



DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA DATE: NOVEMBER 4, 2015
TO: Chair McCormack and Members of the Design Review Committee
THRU: Leslie Aranda Roseberry, Planning Manager
FROM: Marissa Moshier, Associate Planner - Historic Preservation
SUBJECT: **DRC No. 4803-15 – Urth Caffè**

SUMMARY

The applicant proposes to rehabilitate a historic building in the Plaza Historic District for use as a restaurant.

RECOMMENDED ACTION – FINAL DETERMINATION

Staff requests that the DRC approve the proposed project subject to conditions of approval contained in the staff report and any conditions that the DRC determines appropriate to support the required findings.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Applicant/Owner: Urth Old Towne Development, LLC
Property Location: 100 W. Chapman Avenue
General Plan Designation: OTMIX-15
Zoning Classification: OTMU-15
Existing Development: 5,808 SF two-story commercial building
Property Size: 7,082 SF
Associated Applications: None
Previous DRC Review: June 17, 2015

PUBLIC NOTICE

No Public Notice was required for this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Categorical Exemption: The proposed project will be categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per State CEQA Guidelines 15303 (Class 3

– New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) and 15331 (Class 31 - Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation) because the project involves rehabilitation of an existing commercial structure for use as a restaurant. The project restores the exterior of a historic building in conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Secretary's Standards)* and with the Old Towne Design Standards. There is no environmental public review required for a Categorical Exemption.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to rehabilitate a historic commercial building in the Plaza Historic District for use as a restaurant. The major project components include:

- **Restoration of storefronts on ground floor.** The applicant proposes to remove the existing non-historic openings on the ground floor and replace them with a wood storefront system based on historic photographs. After the DRC's preliminary review on June 17, 2015, the applicant engaged Spectra Company, a historic preservation contractor, to continue exploratory testing of the building's historic materials. This testing revealed four round cast iron columns that had been covered up at the northeast corner of the building. The columns are in good condition and are intact, except for the capitals. The columns will be incorporated into the restored storefronts, and the capitals will be restored to match the historic photographs. Wood casing and mullions forming historic tripartite transoms were also revealed above the existing openings on the north elevation. The existing transoms will be repaired and re-glazed. New operable single-hung windows, reflecting the rhythm of the historic storefront glazing, will be hung below the transoms. The storefronts will have a wood bulkhead, reflecting the historic bulkhead in photographs.
- **Restoration of angled corner entrance.** A wood double door entrance with transom will be restored at the northeast corner of the building.
- **Restoration of window and door openings on east elevation.** The non-historic openings on the east elevation ground floor will be removed and replaced with a series of punched openings, in the historic configuration of windows and doors on this elevation. After the DRC's preliminary review, areas of plaster were removed in these locations to determine if the brick opening surrounds were still intact given the alterations to the ground floor. It appears that the original openings were infilled with brick to create new storefronts. The openings originally had decorative brick lintels that extended beyond the plane of the building wall. The lintels appear to have been shaved down to a flush surface with the wall, likely when the plaster was applied to the ground floor. Despite this, the decorative angled brick lintels are visible above the newer storefront openings. Spectra Company has reviewed the condition of the existing brick and proposes to repair the lintels to a weatherproof brick surface, flush with the building wall. The new openings will have cast stone sills to match the historic photographs.
- **Plaster and paint removal from historic brick.** The applicant is proposing to remove the plaster and paint from the historic brick on the north and east elevations. Spectra Company also evaluated the existing plaster and paint coatings to determine if removal is feasible.

Based on test patches of paint and plaster removal, Spectra recommends removal of the ground floor plaster and the second floor paint. The plaster finish on the south elevation on the alley will remain. The building will be repointed with appropriate mortar and the damaged bricks will be repaired or replaced to match.

- **Outdoor dining in the alley on south side of the building.** Improvements in the alley will include new concrete paving, lighting, and landscaping. The existing building openings will be retained, and one new double door entrance will be added at the east end of the alley to provide access to the restaurant interior. Based on the DRC's direction, the applicant eliminated the second floor window boxes and revised the proposed light fixtures.
- **Signage.** The applicant proposes to restore the historic parapet sign on the north elevation for use as restaurant signage. A blade sign, similar to the blade sign visible in historic photographs, is also proposed for the north elevation. Details of the parapet sign and blade sign have been provided for the DRC's review and comment. Final determination on the signage package is not requested at this meeting. The complete signage package will return for final DRC approval prior to issue of a certificate of occupancy.

EXISTING SITE

The existing site is developed with a 5,808 square foot, two-story commercial structure. The building is a contributor to the National Register of Historic Places-listed Plaza Historic District. The building was constructed in two phases. The first portion was a one-story building, consisting of a single storefront bay with angled entrance at the intersection of W. Chapman Avenue and the Plaza roundabout, constructed circa 1888 (See Attachment 3 – Historic Photographs). Circa 1908, the building was expanded with additional storefront bays on Chapman Avenue and a second story. During this period, the building appears to have had an unpainted brick exterior. By 1927, the building appears to have been painted. Since that time, the ground floor has been substantially altered by removing and infilling historic storefronts and windows openings. The upper story remains largely intact from its construction.

EXISTING AREA CONTEXT

The subject property is located in the southwest quadrant of the Plaza and is surrounded by primarily two-story buildings with retail stores and restaurants on the ground floors and offices or apartments on the upper floors. The area is characterized by pedestrian-oriented commercial storefronts, and surrounding properties are zoned Old Towne Mixed Use.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Orange Municipal Code (OMC) Section 17.10.070 establishes the general criteria the DRC should use when reviewing the project. This section states the following:

The project shall have an internally consistent, integrated design theme, which is reflected in the following elements:

1. **Architectural Features.**
 - a. The architectural features shall reflect a similar design style or period.

- b. Creative building elements and identifying features should be used to create a high quality project with visual interest and an architectural style.
2. **Landscape.**
 - a. The type, size and location of landscape materials shall support the project's overall design concept.
 - b. Landscaping shall not obstruct visibility of required addressing, nor shall it obstruct the vision of motorists or pedestrians in proximity to the site.
 - c. Landscape areas shall be provided in and around parking lots to break up the appearance of large expanses of hardscape.
 3. **Signage.** All signage shall be compatible with the building(s) design, scale, colors, materials and lighting.
 4. **Secondary Functional and Accessory Features.** Trash receptacles, storage and loading areas, transformers and mechanical equipment shall be screened in a manner, which is architecturally compatible with the principal building(s).

ANALYSIS/STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

Issue 1: Ground Floor Restoration

The proposed project will restore storefront bays on the north elevation, the angled entrance at the northeast corner, and smaller window and door openings on the east elevation at the ground floor. Based on DRC comments from the preliminary review on June 17, 2015, the applicant engaged a structural engineer specializing in historic buildings and a historic preservation contractor to do additional exploratory testing of the existing historic materials. Spectra Company uncovered four round cast iron storefront columns at the northeast corner, dating to the original 1888 building. The column capitals are missing. As recommended by the DRC, the proposed structural attachments retain the historic cast iron columns to the greatest extent feasible, while recreating the column capitals based on historic photographs.

Spectra Company also uncovered historic wood transom casing and mullions above the existing ground floor openings on the north elevation. The operable windows on the north elevation are designed to retain and function with this historic transom casing. To reflect the building's construction history, the proposed pattern and dimensions of the storefront glazing changes from the original 1888 portion of the building to the later 1908 portion. The storefront bulkhead follows a similar pattern based on historic photographs. In one location adjacent to the lobby entrance on the north elevation, a new storefront column will be added to accommodate the new double door opening with the existing transom casing. This column will incorporate a simplified version of the historic cast iron columns with a base, shaft and capital design and will have a smooth plaster finish to differentiate it from the historic columns.

Issue 2: Paint and Plaster Removal

The applicant proposes to remove the paint and plaster coatings on the building and uncover the historic unpainted brick. The building was constructed with an unpainted brick exterior and

appears to have been painted around the mid-1920s, after the building was expanded along Chapman Avenue and with a second story. Plaster was applied to the ground floor exterior when the storefront openings were changed, after 1950. Based on Spectra Company's evaluation of the brick condition, the plaster and paint coatings may be removed. The brick and mortar were found to be in average condition with the majority of the glaze intact in the areas of observation. The brick appears to be consistent in age, color, and size between the ground and second floor. After removal of the plaster and paint, areas of deteriorated bisque and glaze will be repaired. Where necessary, a water-repellant coating will be applied. The coating will be subject to staff review, including test patches on the building, prior to application. Should the plan for plaster and paint removal change substantially during construction due to unforeseen conditions, alternatives will return to the DRC for review and approval.

ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

None.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND REQUIRED FINDINGS

The courts define a "Finding" as a conclusion which describes the method of analysis decision makers utilize to make the final decision. A decision making body "makes a Finding," or draws a conclusion, through identifying evidence in the record (i.e., testimony, reports, environmental documents, etc.) and should not contain unsupported statements. The statements which support the Findings bridge the gap between the raw data and the ultimate decision, thereby showing the rational decision making process that took place. The "Findings" are, in essence, the ultimate conclusions which must be reached in order to approve (or recommend approval of) a project. The same holds true if denying a project; the decision making body must detail why it cannot make the Findings.

The Findings are applied as appropriate to each project. Based on the following Findings and statements in support of such Findings, staff recommends the DRC approve the project with recommended conditions.

1. *In the Old Towne Historic District, the proposed work conforms to the prescriptive standards and design criteria referenced and/or recommended by the DRC or other reviewing body for the project (OMC 17.10.070.F.1).*

The proposed project conforms with the Old Towne Design Standards for the Plaza Historic District. The project retains the existing historic materials and restores missing features using documentary and physical evidence from the building. The proposed restoration revives the historic building, incorporating uncovered historic materials to the greatest extent feasible. Where new materials are required, they will match the historic materials. The proposed color scheme and materials for the exterior of the building are in keeping with the colors customarily used in the Plaza Historic District and are complementary to the architectural style of the building.

2. *In any National Register Historic District, the proposed work complies with the Secretary of the Interior's standards and guidelines (OMC 17.10.07.F.2).*

Projects found to be in conformance with the Old Towne Design Standards are generally considered to be in conformance with the *Secretary's Standards*. In conformance with Standard 1, the new restaurant use is being inserted into a historic building with restoration of character-defining features. In conformance with Standard 5, the distinctive character of the historic building will be retained, and alterations to the building will not remove or negatively alter any historic materials or features of the building. In conformance with Standard 7, the approach to removing plaster and paint coatings on the building will use the gentlest means possible. The proposed project is in conformance with the *Secretary's Standards*.

3. *The project design upholds community aesthetics through the use of an internally consistent, integrated design theme and is consistent with all adopted specific plans, applicable design standards, and their required findings (OMC 17.10.07.F.3).*

The proposed work conforms to the prescriptive standards and design criteria set forth in the Old Towne Design Standards and *Secretary's Standards*, as described above.

4. *For infill residential development, as specified in the City of Orange Infill Residential Design Guidelines, the new structure(s) or addition are compatible with the scale, massing, orientation, and articulation of the surrounding development and will preserve or enhance existing neighborhood character (OMC 17.10.07.F.4).*

The *City of Orange Infill Residential Design Guidelines* do not apply to commercial projects; this finding does not apply.

CONDITIONS

The approval of this project is subject to the following conditions:

1. This project is approved as a precise plan. All work shall conform in substance and be maintained in general conformance with plans and exhibits labeled as Attachments 2 and 3, including modifications required by the conditions of approval, and as recommended for approval by the Design Review Committee. Any changes from the approved plans shall be subject to subsequent review and approval by the Design Review Committee.
2. The applicant agrees to indemnify, hold harmless, and defend the City, its officers, agents and employees from any and all liability or claims that may be brought against the City arising out of its approval of this permit, save and except that caused by the City's active negligence.
3. The signage shall return to the DRC for final review and approval prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
4. The location of all utilities is subject to review and final approval by the City's Public Works Department and Community Development Department, prior to issuance of a building permit.

5. Outdoor dining in the public right of way is subject to issuance of an Outdoor Dining Permit by the Community Development Director under the Outdoor Dining Ordinance (OMC Chapter 12.18).
6. Prior to issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall submit a construction timeline, including a timeline of all work in the public right of way, for review by the City's Public Works Department and Community Development Department.
7. Encroachment permits shall be obtained for all work in the public right of way.
8. A grading plan for the alley shall be submitted for review and approval by the Public Works Department.
9. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall submit a water improvement plan to the Water Division for proposed water mains, fire hydrants, domestic water services, fire suppression services, landscape services, and/or any other proposed improvements or relocations affecting the public water system appurtenances for review and approval. The improvement plan is required to be submitted directly to the Water Division located at 189 S. Water Street for review and approval. The applicant shall be responsible for the costs associated with the proposed improvements.
10. Construction permits shall be obtained for all future construction work, as required by the City of Orange, Community Development Department's Building Division. Failure to obtain the required building permits will be cause for revocation of this permit.
11. If not utilized, project approval expires twenty-four months from the approval date. Extensions of time may be granted in accordance with OMC Section 17.08.060. The Planning entitlements expire unless Building Permits are pulled within 2 years of the original approval.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Photographs
3. Historic Photographs
4. DPR Forms 523 for 100 W. Chapman Avenue
5. DRC Meeting Minutes from June 17, 2015
6. Spectra Company Report on Brick Restoration
7. Color and Materials (to be provided at DRC meeting)
8. Light Fixture Specifications
9. Plans (date stamped October 26, 2015)

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