



Design Review Subcommittee (DRSC)

Meeting Date: January 14, 2015

PLANNER: Adam Atamian, Associate Planner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "A. Atamian", written over a circular stamp.

SUBJECT: **Zoning Amendment 14-364/Site Plan Permit 14-365/Conditional Use Permit 14-366/Cultural Heritage Permit 14-367, Santiago Mixed Use,** a request to consider amending the zoning designation of a portion of the Neighborhood Commercial (NC 2) zone along South El Camino Real to a new Mixed Use (MU 3.2) zone, and consider a new mixed use development consisting of 7 residential units and 4,244 square feet of commercial space located at 1010 South El Camino Real.

BACKGROUND:

The DRSC reviewed this project on November 26. At that meeting, the DRSC provided recommendations to improve the project's compliance with the Design Guidelines. The DRSC requested that the project return for additional DRSC review prior to moving forward through the development review process. The staff report and draft minutes from that meeting are included as attachments 2 and 3, respectively.

Project Description

The applicant is proposing to amend the Zoning Ordinance to reflect the Centennial General Plan's new Mixed-Use (MU 3.2) land use designation for the subject zone to allow a new mixed-use development. The applicant proposes to apply the existing Mixed-Use (MU 3) development standards to certain sections of South El Camino Real located between Avenida Presidio and the I-5 freeway that changed General Plan land use designations from Neighborhood Commercial (NC 2) to MU 3.2.

The project consists of a tiered, four level building in the Spanish Colonial Revival style that contains 4,244 square feet of commercial space on the first and second stories with seven residential units that are located throughout the second, third, and fourth stories. Parking is located in a partial-basement level garage. Part of the partial-basement level garage counts as a first story and the other portion is considered a basement because it is more than 60% below grade. Although the building has four levels, for this reason it is three stories tall.

Why is DRSC Review Required?

A Zoning Amendment is required to change the subject zone to MU 3.2 and to apply the existing MU 3 development standards to this zone; a Cultural Heritage Permit is required

because the project is located within 300 feet of a historic property; a Conditional Use Permit is required to allow residential development in a Mixed-Use zone, and a Site Plan Permit is required for all new mixed-use developments. The DRSC is tasked to ensure development in the Architectural Overlay is compatible and harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood, and consistent with the City's Design Guidelines and does not negatively impact nearby historic structures. These applications will be reviewed by the Planning Commission with a recommendation made to the City Council, the final review authority for projects involving a Zoning Amendment.

Site Data

The property is a 12,930 square foot, vacant lot located on the northwest corner of the South El Camino Real and Avenida Santiago intersection. The natural topography of the lot slopes down away from South El Camino Real. The property was previously graded for use as a gas station. To accommodate that use a 10 foot tall retaining wall was installed and the lot was filled to bring the grade of the entire lot to that of South El Camino Real. There is a 20-foot wide, City-owned alley abutting the property on the west side, which runs parallel to South El Camino Real.

The surrounding land uses include a two-story multifamily residential structure to the west, separated from the site by the alley. To the north is a two-story, multi-tenant commercial building which appears as a one-story building from South El Camino Real. Across Avenida Santiago is another two-story commercial building, which also appears as a one-story building from South El Camino Real. To the east, across South El Camino Real, are one-story commercial buildings.

The project is located within 300 feet of two historic properties located at 104 Paseo de Cristobal and 105 Avenida Barcelona. The project will be visible from both historic properties because both have direct lines of sight to the subject lot.

ANALYSIS:

In 2014, the City Council adopted a new General Plan which provided a new land use designation for the subject property, and most others on the west side of North El Camino Real between Avenida Presidio and the I-5 freeway. This re-designation from neighborhood commercial to mixed-use, once codified through the pending Zoning Ordinance update or the applicant's zoning amendment, effectively up-zones this area to increase the floor area ratio (FAR) from .35 to 1.5 for mixed-use projects.

The General Plan contains very basic descriptions of the new development standards that apply to the new MU 3.2 zone, such as those that apply to height limits and story limits. These standards are not specific enough to provide staff with a clear understanding of the final intent of the Zoning Ordinance. To resolve these ambiguities, staff will be requesting clarification from the City Council regarding the appropriate standards for this new land use designation at their January 20, 2015 meeting.

At the outcome of the City Council meeting, staff should have a clearer understanding of the intended Zoning Ordinance development standards that will apply to this project and a better ability to review the appropriateness of the proposed development.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the project design be discussed after the January 20th City Council meeting to determine what, if any, project modifications may be required to comply with the direction provided by the City Council. The applicant requests DRSC input ahead of the January 20th City Council meeting.

Attachments:

1. Location Map
2. DRSC Staff Report, dated November 26, 2014
3. Draft DRSC Meeting Minutes, dated November 26, 2014



LOCATION MAP

ZA 14-364/SPP 14-365/CUP 14-366/CHP 14-367, Santiago Mixed Use
1010 South El Camino Real



Historic Properties within 300 feet of Subject Property

No scale 



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The surrounding land uses include a two-story multifamily residential structure to the west, separated from the site by the alley. To the north is a two-story, multi-tenant commercial building which appears as a one-story building from South El Camino Real. Across Avenida Santiago is another two-story commercial building, which also appears as a one-story building from South El Camino Real. To the east, across South El Camino Real, are one-story commercial buildings.

The project is located within 300 feet of two historic properties located at 104 Paseo de Cristobal and 105 Avenida Barcelona. The project will be visible from both historic properties because both have direct lines of sight to the subject lot.

ANALYSIS:

As noted previously, the applicant proposes to amend the Zoning Ordinance to apply the MU 3 development standards to the new MU 3.2 zone. However, the appropriate development standards for the new MU 3.2 zone have not yet been vetted through the Zoning Ordinance update process and some standards of the MU 3 zone may not be appropriate for this area and community. The Zoning Ordinance update process, which will identify the appropriate standards for the area, is a lengthy process requiring many meetings that involve property owner area input, detailed staff analysis, Planning Commission review and recommendation, and City Council action. Staff has provided the applicant the option of waiting for staff to update the Zoning Ordinance to be consistent with the General Plan but they chose to proceed with the Zoning Amendment.

Consistency with the General Plan Urban Design Element and the Design Guidelines

Due to the nature of this project as a Zoning Amendment to allow a new mixed-use development on a lot currently zoned NC 2, there are many design considerations that apply to this project. This section of the report will focus on staff's major concerns regarding the scale and mass of the proposed building. For additional detail, staff is providing a more comprehensive analysis of this project's compliance with the Design Guidelines, included as Attachment 2.

The Urban Design Element and the Design Guidelines require:

“Building design shall consider the site’s natural topography, public view corridors and adjacent building profiles so that canyonization is avoided.”
General Plan UD-5.14

“Develop compatible relationships between the topography, building placement, and existing open spaces of neighboring properties.” Design Guidelines. General Site Design Objectives II.A.

The project involves substantial grading for a basement level garage that could offer the opportunity for the development to demonstrate the natural slope of the property. However, the proposed project does not follow the natural topography of the site. From front to back, the building’s roof line follows a generally horizontal pattern.

“All development proposals should demonstrate sensitivity to the contextual influences of adjacent properties and the neighborhood.” Design Guidelines. Relationship to Neighboring Development II.B.

Adjacent properties include a two-story duplex to the west, two-story commercial buildings to the north and south, and a one-story commercial building to the east. None of these properties are over one-story tall from the grade of South El Camino Real. While the building appears as a tall two-story structure from South El Camino Real, the building’s rear façade shows four levels. The proposed development does not provide much massing relief to the properties to the west and north due to their proximity and the bulk of the proposed structure oriented toward them.

“We require that the scale and massing of development be compatible with its surroundings and with the General Plan....” General Plan UD-5.10

“Design buildings to be compatible in scale, mass and form with adjacent structures and the pattern of the neighborhood.” Design Guidelines. Relationship to Neighboring Development II.B.3

The pattern of the neighborhood is relatively consistent in terms of scale and mass. As noted above, the adjacent properties are all one-story tall from South El Camino Real. While there are taller commercial buildings in the area, such as the Ralph’s building at 901 South El Camino Real, within the context of this portion of the neighborhood, this proposed structure appears out of scale with the pattern of development. The proposed project is two levels taller than the adjacent two-story residential structure to the west and this difference in scale has the potential to completely overwhelm nearby residences.

“Three-Story Development. In the Pedestrian Overlay and on El Camino Real, three-story commercial and mixed-use developments shall include usable open areas at the ground level to create interest, areas for outdoor dining, seating or

displays and to help reduce the apparent scale and mass of second and third building stories.” General Plan UD-5.02

The project provides a narrow entry courtyard with access from South El Camino Real. However, this courtyard is surrounded by two-story portions of the buildings and is oriented more for internal access than usable open area. Additionally, the rear façade is the most massive section of the structure, and would greatly benefit from additional usable open space to help reduce the apparent mass in that area.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In addition to the comments included in Attachment 2, staff has the following general recommendations to improve the design of the project:

1. The project should be modified so that the building steps down to follow the natural topography. The building maintains a relatively consistent height from front to back.
2. The project should be modified to reduce the bulk at the rear of the property, the portion that is adjacent to the multifamily residential structure to the west. The building is substantially out of scale with the residential neighborhood. Reducing the impact of the higher floors will minimize this scale difference.
3. The project should incorporate bicycle parking facilities to accommodate a reasonable amount of the building’s anticipated users.
4. Public art, and additional ornamental detail, should be incorporated into the project on the building facades facing South El Camino Real and Avenida Santiago.
5. The project should provide more of a sense of openness in terms of providing outdoor spaces. When viewed as a whole, the building consumes the lot. From the street facades, the building provides a landscaped corner and the entry courtyard as the only outdoor spaces. The landscaped corner is not functionally inviting as a space for pedestrians, and the entry courtyard lacks the sun exposure to achieve the same goal. Staff recommends that the entry courtyard be expanded to allow more direct sunlight and to provide additional spaces for pedestrian uses that have a connection to the street. Staff also recommends that the project provide additional usable open area on the rear façade.
6. In conjunction with recommendation #1, the project should provide more roof articulation to break up the monolithic appearance of the building. The roof should be broken up into smaller elements that tend to step down with the original topography of the site.

Staff seeks the DRSC’s comments and welcomes any additional recommendations.

Attachments:

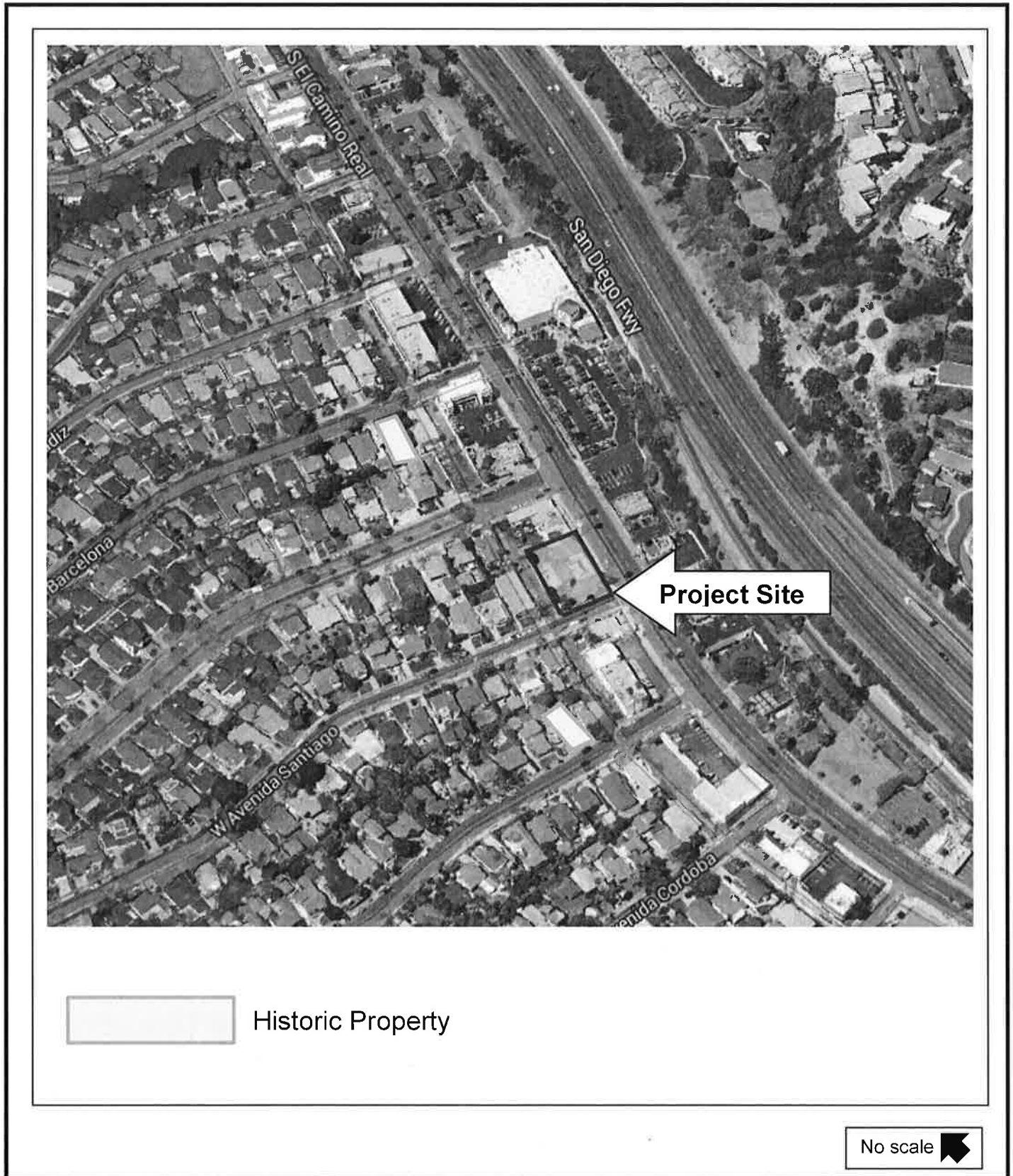
1. Location Map
2. Design Guidelines Consistency Matrix
3. Photos of Existing Conditions



LOCATION MAP

ATTACHMENT 1

ZA 14-364/SPP 14-365/CUP 14-366/CHP 14-367, Santiago Mixed Use
1010 South El Camino Real

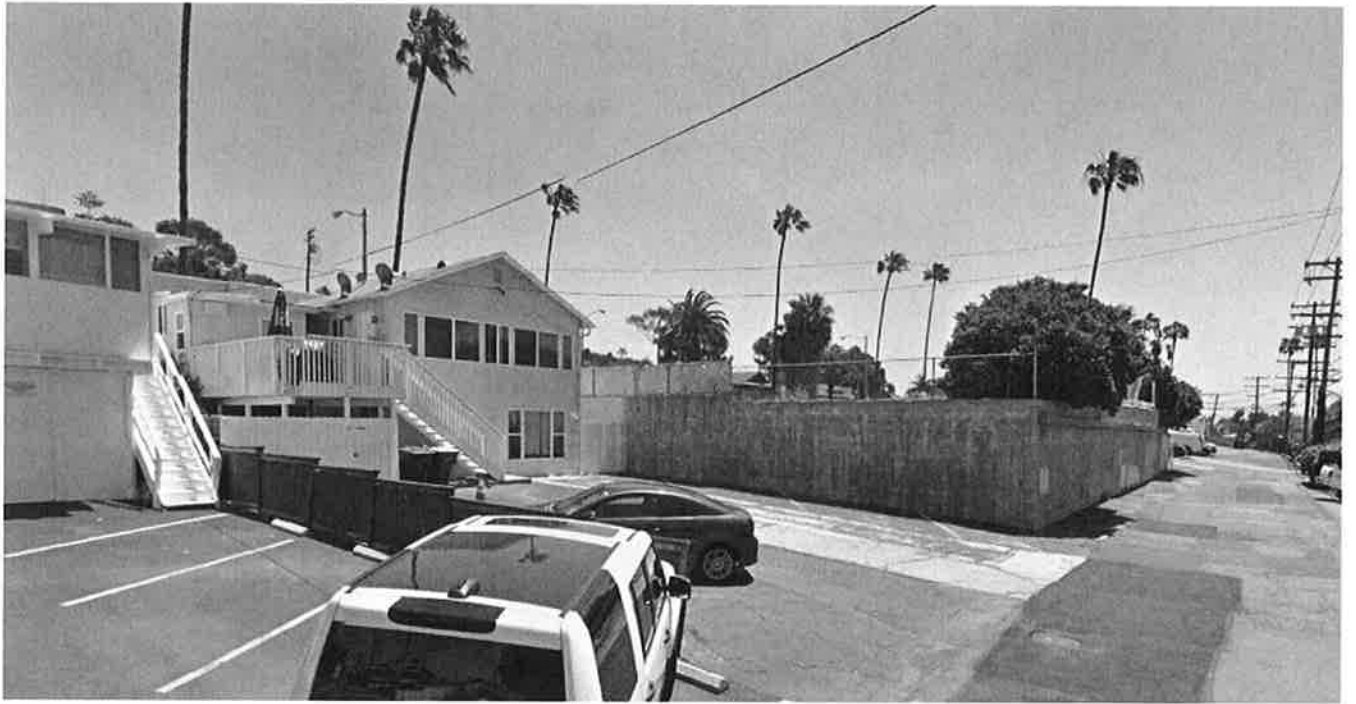


Existing Site Photos



Historic Property (104 Paseo de Cristobal)





**CITY OF SAN CLEMENTE
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
DESIGN REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 26, 2014**

ATTACHMENT 3

Subcommittee Members Present: Bart Crandell, Julia Darden and Jim Ruehlin

Staff Present:

1. MINUTES

Minutes from the November 12, 2014

2. ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM

A. Zoning Amendment 14-364/Site Plan Permit 14-365/Conditional Use Permit 14-366/Cultural Heritage Permit 14-367, Santiago Mixed Use (Atamian)

A request to consider amending the zoning designation of a portion of the Neighborhood Commercial (NC 2) zone along South El Camino Real to a new Mixed Use (MU 3.1) zone, and consider a new mixed use development consisting of 7 residential units and 4,244 square feet of commercial space located at 1010 South El Camino Real.

Associate Planner Adam Atamian summarized the staff report.

Subcommittee Chair Crandell asked staff for clarification regarding the usable outdoor area required for each residential unit, referencing the requirements for multi-family residential development. Mr. Atamian responded that the Mixed-Use zoning standards require a certain amount of usable outdoor area, but not a specific amount assigned to each unit.

Subcommittee Member Darden asked staff for clarification on their recommendation regarding the front courtyard. Mr. Atamian responded that the front courtyard is quite narrow and creates a canyon-like effect. Additionally, the courtyard serves the purpose of a pathway to and from the parking garage, the street, and the commercial units than as a usable outdoor space as discussed in the General Plan.

Subcommittee Chair Crandell asked for staff clarification of how height is calculated for this property, whether it is based on the original topography of the site, or the existing built-up grade. Mr. Atamian responded that for this part of the City, the height is calculated from the original grade, which would follow the slope of Avenida Santiago. He stated that the existing grade that results from the back-filled retaining wall at the rear of the

property does not provide any opportunity for additional height over the natural topography.

Project architect Michael Luna presented the project, and responded to staff's comments using project illustrations.

Subcommittee Member Ruehlin asked Mr. Luna how high the top of the arches at the rear of the parking garage are from the grade of the alley. Mr. Luna responded that they are approximately 14 feet from the grade of the alley.

Subcommittee Chair Crandell and Subcommittee member Darden asked about the building setback dimensions. Mr. Luna and the property owner and developer, Nick Buchanan, responded, noting multiple setbacks throughout the project, for multiple stories. Mr. Luna continued, discussing how the project follows the topography, keeping two stories along El Camino Real.

Subcommittee Chair Crandell and Subcommittee Member Ruehlin discussed the General Plan update process and how the goal was to limit development to two stories on the El Camino real street frontage and to provide an allowance for three stories that is dependent on topography that would allow a third story tucked underneath the two stories situated on the street.

Mr. Buchanan stated that he has familiarized himself with the new General Plan and has reviewed many City Council meeting videos and is unaware of any language that describes a two-story height limit along El Camino Real. He asked if the DRSC was aware of any language, outside of those sections of the General Plan that discuss the Downtown/ T-Zone area, where the mixed-use zones are limited to two stories along El Camino Real. Subcommittee Chair Crandell stated that he was not aware of any, but that the proposed project appears to comply with that understanding.

In response to discussion about staff's comments regarding the number of stories and the massing at the rear portion of the project, Mr. Atamian stated that the project is technically no more than a three-story building at any point in the project. However, the visual impact of the structure is that of a four level building that increases in height toward the rear of the property. Using images of the project, Mr. Atamian demonstrated how the top story of the project is stepped up from the top commercial floor of the project that fronts El Camino Real. Mr. Luna stated that the slight increase in the height of the roof line as it carries back from the El Camino Real frontage is inconsequential as the front of the building will set the ambiance on the street.

The DRSC asked whether this project complies with the minimum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for the commercial portion of the project. Mr. Atamian stated that the General Plan does not specify a minimum FAR for the new MU 3.2 zone, but that based on the existing MU 3 zone, it does not. The minimum FAR for the commercial portion of a mixed-use project in the existing MU 3 zone is .35, the current project is at .33, approximately 260 square feet short.

The project landscape architect, Richard Price, discussed the site landscaping and courtyard designs. He stated that the north side of buildings tend to be dark because of the reduced amount of sunlight exposure, but that the project is design in a way to maximize the landscaping that will survive while offering usable outdoor areas. Subcommittee Chair Crandell noted that he agrees with staff regarding the functionality of the proposed courtyard in that it does not serve much public purpose, only as a path to the parking area and one commercial unit entrance.

Mr. Buchanan spoke about the history of the site, specifically that it is an abandoned gas station that has sat vacant since 1987. He then proceeded to discuss the project and how it is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, utilizing a PowerPoint presentation.

Subcommittee Member Darden discussed her impressions of the project and responded to comments made earlier. She stated that she liked much of the architectural treatment and the landscaping. She also noted that the pedestrian portion of the project fronting El Camino Real could be enhanced to be more inviting at the street. She specifically noted that the courtyard could be opened more to provide more connection to the street, less of a surprise to those walking into it. She is concerned about the shallow second story setback from El Camino Real. For the rear portion of the project, Subcommittee Member Darden agreed with the staff report description of the project and how it "consumes the lot." She stated that the project should incorporate measures that reduce the overall building impact such as increased setbacks. She noted that while there is a difference in scale between mixed-use zones and residential zones, development should be tailored to not overwhelm the abutting residential zone. She also agreed with staff's recommendation to revise the roof line to more closely follow the natural topography of the site.

Subcommittee Member Ruehlin stated that he liked the arches at the rear of the property and how they helped reduce the impact of the rear façade on the adjacent property. Additionally, he noted that the landscaping located along the alley also softens the impact. He asked for clarification from staff regarding the building's impact to adjacent properties. Mr. Atamian stated that staff's concern is mainly about the rear portion of the

structure and its impact to the single-family residential zone to the west. Mr. Atamian noted that staff's main concerns regarding the portion of the project fronting El Camino Real is primarily about the pedestrian orientation. Mr. Luna asked whether this property was located in a Pedestrian Overlay. Mr. Atamian stated that it was not, but that the project is proposed to utilize the reduced parking ratio of the MU 3 zone, which is provided to pedestrian oriented districts.

Subcommittee Member Ruehlin agreed with Subcommittee Member Darden's comments regarding the front portion of the project in terms of the courtyard and the pedestrian orientation. He went on to state that while this is the type of project that the General Plan Advisory Committee intended to promote in this area, this particular project appears to present a potentially looming development. He noted that the project does incorporate measures to reduce the massing impacts of the projects, and he is not sure that additional upper story setbacks would provide the type of relief necessary to really reduce the looming effects of a structure this massive. He stated that he is not supportive of setting a precedent of projects that increase the canyonization along the alley.

Mr. Buchanan discussed the difficulty of building to the maximum allowable development standards while trying to meet the Design Guidelines. Mr. Luna also spoke about the difficulty of trying to hide third stories, and how this project has incorporated sizeable setbacks that the plan elevations do not present adequately.

Subcommittee Chair Crandell commended staff on the job of reviewing a project without the use of clearly established development standards. He thanked the applicants for their honesty regarding the project and their concerns regarding the pedestrian frontage and mass. Subcommittee Chair Crandell asked the other Subcommittee Members if they had any concerns regarding this project's impact to nearby historic resources. Subcommittee Member Darden stated that she finds that the project's mass has the potential to impact the historic resources and that the project's mass should be reduced. Subcommittee Member Ruehlin stated that as part of a commercial area, he does not see the potential for a negative impact. Subcommittee Chair Crandell agreed with Subcommittee Member Ruehlin.

Subcommittee Chair Crandell stated that he was generally supportive of the project as it is representative of the type of development intended for this area. He noted that he agrees with staff's concern about the narrowness and usefulness of the front courtyard as a pedestrian space.

The DRSC and staff discussed the potential process for the proposed Zoning Amendment in terms of how it could affect the design of the project and whether the project would need to be brought back to the DRSC for

additional review. Mr. Atamian stated that based on the proposed development standards and the level of support for them, there are potential design changes that could occur, and in that event, this project would need to be reviewed again by the DRSC to ensure compliance with the Design Guidelines.

Subcommittee Chair Crandell discussed staff's recommendations with the applicants. They were in agreement with most of the comments, which they felt they could incorporate into the project without too much difficulty. However, they were not in agreement regarding the comments to further step the building to follow the natural topography of the site, nor the recommendation to further articulate the roof for the same purpose. All were in agreement that public art was not required, and the DRSC stated that they would rather see good architecture than forced public art.

The DRSC was not unanimous regarding the scale and massing of the project or the suggestions to reduce the scale of the project either through stepping the building down more or increasing the setbacks of the higher stories of the project to improve the building's compatibility with the adjacent residential structure and single-family residential zone. The DRSC did indicate that the project should be reviewed again prior to proceeding to the Planning Commission level.

Mr. Buchanan asked the DRSC for some clarifications on design comments discussed previously. When discussing the massing impacts of project, the DRSC and staff discussed how additional perspective renderings and simulations could help to better illustrate how this project will be perceived within the context of the surrounding neighborhood. The DRSC expressed their appreciation for the proposal to build this type of project in this area, and thanked the applicants for working with staff through this process.

B. Cultural Heritage Permit 14-107, McIlvian Addition (Ciampa)

A request to consider a first and second story addition to a historic house located at 209 Avenida La Cuesta.

Associate Planner John Ciampa summarized the staff report.

Subcommittee Chair Crandell asked if the Minor Exception Permit (MEP) is supported by staff and what are their reasoning's to allow a reduced setback for side yard of the house. Staff responded stating that the modified project reduced the addition to a single story to improve the compatibility and the massing of the project with the historic house. Staff's position was that this reduction of one foot to the side yard setback was acceptable because it pulls the addition further from the original portion of the house and there