



Downtown Community Planning Council San Diego

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

PRE-DESIGN SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING OF THE DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY PLANNING COUNCIL

TUESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2017
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, Dan Wery, LC Cline and Claudia Escala.
2. Public comments on non-agenda items. None
3. No report from Chairperson
4. **Action items:**
 - **1122 4th Avenue** (commonly known as the California Theatre) (north side of C Street between Third and Fourth avenues) – Design Review - Centre City Development Permit/Site Development Permit/Centre City Planned Development Permit/Neighborhood Use Permit No. 2014-76 – 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 dwelling units (22 affordable units, 260 market rate units), approximately 10,900 SF of ground floor retail space and 325 parking spaces. Three levels of subterranean parking and four levels of above grade parking are proposed.

Presentation by Architect Joseph Martinez with Martinez & Cutri:

What does the project aspire to be? An Overture. Topics raised by DCPC Subcommittee as well as the Real Estate Subcommittee that have been addressed include:

- Replication of old façade: Presented a case study of Robert Stern's Harvard University Business School as an example of a good replica. The team has hired Heritage Architecture to assist them in obtaining all available information on the historic building as well as with the accuracy in the replication
- Fourth Ave. NE Corner at Street Level: A pinch point is created with the new building pointing to the building. Two options for this façade were presented, one fully glazed and the other one with bands of metal panel creating a contextual connection with the Wells Fargo Building across the street.
- Northern Blank Podium wall: New proposal includes a form liner with the potential of showing on the concrete wall silhouettes of trees or a natural landscape. The concept looks at capturing a fine grain expression.
- Articulation of the top 20% of the tower: The tower has been further articulated by introducing alternating balconies, quantities of colored glass have been reduced and more verticality has been given to the overall composition. An open sunshade at the top SW corner with a pair of trees also refine the top,
- Exposed concrete core: Since the previously shown twinkle stars and laser lights were not well received, spandrel glass has been added instead and the focus of the exposed core at the top is the Overture proposed signage.
- Total # of colored glazing: Number of colored glazing types has been reduced and more importantly the colors have been toned down by 50%



- **Tower Lighting:** The zig zag lighting element previously presented has been removed. A more sophisticated and subtle lighting concept includes lighting the slab edges with LEDs. Architect presented a series of examples from various cities in lighting has significantly changed the ambiance of the city.
- **C Street Corridor:** The project proposes to bring character back to C Street with the blade marquee as well as roof top lighting.
- **Window details to address automobile lights:** Since the height of the window sills on the 4th Ave. façade does not reach the required 42" the proposed solution is to add an L angle bolted to the wall to comply with the 42" requirement.
- **Small Façade along 4th Ave.:** A black box small theater is proposed for events like poetry reading. Includes a tiffany style window for event announcements.

Members Questions

Q. What is the materiality for the façade replication? **A.** EIFS for the overall façade and sheet metal for the blade sign. Team has retained Heritage Architecture to prepare measured drawings. **Q.** What is base material for south façade? **A.** Perforated metal and the intent is to retain a local artist to work on the design of the perforated screen. **Q.** Parking structure areas are they non mechanically ventilated? **A.** Correct it is intended to be naturally ventilated with operable windows to create a Venturi effect. **Q.** The reduction in glass coloration which created some nice contrast is it a result of overall input? **A.** Yes, previous comments were not favorable to the exuberance of the glass so architect is proposing a refined elegance. **Q.** For the building just to the north the banded area shows two options. Does applicant have a preference? **A.** Preference for the metal version. **Q.** Did window system change? **A.** No it remains the same. **Q.** What type of spandrel glass will be used at the core? **A.** It will try to be as similar as possible to the vision glass and a wall will be built behind it. **Q.** For the proposed architectural concrete will white cement be used? **A.** Yes architect had the pleasure of working on the Salk Institute expansion and knows exactly which concrete mix to specify.

Public Comments

Jim Bartell Submitted a speaker slip in favor but did not speak at this time

Bruce Coons with Save Our Heritage Organization – Opposed: Likes the tower setbacks on lot, the blade sign and the replica of the marquee but that is about it. Has problems with the historical building not being retained on site which cause him to oppose the project in general. Noted that SOHO got the building registered in the local historic registry. Parking is not an appropriate use for the previous office use. There is no justification for replication to create authenticity. Would like the original office tower retained. The historic facades should be retained and incorporated into the project. The project does not meet the underground parking requirement and he is not in support of lifting the Employment Overlay for this site. Thinks the proposal is only an exercise in getting the project entitled.

Gary Smith (President of the Downtown Residents Group) – In Favor: Pleased with changes. Still objects to above grade parking. Would like further development of the panel north of the garage entry. The overture sign is a nice addition and also likes the halo lighting. The project has come a long way.

Member comments

Dan Wery Concerned with signage and with the trend to use brightly internally lit letters. He questions who are the projects advertising to. Suggests controlling brightness, color and try to be more subtle. Understands the affordability issue but is torn about the old historic preservation. Agrees with LC Cline about liking more differentiation with the glass. Muting to 60% and still having 5 colors may not be as effective. Also concerned about artwork on C Street. Likes C Street promenade and hopes it creates vitality. The renderings remind him of a good example in San Jose. Cannot speak to the option of glass versus metal façade. What is the purpose of the large concrete portion of the façade at the venue space? Architect responded that it is concealing a stair enclosure coming to the ground.

LC Cline Torn about the preservation concept. He sees a lot of energy and effort put on the facades. Thinks the perforated metal screens are a great idea and could help inform people on why the site was so important. The recreation of the marquee needs to be done in an impeccable way. The architect noted that in 2001 the structural engineer Flores Lund did a structural analysis of the building slabs, columns and diaphragm and deemed the building unsafe.



Pat Stark OK with the façade replication. Likes the modifications. The quality of the concrete detailing and execution could make it better. Something is lost when the parking is pushed above grade. Has confidence in Heritage Architecture. Architect noted that one cannot tell at Symphony Towers that parking exists.

Claudia Escala Consistent with comment she made at the previous meeting she opposes the façade replication instead of a historic preservation and mentioned again the great execution of the Hotel Churchill preservation and renovation. Agrees with the reduction in glass colors and tone. Prefers the metal option instead of the glass option for the NE corner street façade. Emphasized the importance of detailing and execution. Is concerned with above grade parking going in the replication of the previous office building and the emptiness it may create. Afraid that façade could feel dead. Recognizes the substantial improvements made to the project.

- **Laurel Pacific Valero** (Southeast corner of Pacific Highway and Laurel Street) – Preliminary Design Review – Centre City Development Permit/Coastal Development Permit/Centre City Planned Development Permit/Conditional Use Permit No. 2016-30 – Little Italy Neighborhood of the Downtown Community Plan Area ~ Steve Bossi

The project proposes the construction of a one story, 3,110 SF retail space with an attached 900 SF automated car wash, a gas station with two 3-pump islands and 10 parking spaces.

Design Issues and considerations:

- Overall Design – Does the Project design exhibit qualities that are consistent with the intent of the CCPDO and the DDGs especially considering the highly visible nature of the site at an entryway to the Downtown community?
- Street Walls – Does the location of gas station pump islands along the street frontage and the location of the proposed retail building beyond the required 5-foot street wall setback compromise the street wall experience? Does the proposed site plan configuration enhance the public/private interface consistent with the DDGs?
- Material Quality – Are the proposed materials “durable” and “upgraded” consistent with the DDGs for building materials?
- Blank Walls – Does the distribution of marble veneer throughout the retail building and the large expanse of ribbed split-face concrete masonry units along the southern elevation result in blank wall conditions as defined in the DDGs for Blank Walls?
- Landscaping – Does the lack of landscaping treatment around the perimeter walls present a design issue? Would landscaping or other design changes soften the appearance of the perimeter wall and provide for a public/private interface consistent with the DDGs?
- Perimeter Wall – Does the design present a potential opportunity for security issues along California Street and for graffiti on the blank walls on the building and perimeter.

Presentation by Architect – Hagman & Associates:

The site is appropriate for its use and will be very convenient to have a gas station at that intersection. FAA has a restriction of 26 feet in height. The project abuts California Street and the trolley tracks. The architectural approach is based on the eclectic nature of the context and aims at being contemporary and energetic. The materials have been chosen based on durability. Has preference for a smooth plaster façade. The security around the perimeter can be addressed with a barrier composed of a stem wall clad in El Dorado stone and a decorative wrought iron fence. The narrow nature of the site prevents the addition of a landscape strip as it would interfere with vehicular circulation.

Members Questions:

Q. Can there be any windows on the California Street side? **A.** Not possible due to the walk in cooler locations. **Q.** Recessed window areas could there be planters at those locations. **A.** If planters are less than 3'-0" they typically get abandoned but can look at that. **Q.** Is green wall an option for the large expanse of blank wall? **A.** Yes will consider. **Q.** What other uses did the applicant consider for the site? **A.** No other use. Car Rental has been the prior use. **Q.**



What is the proposed glass since it is not shown on the materials board? **A.** It will be a tinted glass with a metal bronze frame. **Q.** Which option is the applicant leaning to? **A.** The smooth plaster option. **Q.** The existing building is black due to soot related to the proximity to the airport. Has applicant thought about this potential problem and long term maintenance of materials? **A.** Did not think of that.

Public Comments

Gary Smith – In favor of project but opposed to CUP. Makes perfect economic sense. Soot plus grease is a concern. Soot plus grease generated from airport is a concern. Dark brick is too expensive but applicant should look at a painted brick façade that allows graffiti to be washed off. Would like an accent at Pacific Highway & Laurel Street. Suggests ground level planter boxes. Discourages putting a tree at the corner due to potential collisions. Would like to see a rendering. The stone should be flat to be a lot easier to clean graffiti. The fence should also not invite graffiti.

Member Comments

Pat Stark – Concept makes sense for the area. Encourages combination of concrete masonry blocks. Would like to see a green wall.

LC Cline – Makes sense to put a convenience store. Tricky ingress and egress. Good use of space. There is a long history of the architecture of the automobile. For example mid-century Shell stations have recognizable features. The proposed project lacks style definition. A particular style should be chosen.

Dan Wery – Not a fan of the use and the architecture. Would rather keep the simple and attractive existing building. The proposal is doing the suburban thing and it does nothing for the site. Does not think tile is attractive. Needs something that relates to San Diego. Does not see anything that reflects that. Agrees with LC on his comment regarding the color scheme. Recommends looking at examples of unique gas stations. Also look at a possible California type shade structure. With the project being at a very prominent corner some consideration should be given to putting the convenience store at the corner and flip the gas station. Since the project is part of bike path identified on the Complete Streets mobility plan this should be taken into account. If the fuel station can be up to 26' high solar should also be considered.

Claudia Escala – Recommended that the architect take a step back and research examples of unique gas stations designs. The corner lot presents a great opportunity to create something unique and expressed concern over approving something that feels we have seen many times before and does not feel that it responds to the site and location. Architect should also look at inspiration from the proximity of the project to the airport. The project is presented as a contemporary project, yet the proposed fence with El Dorado stone and wrought iron fence feels really traditional so encourages the applicant to rethink the fence and also look at incorporating planters on the perimeter.

Meeting adjourned at 7:05pm.