms also identifying the main residential entry. Frames are multi story in scale similar to the colonnade at the CAC. The project also takes cues from the CAC to create upper glass cornices at the streetwall. The design parti focuses on one façade addressing the waterfront and the park



and the other façade addressing the urban fabric. Facing the water the use of wrap around balconies maximizes views and openness and the random placement of the balconies prevents the building from having a motel look with horizontal banding. On the opposite façade facing California Street the approach is that of a multiple massed sculptured façade with window placements along the railway limited to living rooms not bedrooms.

Member Questions:

Q. The entry alcove shows a staircase to a mezzanine. Is this area secured?

A. The intent is to not have a gate at the very entrance but locate one further along the path to provide security.

Q. Are the elevators in the best location? It seems like a maze to get to them.

A. The proposed plan is similar to other projects in which there is an open feel entry, hotel lobby style leading to the elevators.

Q. California St. elevation is a reminder of an old soviet building. It is stark and cold. If this street could ever be activated there is a desire for it to be more appealing to move the transients away. Why not carry some of the Pacific Highway (PCH) vocabulary to the back like the materiality and textures?

A. The PCH façade begs to be open. Applicant may consider some balconies on the south but does not recommend them on the East. Applicant will further study the east elevation.

Q. Setback from property line along North 10' to 15' what is a good dimension?

A. 10' to 15' is appropriate.

Q. At the northeast corner in similar fashion as the Ariel Suites with the Tuna fishermen and Broadstone with its mirror tree. Could the project consider art work celebrating the tuna fisherman heritage of the Little Italy Community?

Public Comments:

Gary Smith President Downtown Residents Group. His board has previously reviewed the project and has seen considerable progress especially in switching from horizontal to vertical elements on the PCH façade to make it look more stately and less squatty. At the southwest indentation on the north side of the indent adjacent to the leasing office glass would be good. The north side of the California St. elevation has too long of a blank wall.

Architect noted that by building code a minimum of a 5'-0" setback would be required to allow for any openings and would not want to reduce building footprint.

Gary Smith noted that the view of this façade from the trolley feels OK but not from across the trolley tracks. Also the triangular grass area will not survive and should be reconsidered.

Architect acknowledged relevance of comment.

Member Comments:

Dan Wery: Likes the front façade on PCH and feels it works with the colors breaking up the block. He would like to see on the northern third more of what is proposed with the southern part in terms of colors and materials. Recommends removal of blank wall at north. Likes setback between base and upper stories. The sidewalk scoring pattern should be kept and carried across the parking entry. The eastern half of the project is cold and stark. The applicant should try to make it visually warmer. This project should establish a model on how to improve California St. and make it more active. Consider adding pavers. Currently the blank walls invite graffiti. Also the storage count seems low. To the questions raised by Civic SD staff with regards to the street wall Dan feels 33' is appropriate as 40' would make the building out of proportion.

LC Cline: There is little he does not like about the proposed project. It takes a neglected area in a new direction. Believes proposed massing and movement is well executed. Along PCH there is good street activation with excellent variation and use of materials. On the East elevation he really likes the recesses and protusions in terms of an artform. There is some color missing on this façade that could be brought from the PCH façade. He welcomes any effort to include public art and notes that it does not have to be a massive installation. The distinction of different buildings as part of the design concept is well thought out. No objections to Civic SD staff questions. Project integrates well and is in compliance. Would like California to become the blue mile.



Cindy Blair: Agrees with Dan Wery that northwest corner should follow the vocabulary of the southern portion. The project is a good modern interpretation of the CAC. As far as the east elevation agrees with the different buildings concept but believes they should feel more as companion buildings.

Luke Vinci Really likes the project. Would like to see a concept for reclaiming California St. He wonders how this street could become unique. What if the street was painted blue. What can be done to take away the harshness.?

End of Item 1

- ❖ **Item 2** -AC Hotel (743 Fifth and 744 Sixth Avenues) – Amended Gaslamp Quarter Development Permit/Planned Development Permit/Neighborhood Use Permit No. 2013-35A – Gaslamp Quarter Neighborhood of the Downtown Community Plan Area ~ Aaron Hollister  
\*Claudia Escala returned as Chairperson for this action item.

Previously approved project included a 119 guest room hotel with ground floor restaurant, sidewalk café, a basement-level night club and lounge with live entertainment, rooftop pool deck and lounge and 36 valet parking spaces. The proposed amendment increases number of guest rooms to 147 by replacing the rooftop pool deck and lounge on the seventh floor and by adding guest rooms at preciously proposed stair and elevator core. It also increases valet parking spaces to 44 and removes basement level nightclub and CUP.

PDP Deviations include smaller than required parking spaces, allowing tandem parking to count towards required parking, narrower than standard drive aisles and allowing parking in drive aisles.

Civic SD staff believes change at top of building makes project more consistent with the Gaslamp Quarter Presentation by Architect – Awbrey Cook Rogers McGill Architects:

The project proposes two valet zones, one on 5<sup>th</sup> and one on 6<sup>th</sup>. Ave. There is one level below grade and ten feet were eliminated with the use of mechanical lifts for parking. On the previous plan the Hotel Lobby was located on the south. With the elimination of the lounge the Hotel Lobby has been increased and moved to the north shifting the restaurant to the south. Reconfigured core to allow for more rooms and added two guest rooms to the south. On 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. the reduced roof deck has a small water feature. This area will only be for hotel guests with no public access. The stairwell now replaced with guest rooms include a balcony. On the north elevation the mural has been extended. On the 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. façade at Level 7 the large guest suite with a previously proposed exterior staircase has been eliminated .

#### Member Questions

Q. Seating on 5<sup>th</sup> Ave seems too small at the Northwest corner as well as at the bar on the southwest corner. Seems a real busy section of the street for just a few tables and chair. Should outdoor seating be eliminated all together?

A. Applicant believes leasing the space without outdoor seating would be a challenge and thinks even a couple of seats will work.

Q. Transformer vault extending to sidewalk? Concern with concealing hatch. Where is trash and recycling located?

A. Gaslamp pavers can be used to conceal the transformer hatch. Trash and recycling need to be further studied but the intent is to use the parking lift to transport trash to ground level.

Q. With utilities below grade back of house areas seem to have limited maneuverability.

#### Public Comments:

Gary Smith – President Downtown Residents Group. Gary likes this project much better because the rooftop entertainment component goes away. Also the elimination of the top suite makes the roof line more consistent with the Gaslamp Quarter. Regarding outdoor seating even one table will get utilized.

#### Member Comments

Cindy Blair – Likes revisions to project and sees great improvement on roof line along the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue side.

Marsha Sewell - (Gaslamp Land Use Planning)- The project presented is a much better project.

Catalina Preskill - Favors project does not have any further comment

Dan Wery – Likes the project much better without the top guest suite. The front façade at ground level also looks better. Not sure if the elevator at the south projecting at the corner finishes strongly. Also the



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band at the top does not look big enough. Encourages applicant to relook at proportions.

Claudia Escala – Really likes changes presented as they address concerns expressed during the previous approval and believes the project fits better now in the Gaslamp Quarter.

5. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 6:50PM