



Downtown Community Planning Council San Diego

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

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

TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2015  
5:15 PM

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

1. Roll Call at 5:15pm. Members in Attendance: LC Cline, Jon Baker, Pat Stark and Claudia Escala.
2. No public comments on non-agenda items.
3. No report from Chairperson

#### **Action items:**

4. **Citiplace** (North side of Ash Street between First Avenue and Front Street) – Preliminary Design Review – Cortez Neighborhood of the Downtown Community Plan Area ~ Christian Svensk  
7 story (approximately 85 foot tall) residential development on an approximately 25,000 square foot site. 147 residential dwelling units and 153 automobile parking spaces.

#### Design Issues and considerations:

##### Streetwall Elevations

- Does the overall design of the building respond to its immediate environs, that of the Cortez District or Greater San Diego? Is it a distinctive and engaging addition to the City's streetscape?
- Is the use of materials appropriate and does the courtyard separation effectively breakdown the building's massing?
- Is the eastern mass of the building overly simplified in order to create the necessary distinction from the western portion? Does it require more design articulation?
- Does the 34 foot break in the streetwall for the second level courtyard compromise the streetwall experience or enhance the public/private interface by enlivening and improving safety of the public realm?

##### Interior Property Line Walls

- Is the wall in the interior property line architecturally detailed to a sufficient degree to provide visual interest until the adjacent property is redeveloped?

##### Presentation by Architect Skyport Studio – Barbara Jetzer & Frank Wolden

The design parti is inspired in the site's location between the Core and Little Italy neighborhoods.

The architect believes projects downtown should be made of smaller parts to create scale and address the street as well as the context. Being located along Ash Street the project sits in the middle of a gateway which sets the need to also establish a different character. Ash Street is a more ceremonial street with access to the Bay. The other streets are ways of getting in and out of downtown, they are "zoom" streets. The First Street façade has a formal approach with openings regularly arranged along the façade. The southwest corner is a stately subdued corner and when it turns to the south it reveals a leg anchoring on Ash Street. The south façade is tying to the downtown area and introduces a garden court that marks the residential entry to the project. There is no stair coming down to the street but there is a vertical connection to a mezzanine level from the lobby experience.

The Front Street, Little Italy side is more horizontal, playful and artistic displaying an accent colored metal frame with oriel windows. Ground floor stoops with landscaping create the pedestrian experience along this façade.



### Members Questions

Clarify your window system and define the areas where vinyl windows will be used. Vinyl windows will be used throughout the project with the exception of the first level where storefront will be used as on the ground floors the public has the ability to touch and feel the windows. What prompted the applicant to only pursue and FAR of 48% of what was available? The 84" diameter existing sewer line limits how much parking can occur below grade thus limiting the number of units. Has a scour study being conducted with regards to the sewer pipe? Essex the applicant met with the City but did not want to go through a scour study at this time. The intent is to keep the project excavation to a point where it will not affect the existing pipe. Even without the sewer problem the site has a ground lease and the cost to operate a Type I building would make the project financially impossible. Why two curb cuts and the deviation request? With a limited site and an existing slope it makes sense to handle the site with two driveways accessing different levels. Elaborate on how the split storage spaces work and can Civic SD name a precedent for approving split storage spaces. For the split storage there will be a 120 cubic feet storage unit mounted above the hood of the cars and complemented with a gated storage area in a secured room for another 120 cubic feet to make up the 240 total required. Civic recalls approving this condition before but not the exact project name.

### Public Comments:

Gary Smith: Encouraged the applicant not to use parking as an excuse for not proposing more density as other projects under the same condition have come up with creative parking solutions with the use of mechanical lifts and DCPC has also been approving a series of projects with above grade parking. His group will be pleased with the overall exterior design and will like the oriel windows. The trash room opening onto the street will not work the way it is laid out. Not in favor of two entrances into the parking and the corresponding driveway cuts. Storage minimum dimensions as noted in the PDO are so that two bicycles can fit. As long as bicycle storage is provided that is fine he is OK with the split storage. Recycling needs to be accounted for. Did not see a mailroom. Overwhelmingly people are ordering things on line. Good work on the north elevation. Don't use parking as an excuse not to build density. Building half donuts is not an acceptable way to go. We will miss 50% of the population projected for downtown if projects continue to build half of the density allowed.

### Member Comments:

Jon Baker The two driveways and parking garage entrances makes total sense to him as the site is constrained. He is OK with the issue of splitting storage as it may actually help clean up parking spaces where people always want to store things like their shopping carts. Mail storage is a big time issue. In his building they just remodeled the lobby to accommodate packages. The overall design is terrific.

Pat Stark: Not in favor of two curb cuts. Would like to see the applicant try mitigating that condition. Regarding the trash room he would he encouraged the design team to try to relocate it. Parking for post office should be taken into account. On the east module he likes concept but thinks it is too simple with the cast stone base. He really worries about vinyl windows as they are problematic in an apartment use. He has no problem with the courtyard or with the other deviations. He is concerned about the project not achieving more density.

LC Cline: He has no problem with the deviations. His big criticism has to do with the FAR. He understands the rationale and the physical constraints but believes there are ways around to get a higher FAR. On Ash Street, the main gateway street he is tired of back lustered buildings. For such an important street he doesn't find a statement with the proposed building. He is very familiar with this particular block and feels there is a lack of visual interest almost everywhere. The façade facing east is really bland, stale and usual. He doesn't find the courtyard has an open appearance. It seems cordoned off, visually a tunnel to some area that you can visually access. Does not see the appeal on the courtyard. He feels there is a Lack of color and visual interest. Also the elevation character feels institutional. He emphasized this is his own subjective opinion of the project.



Claudia Escala:

Expressed disappointment with the project leaving so much FAR on the table and pointed out that other projects reviewed by the subcommittee and with similar site constraints have come up with out of the box solutions to make the projects feasible. Echoed Pat Stark's comments that eliminating the second driveway cut should be further explored. No problem with splitting storage. Trash opening to the street will definitely be an issue. In her personal experience she lives on a second floor right above the retail trash with a door to the exterior and when she is out on her balcony and retailers like Starbucks dump their trash a foul smell goes up to her balcony. She gets the design parti and thinks the project has enough color and good distinction between the different facades. Likes that the blank wall condition is addressed with the use of different planes as well as windows when possible. Finally the squiggly columns remind her of the Renaissance project. She loves them there but would discourage the team from repeating them again as they are pretty unique.

Meeting adjourned at 6:20pm.