



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

PRE-DESIGN  
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING  
OF THE  
DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY PLANNING COUNCIL

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2016  
5:15 PM

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

1. Roll Call at 5:15pm. Members in Attendance: Pat Stark, Jon Baker, Dan Wery, LC Cline and Claudia Escala.
2. Public comments on non-agenda items. None
3. No report from Chairperson
4. **Action items:**
  - **India & Beech** (Southwest corner of India and Beech streets) – Preliminary Design Review – Little Italy Neighborhood of the Downtown Community Plan Area ~ Aaron Hollister

In accordance with the bylaws Claudia Escala recused herself and Jon Baker acted as chair for this item.

The proposed project is a 28 story tower (approximately 334 feet tall) and is comprised of 150 dwelling units eight of which are planned as affordable and 142 market rate units, approximately 3.160SF of ground floor retail and approximately 155 automobile parking spaces within a fully automated parking system.

Design Issues and Considerations:

Overall Massing

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

Interior Property Line Tower Setbacks

- Does the Project represent a contextual development with the adjacent high-rise structures to the south and west such that a deviation can be granted for interior property line tower setbacks?

Maximum Tower Coverage

- Does the Project's maximum lot coverage of 63%, exceeding the maximum of 50%, represent a tower coverage figure appropriate for the Project site?

Tower Architecture

- Does the Project's tower design represent an interesting contemporary architectural expression? Furthermore does the upper 20% 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?

View Corridor Stepback

- Does the Project's protrusion into the Beech Street view corridor adversely affect views of the San Diego Bay beyond that affected by existing developments along the south side of Beech Street?

Podium Level Walls

- Do the blank wall areas of the southern and western elevations of the podium require additional treatment to provide adequate interest?

Above-Grade Parking Screening

- Does the proposed art installation on the street facing facades provide an attractive enhancement to the



above-grade parking area?

Rooftop Mechanical Screening

- Has the rooftop mechanical equipment been adequately screened given the height limits in this area?

Presentation by Applicant:

Sherm Harmer with Urban Housing Partners introduced the developer Richard Hannum with Forgeland.

Richard Hannum introduced himself as a San Francisco Architect and Developer. He shared how he met Frank Assaro and his brother John, long time owners of the site and favorite sons of Little Italy. He also noted that Forgeland Co. formed several years ago to look at solution models for urban housing. Their company is bringing technology to create fully sustainable housing solutions. He acknowledged the site is small with the existing Allegro residential project oriented outwards towards the street. He pointed out that the ESET building's fully glazed north wall is a shear wall. The proposed design addresses the ground floor as part of the retail fabric. It is very important how the building wraps the corner. A challenge was how to design an offset core to create enough space in the building that was not all corridor. Forge believes in inclusionary housing on all their projects. Also they are interested in how to involve families and for this reason have proposed some 3 bedroom units. The façades have undergone several reiterations. The design challenge was how to break the mass without heavily articulating it. Deliberately created off sets with balconies to create variety as the eye of the observer moves up. Solved the parking issue by going to City lift that has installed approximately. 50,000 automated stalls. The retail corner is envisioned as a restaurant. The mass concealed by the screen conceals 150 cars and falls just a couple feet above the view corridor with a glass railing. The above grade parking façade with no windows, no penetrations, no noise and no equipment created a big palette for John Assaro to create a piece of art inspired in the tuna fishing industry which is part of the history of the Little Italy neighborhood. The screen is envisioned in stainless steel perforated metal and is the expression of a local artist bringing the interpretation of his community. The parking will be 100 percent automated but the system will be valet

The main residential entry is located off India. An amenity space is planned at podium level above parking.

The Tower is setback and does not intrude into the view corridor just at the podium level. Staggered balconies provide a variety of units. With regards to the view corridor setback deviation the building directly to the east rises one floor with the view corridor blocking everybody further east. Allegro project also has an element taller than what is proposed. Need height to maintain the retail height and meet the parking requirement.

Members Questions

**Q.** The parking area perforated screen is it just artwork and is the parking fully enclosed? **A.** Yes and requires only light ventilation cause people do not occupy the space. It will require a fire exhaust through the roof. No fumes will be created so the cars are static. **Q** If there is 10% affordable housing are they automatically exempt of the parking requirement. **A.** Civic SD staff confirmed the parking exception chosen is viable for the deviation. **Q.** The Little Italy Association letter indicates a potential condo map. How will affordable be possible with a condo map? **A** If the project would turn to condominiums there is an entire methodology to turn maintain the affordable units. Sherm Harmer met with the San Diego Housing Commission and for example at Smart Corner they used a for sale program that could be used here to. **Q.** Automated mechanical parking how exactly does that work? **A.** Cars at the ground level are set on a lift that looks like a dolly which goes up to a carrier that transfers the car to a slot. The system is operated by a software that can be programmed to determine the time the car will need to be accessed. Without an attendant a resident would enter a code and leave the car. Also one of the carriers goes down to the trash room to bring the trash up for trash pick up **Q.** Can the parking be used for the restaurant? **A.** Not planned to serve a restaurant at this time **Q.** Are spaces like a honeycomb where the car gets placed in?. **A.** Vertical components are built in and a series of beams form the system where the carriers are slid into.

**Q.** Don't see a tower top?. **A.** The design intent is to create a subtle difference in the glazing. The architect understands the aesthetics of the requirements but did not want to introduce a different element. He wants the glass to be the building expression as the cleanest most sophisticated look. **Q.** Operable windows? **A.** Yes besides the sliders that occur in the balconies. Also air is serviced using negative pressure through the building risers, always getting fresh air to the units. **Q.** Is there a need for a power backup supply for the mechanical lift system? **A.** The project is designed with a 4 mega watt cogeneration facility and will export green power. Electricity that would drive



the garage would be a function of natural gas. **Q.** All curtain wall is the same? **A** Yes as the building goes up the building shifts and those shifts are sufficient to create differentiation. Looked at using variation in glass colors but became too decorative. **Q.** How is the artwork lit at night. **A.** With a 6mm LED strip than can be adjustable and programmable. The fixture can be dimmed down and have flexibility.

#### Public Comments

Sherm Harmer Submitted a speaker slip in favor but did not speak at this time

Gary Smith (President of the Downtown Residents Group): Neutral He thanked that someone is doing automated parking. Gary Smith would love to get the data of the first 2 years as he believes people will love using automated parking. The solution is perfect as long as the lights can be turned off. The project has earned the deviation not to go below grade. With regards to the tower's top articulation, the play of balconies for how tall this building is probably works. It is a good looking building with good bones and affordable housing. The technology the applicant is putting into the building will be a great example.

#### Member comments

Dan Wery Really likes the program and the technology to create a very sustainable building is very appealing. Huge fan of inclusionary housing. 8 units applied proportionately. Generally dislikes the above ground parking but in this case without the perforations and light he believes it can work as a solid sculpture. Not interested in lighting the screen too much. Comfortable with the height of the podium wall and the glass railing. Not a fan of the tower coverage expansion but understands the shear wall condition. Overall likes the clean plain look.

LC Cline Overall it is a well designed project . Appreciates the material selections. The stainless steel sculpture will add visually with the play of shadows. No problem with the mechanical enclosure or the setback. Concerned with the streetscape along India. Did not see much activation along the street.. A restaurant watching cars go by is not very attractive. Also curious about 3 bedroom units specific location. The down side is that they are west facing and face a blank wall. The applicant explained that the 3 bedrooms will have southwest views. LC believes the Allegro tower is very massive and the 3 bedrooms will be in the shadow of the Allegro existing project. Encourages applicant to look at a shadow study.

Pat Stark Everything is done very nicely. Excited about the art and seeing an automated garage. Typically concerned with views but understands this specific case with other buildings already blocking part of the view corridor.

Jon Baker. The way the applicant is handling the parking is probably the smartest solution. Hopes it becomes a trend. The subtlety of the façade with offsetting planes is fantastic. Every building does not need a hat. Sorry to see the pool is on the north but sees no other choice. Suggest improving on everything that is happening on the ground plane. Currently it does not look finished. Recommends bringing some of the use to the outdoors. The applicant noted that the Little Italy Association recommended extending the sidewalk if that is possible. Jon Baker recommends tying onto the Complete Streets Mobility Plan. No problem with any of the deviations.

- **320 West Cedar** (north side of Cedar Street between State and Union Streets) – Design Review and Associated Permits – Little Italy Neighborhood of the Downtown Community Plan Area ~ Christian Svensk

Claudia Escala returned to act as chair for this item.

The project consists of an 8 story, 87 foot tall residential building containing 35 dwelling units as well as a separate 4-story, 52 foot single family home on the east end of the lot. Approximately 1,438 SF of ground floor commercial space are planned.

#### Design Issues and considerations:

- Does the Project's overall mass, scale, and height constitute a compatible development with existing development and with the overall neighborhood context?
- Does the Project's architectural expression, particularly with large areas of blank, solid concrete on the north and west elevations, present a desirable, contemporary architectural expression as well as meet the intent of the Fine Grain Overlay District?
- Do the Project's deviations result in a superior design and/or do they provide acceptable relief in order to



achieve desired density goals given the small size of the Project's lot?

Presentation by Applicant Jonathan Seagal, Developer and Architect:

Jonathan pointed out that their company owns, construct and design all their buildings. He is trying to build on what they achieved with the Q building in Little Italy. He is also attempting to bring work force housing. He shared examples of his work and mentioned various awards including back to back national awards for his project Mr. Robinson. His work's intent is to create new architecture for cities. He is trying not to incorporate the car in the project. Believes the future of using less cars will come slowly to us. Other cities like Portland, San Francisco and Seattle have reduced parking requirements substantially. His project proposes 35 micro units, plus a unit 10' x 45' deep with a patio at the end to serve as a private single family residence for his son, Matthew. A part of the project he refers to as the cheese grater will be 7 to 8 stories high.

Members Questions:

**Q.** Interesting concept wants to see how it plays out. How are you going to articulate the blank wall? **A.** Sees no problem with blank concrete walls if done well. Jonathan's daughter may create a mural. The Q building is an example of a wall that does not look blank. **Q.** Putting a lot on one part of the lot why? **A.** His son will have a 4 story home. **Q.** Never seen unit plans like this is there really no door or wall for the restroom? **A.** Panels and drapery will create privacy. Bathroom area is shown without walls to meet ADA. **Q.** There are many old little buildings on the block. Any feedback from city if the project as proposed is a bad direction? **A.** The applicant has saved several historical properties when he saw there was true historical value to them, like the house that was part of the Q project. **Q.** Does the site encompass both houses? **A.** No just the one on the left, it used to be a brothel. The proposed project will remove a blighted property. **Q.** What will be the mechanical system for each unit? **A.** A mini split system. If it will be sitting on the balcony it will not be noticed. **Q.** If I allow and agree with a deviation what do I tell the next project? **A.** You tell them they need to provide affordable housing. **Q.** Have you legally vetted a no car zone for that area? **A.** The State of California allows you to use the incentive to eliminate the parking requirement. People are using less and less cars and people are not interested in dumping money on a car. They prefer to spend it on lifestyle. **Q.** How many units will be restricted? **A.** 4 units. **Q.** Reason for not recessing the garage door? **A.** It is for the single family residence.

Public Comments

Michael Smith -Opposed- He is a property owner and landlord at Union Street. He has yet to meet a person that does not own a car. For the proposed project we are talking probably of about 70 cars. Having no parking will create a nightmare for this area. People will be paying \$1,500 a month for a box. He rents his studio apartment for \$1050. Does not agree with notion of numbers, Sees it as a travesty and the community will take all the risk.

Denise Nelesen - Opposed- Feels upset with the fact that this plan has come about so quickly. Not aware of community input. Already has an issue with friends not finding a place to park. SD County is yet to be New York, San Francisco or Seattle. San Diego does not have proper public transportation. Millennials may want to use bikes but not the elderly people. Matthew at his house will have 2 parking spaces. Is he going to let his tenants borrow those? Feel this is a very arrogant proposal.

Randy Belcher Torres – Opposed – Representing the business community, for 18 years has owned and operated the Double Tree Hotel. 10,000 come every month to the Little Italy area. Concerned about blockage of view. Currently the hotel has contracts with airline pilots. And is concerned about noise during construction. Can't believe people will not be driving cars.

Frank Rogozienski – Opposed - Project is quite unique. Trusts the developer is going to get it done. The developer may have gotten awards for his other projects but he believes this one would get an onion. He may have good intentions. But does not want to lock or commit to a mural. Parking is a big deal. Credit has been applied not to one parking space but to the whole 9. This troubles him. Do the economics show that these could be rented on a long term basis? Will they be like an Air B&B?

Mike Biggs – Opposed - Not sure the math is working correctly on this project. He thinks one cannot divide a candy bar. If Matthew believes in providing no parking why does the project have 2 parking spaces for this private residence?

Jennifer Smith – Opposed - Lives in the vicinity of the project. Parking has gotten continually worse in this community. The project is crazy. Jennifer is representing several of his neighbors. Encourages to read Frank's letter. The historical



character of the homes is important. Every other project in his area has had the existing buildings rehabilitated. She does not believe the proposed project fits within the character of the neighborhood.

#### Member Comments

Jon Baker His criticism of the design is that it is a work in progress, He believes it will be properly detailed. He noted that part of good design is being a good neighbor. As the architect continues to refine his design he should think about addressing the neighbors' concerns. The economics are the responsibility of the applicant and he should make them work. Suggests that the architect look at providing some parking. Earlier in the year the subcommittee saw another project that had manipulated the design to provide 6 parking spaces. He encouraged the applicant to take a hard look at the project. He trusts the quality of the work of the Developer/Architect.

Pat Stark. Both LIA & LIRA are supporting the project, Recommended that the members of the public in attendance of the meeting engage with those two entities to express their concerns. Agrees with parking concern and struggles with suggesting approval and not having consistency with future projects. Pat has his personal opinion on parking. Does not have any architectural concerns. He understands there is a legitimate concern for parking in Little Italy. Amazed LIA & LIRA are supporting the project..

LC Cline Appreciates the community involvement and passionate ideas reacting to what they are seeing. Encourages people to look around and think about how some historic structures are being renovated and other more contemporary buildings are being inserted in the neighborhood. Parking is a huge problem around the City. Does not believe it is a huge responsibility of the developer. We are presented with a pretty dynamic project. A lot of more time needs to be spent with the developer. He is very familiar with that corner and how underutilized it is. Encourages the neighbors to think about what Little Italy can be.

Dan Wery He is very interested on this project moving forward. Has confidence that it will become more attractive. Would be more concerned if this project was larger but believes due to its size it can be treated and viewed as an experiment. Many cities are providing less parking and he believes it is the way of the future. It is a forward thinking project. This project will allow for people that need it to get a parking spot in the garages that are being provided in the vicinity. Little Italy is also doing an excellent job in converting spaces to optimize on street parking. In the long term he believes we are going to need less cars. Would encourage Jonathan to have a fallback position. In terms of the Air B&B comment that could happen with a commercial use but this is a residential building so that would be illegal. A mini hotel is not what this project is going to be. The project has the right size to try something like this.

Claudia Escala: She is in agreement with the concept that this project can be treated and evaluated as an experiment. She shared her personal experience as a resident of downtown relying less on a car and believes the people that will rent the micro unit will be people that don't want to have a car. She is concerned with no guest parking being provided and encourages the developer to see if they could provide at least two. As far as the architecture she is very familiar with the developer's work and believes his portfolio and body of work gives her confidence and should give the community the same confidence that the end result will be a top quality building.

Meeting adjourned at 7:16pm.