



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

PRE-DESIGN
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE
DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY PLANNING COUNCIL

TUESDAY, JUNE 7, 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, Dan Wery, Pat Stark, Cindy Blair and Claudia Escala.
2. Public comments on non-agenda items. Gary Smith: The Port of San Diego is hosting an open house to showcase ideas for Seaport Village. The event will be held on June 13 & 14 from 3:00 to 7:00PM
3. No report from Chairperson

Action items:

4. **1122 4th Avenue** (commonly known as the California Theatre) (north side of C Street between Third and Fourth avenues) – Preliminary Design Review – Civic/Core Neighborhood of the Downtown Community Plan Area ~ Aaron Hollister

The project proposes the demolition of the existing California Theatre building and construction of a 40-story tower (approximately 422 feet tall) and is comprised of 282 units (22 affordable units, 260 market-rate apartments), approximately 11,000SF of ground-floor retail space, and 325 parking spaces. Three levels of subterranean parking and four levels of above-grade parking are proposed.

Design Issues and considerations:

Overall Massing

- Does the Project's overall mass, scale and heights constitute a compatible development with existing development and with the overall neighborhood context?

Historic Building Recreation

- Is the re-creation of the office tower portion of the California Theatre building desirable given that it creates a false sense of history or should a contemporary design be utilized?

Above-Grade Parking Screening

- Do the varying perforated and solid metal parking screening finishes offer an elegant design solution for the above-grade parking screening? Furthermore, are the large superimposed graphics on the perforated metal screening a desirable finish or should an architectural or artistic solution be utilized in lieu of the graphics?

Podium Level Design

- Does the highly visible westerly façade of the podium on Third Avenue provide adequate interest or does this façade need further enhancements? Are windows (particularly operable windows) a desirable above-grade parking screening design feature? Does the blank northerly wall of the podium provide adequate visual interest?

Tower Setbacks

- Is the tower design with no setbacks from Third Avenue and C Street a desirable design that is compatible with the surrounding built context?

Tower Dimension

- Are the tower dimensions, particularly the east-west tower dimension of 150 feet, compatible with the neighborhood?

Upper Tower

- Does the upper 20 percent of the tower achieve an articulated form and composition by means of architectural



techniques such as layering, material changes, fenestration pattern variation and/or physical step-backs? Furthermore, does the upper tower create a graceful transition to the sky?

Tower Lighting Features

- Are the proposed lighting features on the north and south elevations desirable design elements?

Street-Level Design

- Do the eastern and western ground-floor designs create an inviting pedestrian experience? Additionally, do the color-gradient awnings represent a desirable awning design?

Comprehensive Sign Plan

- Are the proposed signs complementary to, and in scale with, the buildings on which they are placed and consistent in size to others in the surrounding neighborhood?

Presentation by Architect Joe Martinez

The design principles are based on the authenticity of the site at this urban intersection. The project's intent is to capture the essence of the California Theatre and draw inspiration from the rhythm and energy captured in the performances that took place. Another key component is the creation of a public realm along the C Street corridor by proposing an urban venue with richness and vitality. In 1927 on opening night the building was in its maximum glory. Now in 2016 it needs help. The design parti includes the recreation of the 9 story historic office portion as well as the recreation of the 1927 marquee and blade sign of which some elements have been salvaged. The project has developed a language of architecture that speaks about performance. For example the proposed zig zag laser beam dances its way from street to sky while the blade sign captivates the intersection.

Along the East elevation the ground plane is devoted to the public realm. A layering of varying colors of glass and slab covers in different tones give character to this façade which includes a VIP balcony. Window relationships are based on mathematics and create a fine grain. The 40 foot width of the recreated historical façade is captured in the tower's south façade on the width of one of the glass elements. At the street wall a metal screen depicting a collage of images of the historic California Theatre conceals the above grade parking behind. There is a 5 foot drop on the site going from east to west. The awnings at ground level showing a gradient in color act as accessories similar to a pair of earrings and sun glasses. On the west elevation different colors of glass define the verticality of the tower. At ground level the parking graphic mesh wraps around the corner. The north elevation offers a neutral composition with an accent feature created by stainless steel twinkle lights inspired by historical images of the El Cortez Skyroom. The side of the project facing the C Street corridor proposes a revitalization with the introduction of a double row of trees to capture ambiance as well as rich and vibrant materials. The parking deviation has been thoroughly documented and discussed at length with the City of San Diego.

Members Questions

Q. Is the laser light a constant moving light? **A.** The lights will point down and bounce off the sides of the balconies. For example at 6:00pm the lights may make 6 pulses. They will be able to be programmed for holidays. They will not be on constantly. The Marriott marquee is a good example. **Q.** How will the montage of images be done? **A.** An artist will be involved in creating the montage as well as the overall screen. Even the construction of the California Theatre could be displayed. **Q.** Will lights at the garage shine through? **A.** The parking garage has a 42" pony wall on the perimeter. **Q.** With regards to the historic recreation what materials and finishes will be used? **A.** Similar materials to the historic building are proposed. You can see on the elevations a porcelain tile and the moldings will be GFRC. May be able to carve out some of the existing moldings and save them or other possibility will be to cast them on. **Q.** How will the proposed marquee be utilized? **A.** It will say "OVERTURE" displaying the project's name. **Q.** Will the project go through the Historical Resources Board (HRB)? **A.** Marie Burke Lia, the team's historic consultant addressed this question. She indicated the building is designated as historical in the local registry. A Site Development Permit will be required to allow for substantial alteration. Alternatives to the design to allow more of the historic building to be retained were studied and the cost for each one was determined. The project presented was determined to be the only economically viable option. The Site Development Permit application will go through the HRB who will have an advisory role. The Planning Commission will have the



final decision. Marie also briefly described each alternative included in the package and its economic feasibility. She disagrees with the staff report and does not believe the recreation of the tower will create a false sense of history. **Q.** Is the historic recreation consistent with the Historic building? **A.** Yes as close as possible. **Q.** Does the laser beam move? **A.** Yes. **Q.** How does the kitchen facility at the podium level work? **A.** It serves the terrace, the party room and the TV room. It can also be rented by the residents. **Q.** Will the edge of slab be covered or exposed? **A.** Both, certain levels will have it covered and others will be painted. **Q.** Does the project propose a curtainwall? **A.** No. **Q.** How will roof maintenance work? **A.** Similar to Hyatt Tower 2 where you do not see the equipment. **Q.** Will a monorail system be used? **A.** Maybe. **Q.** How is the garage exhausted? **A.** There are a lot of opportunities for placement of the exhaust with the headroom shown. **Q.** What is the function of the mezzanine? **A.** A restaurant/VIP dining area. **Q.** The entry arcade on 4th why is it so deep? **A.** The intent was to give as much lineal footage of retail on the street. **Q.** New urban problem, the arcade will be a pretty sheltered area and need security. **A.** Comment noted by applicant

Public Comments:

Received speaker slips from Jim Dawe in favor and Jim Bartell in favor but both indicated on the slips that they did not need to speak. Marie Burke Lia submitted a speaker slip in favor and expressed her views during the members questions section.

Bruce Coons with SOHO (Save Our Heritage Organization): Opposed to the project he noted that his Board unanimously rejected the proposed demolition and recreation of the historic California Theatre. In his opinion the arguments for financial feasibility do not meet the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The California Theatre is eligible for National Registry. It is a violation of the community plan to not save in place. The proposed project will also need removal of the employment overlay zone which is important for employment. He would like it if the tower could be preserved with a gap between the historic building and the new construction. He likes the proposed marquee. Sees overall major problems with restoration not meeting the Secretary of the Interiors standards. He believes the project is currently under a fishing expedition for entitlements.

Gary Smith-President of the Downtown Residents Group: His board has reviewed the project only for Pre Design. The removal of the overlay zone will come back later to DCPC. As far as any restrictions on the California sign the applicant should get an answer from Civic SD. The proposed project is surrounded by other buildings with no tops but questions whether the trees at the top are enough to define the top. Happy with garage treatment except for residences at 4C SquareLofts. The applicant should reexamine the internal circulation at street level. The loading dock at B1 may not work well. He sees double parking on Third Avenue. How things get to the retail spaces should be reviewed.

Member Comments:

Dan Wery: With respect to the overall massing likes the juxtaposition of the new and the old tower. Feels the lack of setbacks will create dark corridors along the streets. No objection to the proposed East/West tower dimension. On the historical façade the preference would be to keep the existing façade and the graphics on the north side. The use of signage should be limited and not be used for advertisement for the tenant. OK with podium level design as proposed. Regarding above-grade parking does not see screen at more than 50%. The upper tower top is flat and the trees don't do it. Undecided about the different glass colors.

LC Cline: The overall project massing looks good. No setbacks are acceptable. Sees no problem with the East/West tower dimension. Applauds the proposed way of recreating the old building. OK with the proposed podium design. Thanks the applicant for the screen as he likes the cultural context shown on the renderings. With regards to the upper tower design likes the differences of the balcony. Also likes the different colors for glass proposed as it will give the building a dimensional quality. Loves the novel idea of the laser light fixture and thinks a glassy façade along C Street will work.

Pat Stark: Comfortable with the overall massing. Concur with no setbacks. OK with respect to the historical recreation. Not a proponent of above-grade parking. The applicant needs to propose something else on the north elevation. Need some embellishment of the roof top. Likes multiple colors of glass. Consistent with other members on favoring the proposed signage and bringing back the marquee.

Cindy Blair: Agrees with the rest of the group with regards to the overall massing. OK with no setbacks. Is concerned with the NE corner of the garage as that part of the building seems foreign.



Claudia Escala: Not convinced about the overall massing and believes the project needs a better more defined top. It would feel better designed if it was proposed in a curtainwall system. She has reservations about the building as proposed in a window wall system. OK with no setbacks. The tower east/west dimension deviation will work. Not in favor of the historical recreation. Would like to see the historical building renovated in place. A great example of a successful renovation and contemporary addition is the Church Hill Hotel. Not in favor of the proposed lighting scheme as she believes the building should still work with the lights out. Disagrees with the use of different colors of glass. Mentioned The Mark project as an example of the use of two different glass colors. In her opinion that project would have looked the same if not better without that distinction. Concurs with Cindy that the NE corner seems out of place with the rest of the building. The parking screen is growing on her.

5. **Modera** San Diego (east side of 14th Street between K and L streets) – Preliminary Design Review – East Village Neighborhood of the Downtown Community Plan Area ~ James Alexander

In accordance with the bylaws Claudia Escala recused herself and Dan Wery chaired the meeting.

The proposed project is a seven story (approximately 85 feet tall) residential development consisting of approximately 384 units and approximately 464 parking spaces in three levels of below grade parking. The structure is a mid-rise podium building with two internal courtyards and articulated façades displaying different colors and materials.

Design Issues and considerations:

Block Modulation and Massing

- Is the Project appropriately modulated in the context of the block and the neighborhood and does it incorporate adequate strategies to break up the massing of the buildings?

Ground Floor Residential Uses

- How should the ground floor plan be re-designed in a way that meets the intent of the Fine Grain Overlay and provides multiple residential entryways that are properly articulated and adequately buffered?

Building Materials

- Does the Project use building materials to adequately modulate the building volume to meet the fine grain objective?
- How and where can upgraded materials be further utilized to more effectively articulate the building as a whole and specifically on the ground floor?

Blank Walls

- What strategies can be implemented to improve the overall aesthetic and provide more visual interest of the east elevation?

Building Rooftop

- Is the 42" parapet adequate in screening the mechanical units given their location and orderly groupings?

Presentation by Developer Mill Creek Residential

David Potter presented the company's history since its inception, its profile and similar projects in the Southern California region.

Presentation by Architect Carrier Johnson

The project proposes a unit mix of 4% studios at 564 SF, 55% one bedrooms at 671SF, 26 % 2 bedrooms at 937SF and 15% lofts at 1,136SF with an overall average unit size of 763SF. It is parked at 1 per bedroom.

The number of ground floor units have been increased to 13 in lieu of the 3 previously shown and represent 62% of the street facing ground floor units. From the fully glazed Lobby entry point at the corner of 14th & K there is a lot of porosity into an amenity area potentially a fitness facility and into one of the landscaped courtyards. At ground level there are two distinct courtyards one programmed with a swimming pool and spa and the other one oriented more towards lounging and various opportunities for gathering. Moving up the building the units are organized around the two courtyards and oriel windows are introduced at the street facing units. At the top level the building is articulated with the introduction of mezzanines for the loft units. Also two



amenity roof top areas occur at the main building corners of 14th & K and 14th & L. These are oriented to offer great urban views as well as bay views.

The project massing and design has been informed by its location in the East Village Neighborhood with its unique gritty character as well as large surrounding projects like the Central Library and Petco Park. The project responds to a large urban scale as well as a smaller human scale. It also addresses its immediate historic neighbor the Wonderbread Building by drawing cues for its warehouse inspired corner at 14th & L. The project also addresses its proximity to the MTS Bus Maintenance Yard in mitigating the view towards the industrial use as well as the noise coming from the facility.

Members Questions

Q. How many units are ground floor units? **A.** 13 versus the 3 previously shown. **Q.** Metal panel durability at ground level? **A.** It has been used on other projects downtown and should age well. **Q.** What type of plaster finish. **A.** Smooth sand finish. **Q.** Concrete proposed at ground level on materials board shows exposed aggregate. Is that the intent? **A.** The finish will be exposed concrete but still finalizing the texture. **Q.** On the east elevation larger panels with opaque glass will create a better atmosphere. This façade will be seen from many points. **A.** The intent for the clerestory windows is for someone in the corridor to look up to the sky. Lower windows would look down to the MTS bus yard. **Q.** Corner of 14th & K behind the glass area besides the lobby what other uses are proposed? It looks like a lot of the glass area is taken by leasing offices? **A.** The program at the lobby glazed area is lobby/leasing. Will pay attention when laying out leasing area to have more lobby use immediately adjacent to glazing. **Q.** Coming into the building as a resident the elevators seem extremely isolated. How would I get to my unit? **A.** The design team will further develop the placement of the elevators. **Q.** What is the area in the back? **A.** A pet relief area.

Public Comments:

Gary Smith: Thinks it is an attractive project with the oriel windows and the three separate buildings. On the other hand the project is just two square donuts squeezed together. Sun will not reach the courtyards. 40% of the units face a well. Ground floor units are flush on the street whether they are open or not they will be a disaster. Treo is an example of ground floor units that don't work.

Member Comments:

Pat Stark: Comfortable with the project massing. Not enough variety of ins and outs at ground level. The project feels very car oriented. The materials can be improved upon. Would like to see more upgraded materials. Need to see some additional treatment of the blank walls. The 42" parapet around the mechanical condenser units is not enough.

LC Cline: Likes the rhythm of the building. He likes especially the side facing the Wonderbread building. Examples of successful ground floor units typically minimize space inside the unit and allow a garden or a patio at the front. He likes the building materials. With respect to the blank walls some frosted glass or a mosaic would help enhance the façade. The 42" screen is not adequate, slightly higher will help conceal the mechanical units. Units designated as one bedroom units without a window directly on the façade will not get enough light. These units may not be as marketable.

Dan Wery: Thinks the project is boring. The donuts feel forced and the facades appear flat. Looks like a box with horizontal lines broken out. Would like to see more articulation. The ground floor units at grade don't work. Would be nice to try to engage with a deck on the side with the loading dock concept. Does not believe the courtyards will be attractive. Other buildings shown by Mill Creek in their presentation have more enhanced materials. Not a fan of the huge blank wall. Noise will be an issue coming from the condenser units adjacent to the roof uses.

Meeting adjourned.