

**CITY OF SAN CLEMENTE
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
DESIGN REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE
JANUARY 14, 2015**

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

Staff Present: Jim Pechous, Cliff Jones, Adam Atamian and John Ciampa

1. MINUTES

Minutes from November 26, 2014 (approved)

Minutes from December 10, 2014 (to be submitted with January 28, 2015 packet)

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.

Mr. Atamian discussed some concerns raised by the applicants regarding the description of the number of stories in the project. Mr. Atamian stated that the staff report clearly indicates that the building is a three story building, though it consists of four separate levels.

The DRSC, staff, and the applicants discussed the pending Zoning Ordinance update, and the applicant's potential options regarding the proposed zoning amendment application and how they could affect the design of the project should the project's proposed development standards not be approved. The DRSC decided to review the project based on the application and the proposed plans

Nick Buchanan, applicant, stated that he had submitted a letter to Mr. Atamian describing his dissatisfaction with staff's writing of the DRSC meeting minutes of January 14, 2015. He said that the minutes reflected more of the negative aspects of the project, instead of presenting both sides of the discussion that transpired. Mr. Atamian replied, noting that projects are brought to the DRSC because staff determines that particular aspects

of a project may not be consistent with the City's Design Guidelines. He went on to explain that the minutes are a transcription of the relevant discussions of the DRSC relating to how project's may or may not be consistent with these guidelines, and not a verbatim dictation of every comment or response made during the meeting.

Michael Luna, the project's architect, provided an overview of the revisions made to the project using perspective renderings of the project. He discussed how the upper story setbacks have been increased to provide a 10 foot story step-back on the second story (third level), and a 20 foot story step-back for the third story (fourth level). Subcommittee Member Darden asked for clarification of how much additional step-back was being provided in this set of plans over what was originally reviewed. Mr. Luna stated that the second story was stepped back an additional two to three feet, and the third story was stepped back an addition three to four feet. Mr. Luna also noted that the alley frontage includes a three foot wide landscaped planter, instead of placing the building right along the rear property line. Subcommittee Chair Crandell asked if the material of the planter wall would stand up to the alley traffic. Mr. Luna stated that he felt it would, but that there were options to ease maintenance concerns, such as painting the wall a terra cotta color.

Subcommittee Chair Crandell asked about the choice to provide a long, uninterrupted stucco wall along the second story (third level) deck, and if there were opportunities to break up the unrelieved plane. Mr. Luna, stated that the purpose of this wall, on the lower of the two deck levels, was to provide privacy for the residents. Mr. Luna stated that the project could incorporate additional detail along the wall to break up the horizontality of the wall. Subcommittee Chair Crandell asked about the arched openings of the commercial parking area, and whether there would be any architectural value in providing some type of visual screening to block views of the cars. Mr. Luna and Mr. Buchanan stated that the openings are there to provide required ventilation into the parking area, and that the parking level was high enough off the grade of the alley that direct views into the parking garage would not result in much visibility of the vehicles. Additionally, they stated that they would prefer not to obstruct views out of the commercial parking level because they would like to retain the ocean view for their commercial customers and allow as much light into the parking area as possible.

The DRSC members discussed the interior lighting in the commercial parking area, and stated that the lighting plan should direct light away from neighboring properties as much as possible. Mr. Luna discussed the idea of installing a roll-down gate to allow the lights to be turned off at night. Subcommittee Chair Crandell discussed the possibility to use shared

parking to allow the residents to utilize the commercial parking at night, should parking be an issue.

Mr. Luna then discussed the modifications proposed for the front courtyard along South El Camino Real. He stated that the stairs had been moved to open up the entry, the second story walkway had been revised to provide a more open experience, and a portion of the roof had been pulled back to allow more sun light to penetrate the space. The DRSC discussed the changes, noting that the modifications help the project establish a better connection to the pedestrian frontage. Mr. Luna also reviewed the corner patio area, and how it has been enlarged to provide additional area for usable outdoor space. Subcommittee Chair Crandell asked about the potential location of the fire riser, and Mr. Luna stated that it would most likely be located along the Avenida Santiago property line toward the rear of the corner patio area.

Subcommittee Member Darden asked if the project had been able to provide any additional step-back on the second story of the commercial façade along South El Camino Real. Mr. Luna stated that the second story step-back was increased by one foot to 5 feet, five inches.

Subcommittee Member Darden then asked for clarification on the purpose of this review, specifically asking what the applicant hoped to receive. Mr. Luna stated that they are looking to find out if the project is moving in the right direction aesthetically, and what, if any, architectural concerns remain. Mr. Buchanan stated that he is applying for a zoning amendment that will provide the development standards necessary to allow the proposed structure, and is asked the DRSC to review the project's design based on the proposed zoning amendment.

The DRSC then provided individual comments to the applicant and staff. Subcommittee Chair Crandell stated that he appreciates that the applicant did not propose a structure that maximizes the building based on the potential development standards. He went on to ask for clarification about the height of the story with the commercial parking off of Avenida Santiago. Mr. Luna stated that the plate height for that level is about 12 feet, and is due to the floor level being lowered to allow access to that parking area from Avenida Santiago which meets the Engineering division's standards. Subcommittee Chair Crandell stated that he is pleased with the architectural detail shown on the plans. He stated that many of the details are ones that have been incorporated into previous projects and which have worked well. He noted that the project is below the height limits of the existing Mixed-Use zone, and though the building does not terrace down the slope significantly, this is due more to the lower height on the portion of the building fronting South El Camino Real than the height of the building at the rear of the

property. Subcommittee Chair Crandell stated that he is in support of the design of the project.

Subcommittee Member Ruehlin asked for clarification of the applicant's perceived use of the front courtyard. Mr. Buchanan discussed the multiple purposes he envisions for the space as an area for circulation for the residents, and a natural break in the building's façade to create architectural interest without creating a dead space along the pedestrian frontage. Mr. Luna discussed the space as providing pedestrian interest, as well as an enjoyable experience for the residents and commercial customers. He spoke of the proposed fountain and how the courtyard balances architectural interest and relief with the usability of outdoor space. He continued, discussing the corner patio area as a pedestrian space where tables and chairs could be placed creating a connection between the building and the pedestrian frontage at the corner.

Subcommittee Member Ruehlin said that he likes the revised courtyard plans, and is happy that the architect accomplished the modifications without sacrificing interior floor space. He continued, noting that he is cognizant of the short term concerns regarding pedestrian spaces that create areas for unwanted uses. However, he would hope that this type of project will activate the area, allowing the outdoor spaces in this project to attract and engage pedestrians positively. He stated that he likes the modifications made to the project, and noted that he is generally in agreement with Subcommittee Chair Crandell and sees this project as consistent with his memory of the General Plan update process. He continued, saying that while the final design depends on the development standards that will eventually be applied, he thinks that the applicant has done something great with the proposal.

Subcommittee Member Darden relayed her comments on the project in a bullet point fashion, stating the following:

- Like the other DRSC members, the architectural treatment of the project is of high quality.
- The changes in the front setback, opening up the front courtyard, and increasing the corner patio area alleviate her concerns about the pedestrian engagement along the project's street frontage.
- The building reads as three stories, not four stories, and the utilization of basement parking is much appreciated.
- That the treatment along the alley, including the arches, landscaping, and flying buttresses, are very nice and provide some engagement for pedestrians using the alley. She stated that this treatment will help to establish a standard for development adjacent to the alleys.
- While she appreciates that the project is within the envelope of the proposed development standards, she continues to have concerns regarding the massing at the rear of the project. She appreciates the

increase in the setbacks, but remains concerned that the building is consuming the lot, though less than before.

- The canopy trees provide some relief to the massing, however the building still sets a standard of development that could overwhelm the adjacent residential zone and the nearby historic resources.
- The second story balcony wall adds massing at the rear of the building that breaks in the wall would help alleviate.

Mr. Luna responded to Subcommittee Member Darden's comments about the massing, stating that in order to provide parking access off of Santiago for commercial customers, the building necessarily requires a staggered story design which provides the appearance of a three story element, though the third level along the rear elevation is generally at the level of the first level from El Camino Real. Subcommittee Member Darden stated that she is not concerned with three story elements, per se, but that her concerns in this project are due to the overall massing along the alley side of the building.

There was discussion between the DRSC members, Mr. Buchanan, and Mr. Luna regarding the existing pattern of development along the alley, specifically regarding the highly vertical three story structures on the alley property line. Subcommittee Member Darden stated that while she does not want to make the applicant feel that he is being held to a higher standard, that the previous types of development that exist are what the City is trying to avoid. Mr. Buchanan stated that it should be noted for the record that he understands that concerns, and that his project is significantly better than what has been previously built in the area. He went on to note that the project is not out of character with the neighborhood, and showed photographic examples of projects developed with similar massing along the alley. Subcommittee Member Darden stated that it has been noted how the alley treatment of this project is definitely better than what has been built previously.

The DRSC discussed the difficulty of reviewing designs for projects where there are no established development standards, and how to best support quality development without creating adverse impacts on adjacent areas.

Mr. Buchanan responded to some comments made regarding the nearby historic properties, and using photographs, explained how he believed there would not be any significant impacts to them. There was a question about whether there was a historic structure on the block directly west of the subject site. Mr. Atamian stated that the two nearby historic properties were both one block away from the block directly west.

Mr. Buchanan discussed the investment made in this area, and the substantial amount of work, effort, and time that he has put into developing

a project that he believes the new General Plan encourages. The DRSC acknowledged and thanked the applicant for his desire to invest capital into the city.

Subcommittee Member Darden stated that she does not perceive the project to be far away from an acceptable level of massing. Questions were raised about what could be done for her to be satisfied with the massing of the project. Subcommittee Member Darden stated that there is no specific amount of mass reduction that she can recommend, that some small changes could conceivably reduce the mass appropriately.

The DRSC all agreed that the project, in terms of design, is ready to be reviewed at the Planning Commission level. Cliff Jones, Secretary of the DRSC, noted that based on the DRSC review thus far, staff has not developed design recommendations as detailed as would normally be presented because of the concerns over massing. The DRSC asked that the detailed staff review be included in the staff report for the Planning Commission. Subcommittee Member Darden noted that the staff report would reflect the DRSC's individual recommendations.

B. Cultural Heritage Permit 14-396/Minor Exception Permit 14-395, Berardi Duplex (Ciampa)

A request for a second story addition to a legal nonconforming duplex that is adjacent to a historic house. The project site is located at 314 North Ola Vista.

Associate Planner John Ciampa summarized the staff report.

The applicant, Mario Berardi, stated that he has shown the plans to the neighboring property owners and they are supportive of the proposed project.

Subcommittee Member Ruehlin asked staff is the proposed application increased the square footage of the duplex by more than 50 percent. Staff confirmed that the addition was under 50 percent of the existing square footage of the duplex.

The DRSC had concerns with the following aspects of the project:

- As designed, the architectural quality of the design would have a negative visual impact on the adjacent historic houses. DRSC requested an improved fenestration and architectural design.
- The mansard roof gives the duplex a dated design and should be a pitched roof similar to the existing roof. The DRSC was in favor of increasing the roof height to improve the roof design.

- The north and east elevations need additional articulation to improve the architectural quality and transition from the first floor to the proposed second floor.
- Additional second story roof elements should be added to improve the design quality.
- The second floor balconies should be centered over the openings below.
- The proposed railings should be compatible with the building's architecture.

Subcommittee Chair Crandell discussed design modifications to improve the design of the project which included: popping out a portion of the east and north elevations and adding a roof element to break up the elevations, improve the transition to the second floor addition, and add architectural interest to the project design. He also requested the water heater be relocated to a new location so that it would not be visible from the street.

Subcommittee Darden stated that the revised project could also be improved to create a sense of entry for unit one.

The applicant agreed to make the recommended modifications to improve the project and address DRSC's concerns.

The DRSC requested the applicant make the recommended modifications and return back to review the project again before moving to the Planning Commission.

3. NEW BUSINESS

None

4. OLD BUSINESS

None

5. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourn to the Regular Meeting of the Design Review Subcommittee to be held January 28, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. in Conference Room A, Community Development Department, 910 Calle Negocio, Suite 100, San Clemente, CA 92673.

Respectfully submitted,

Bart Crandell, Chair

Attest:

Cliff Jones, Associate Planner

DRAFT