

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
REDEVELOPMENT DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE**

COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM

FULLERTON CITY HALL

Thursday

October 12, 2006

4:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 4:03 PM by Acting Chairman Duncan

ROLL CALL: COMMITTEE MEMBERS Chairman Daybell, Committee Members
PRESENT: Duncan, Hoban and Larsen

COMMITTEE MEMBERS Committee Member Cha
ABSENT:

PUBLIC PRESENT: Gwynne Pugh and Kim Prijatel

STAFF PRESENT: Acting Director Rosen, Acting Chief Planner
Eastman, Senior Planner St. Paul, Acting
Associate Planner Kusch and Clerical Staff
Leopold

MINUTES: The September 21, 2006 minutes were not ready for review and were continued to the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item No. 1

PRJ06-00222 (LRP06-00009, LRP06-00010, ZON06-00040, ZON06-00041, ZON06-00075, ZON06-00076, TTR16813) APPLICANT: THE OLSON COMPANY. PROPERTY OWNER: SUMMA INDUSTRIES.

Acting Associate Planner Kusch presented a proposal to construct a 68-unit residential condominium project which includes requests for a tentative tract map; a change in general plan land use designation of "industrial" to "medium density residential"; a change in zoning from "general industrial" (M-G) to "limited density multiple-family residential" (R-3); a variance to maintain the existing building setback; a variance to reduce the required useable open space; a variance to exceed the allowable lot coverage; and approval of a major site plan on property located at 1600 West Commonwealth Avenue (located on the southwest corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Basque Avenue) (CEQA Determination: Mitigated Negative Declaration)

Acting Chief Planner Eastman clarified that this item was not noticed to the public, although a community meeting was held where 15 people attended and none expressed concern with the architecture.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman said staff is recommending continuance of the item, but requests initial RDRC comments on the proposed site design and architecture. In addition, staff needs

more information from the applicant before the project can move forward. He stated staff still needs to prepare a Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Acting Associate Planner Kusch stated there are several applications associated with this project including a Tentative Tract Map for condominium purposes, a General Plan land use designation amendment from "Industrial" to "Medium Density Residential", a zone change from General Manufacturing (MG), to Limited Density Multiple Family Residential (R3), a major site plan and three variances including a reduction in the required building-to-street setback, a reduction in useable open space and excessive lot coverage.

Acting Associate Planner Kusch said the staff report indicated elevations of the proposed building at the street corner were not provided. The elevations for the building were provided with the submitted plans.

Acting Associate Planner Kusch said the required useable open space is 40,800 square feet. As proposed, the provided usable open space is approximately 30,000 square feet. He stated that there are a number of concerns with the usability of some of the open space areas. He stated there are areas of open space that are not readily accessible. As a result, staff counted a portion of the areas as visual open space. Staff mentioned a concern with the lack of landscaped areas or open space at the property's entrance from Basque Avenue. Staff is also concerned with the lack of landscaping along the southern edge of the property adjacent to the proposed 16-foot tall sound attenuation wall, parallel to the railroad right-of-way. This area includes a large amount of hardscape with no provision for landscape areas. Staff recommends both sides of the sound attenuation wall be softened in appearance with vines and/or a decorative wall design.

Acting Associate Planner Kusch indicated that the central common open space area narrows down where the buildings almost meet. This area may seem somewhat claustrophobic considering the narrow space between the buildings at the "point" of the triangle, and the height of the buildings. In addition to not providing accent landscape in the central open space area, the landscaping does not accentuate the architecture of the building's long flat façade, and there are no focal elements to provide a sense of place or excitement.

Acting Associate Planner Kusch indicated that the lineal expanse of the long, flat buildings create a repetitive unit design, which lacks distinguishing features for individual units. He mentioned that staff would like to see more details provided which create individuality and a sense of pedestrian attention. Staff suggested the provision of landscape elements to break up the tunnel effect of the long building.

Staff's analysis of the project is that the project does not comply with the City's development standards. Staff believes there is no hardship or unique circumstance to justify the three variances. Staff does not have an opinion regarding the preservation of the façade of the Morehouse-Cowles building. There is no historical status or policy to justify the recommendation of preservation.

Staff also has concerns with the demolition and reconstruction of the office building at the street corner. Acting Associate Planner Kusch said the building is not historic and does not meet the current building-to-street setback requirement. He mentioned that staff does not believe there is justification to approve a variance to rebuild it in its existing location and staff believes an attempt to rebuild the existing building will render a product that could reflect a bad copy.

Staff believes the project should be denied as designed, but recommends the RDRC provide comments on the site design and architecture at this time and continue the project to a future date.

Chairman Daybell asked if the applicant has seen the staff report and recommendations.

Kim Prijatel, Olson Company, introduced the project's architect and landscape architect. She presented an overview and historical background on the project and what was previously submitted and commented on at previous meetings.

Committee Member Hoban asked if there is consideration that this would be a certified "green" environmentally sustainable project. Gwynne Pugh, project architect, said they have advised cities on green building standards and will incorporate sustainable practices throughout the project.

Mr. Pugh presented a brief outline of various projects developed by his architectural firm. He stated they are bringing more of an urbanist view of the environment and as a firm have focused on infill adaptive re-use.

Mr. Pugh mentioned that due to the adjacency of the railroad and Commonwealth Avenue, the west side of the property was not responsive to a residential development unless it is walled off from the street. He said the intent of the project was to provide a town home urban in-fill project and incorporate the concept of a "village green". The central common open space or village green is elevated with adjacent units having their front doors oriented toward the common area. The units adjacent to the common open space have been designed with a garage under the living area, resulting in an approachable two and a half story appearance as seen from the common open space.

Mr. Pugh mentioned that part of the idea of sustainability is reusing the existing building fabric. To the extent that new materials are not used, a sustainable environment is being established. The existing building along Commonwealth Avenue has been retained up to the clear story roof. The street aspect of the building is as currently seen with the town home units producing slightly above the building roof line. He mentioned that it is important to differentiate between existing and new building fabric. A portion of the lower roof has been removed that is over the driveway adjacent and parallel to Commonwealth Avenue. Mr. Pugh said that landscape areas were provided along the northerly side of the driveway. He said that landscape areas were not provided along the south side of the driveway due to the adjacency of the garage entries and the building's structural footing. The glazing of the existing building windows will be taken out with the window frames preserved to try to retain the building's appearance.

Mr. Pugh explained that in trying to create a village green quality or village within a town concept, resulted in the driveways pushed to the outside. The circular pattern of the driveway provides for ease of access from Basque Avenue and within the property. However, the circular pattern has increased the amount of driveway area beyond that which he would like to see. He believed the tradeoff of creating the central common open space area is important. He agreed with staff's comment as to lack of usability of some of the open space areas, but believed those areas provide a cognitive sense of open space, particular at the western end of the property.

Mr. Pugh indicated that the western end of the property would occasionally be utilized for overflow parking. Counting the overflow parking area, the project has 32 parking stalls in excess of what is needed. He mentioned that the project has a parking ratio of over 1.75

covered parking stalls per unit, excluding the proposed tandem parking spaces. The surplus parking was provided to help address a previous concern with a lack of street parking due to the property's relative isolation from the surrounding community. Mr. Pugh said they are looking at who the housing is intended for and to make the units economical and highly desirable.

Mr. Pugh said from an aesthetic perspective, the property is an industrial site. They have attempted to preserve some of the building's metal siding, and as an alternative, incorporated vinyl siding to provide texture.

Mr. Pugh believed that the design of the project could be viewed from the perspective of each individual unit, or the building as a whole. The view of each individual unit tends to create a texture overall, but the building's rhythm is not apparent. He believes that when viewed from slightly afar, the building does have syncopation, movement, and variation along its length. Individual units would have unique aspect to them.

Mr. Pugh mentioned that the new building on the westerly end of the property was located outside of the required street setback. The building fronts the portion of Commonwealth Avenue that starts to go down in elevation to clear the railroad overpass. The street frontage is a relatively high speed area. The building's private patios are located within the required setback. The patios are designed to be lower than the adjacent sidewalk and guardrail to make the open space area quieter and buffered from the street.

Committee Member Hoban said when the previous project was presented at the City Council it was 49 units. He asked if the applicant is saying that it is not financially feasible without increasing the number of units to 68. Mr. Pugh said the unit increase is to offset site costs invested in dealing with the existing building, including painting, preserving and seismic retrofitting. There would not be similar site costs if the property was vacant. There is more hardscape than what normally would occur and those are part of the additional site costs that are generated by working with the existing fabric.

Committee Member Hoban asked if there was consideration to have live-work units, since it is a village unto its own. Mr. Pugh said that the sectional drawings of the units indicate that the primary living level has almost an 11-foot ceiling. So the idea is that they have the feeling of a live-work space, although they are not a true live-work space. The market research conducted showed that there was not a strong demand for a live-work unit product. It is important to have two bedrooms units, instead of one bedroom, in order to make it a viable project.

Chairman Daybell asked if the applicant explored the possibility of keeping the existing long building intact, converting it to units without tearing half of it down, and not trying to put so many units on the property. He said there is a lot of cost in what is being proposed. Mr. Pugh said from an architectural standpoint, the nature of the fabric of the building and the previous industrial use, would require considerable retrofit under today's codes. He said in this case, we felt we were saving what was worthwhile saving. Ms. Prijatel said they had thought of that initially and the building did not lend itself to town homes, perhaps an apartment use. The type of retrofit that would be required was extensive and the Olson Company is in the business for sale products and not for rentals. They were told that the entire building was not important, but rather, the important aspect was retention of the façade along Commonwealth.

Chairman Daybell asked how the project is affected by not taking the street corner building out to replace it with units. He also asked if you leave it as open space or parking, would the project not "pencil out". He said the proposal of recreating the building may require specialized

construction that would be fairly expensive. Ms. Prijatel explained they cannot lose the four units and, in light of the residential housing market in the past few months, they absolutely need all 68 units to make the project viable.

Mr. Pugh said he would have liked to see the corner building's original fabric remain. The nature of the construction is relatively easily reproducible and it should also be noted that they could texture-coat the existing skin on the new building.

With regard to retaining the appearance of the corner building and building new units in its place, Committee Member Hoban believed it was a "we want our cake and eat it too" scenario. He indicated that the code requires the setback for the building footing. He inquired what implications would the project have, and if it would be possible to re-create the building and meet the required setback. Mr. Pugh said he would not be able to put the units at the portion of the property. He stated he could comply with a condition to maintain as much of the original building's fabric, i.e. framing, skin and materials

Committee Member Duncan said there's been very good discussion, and opened my eyes a little bit more to the project. He said he came in not liking the fact that a residential use was proposed for the relatively small area.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman provided a brief history of the project. He said a difficult project on this property was submitted by Olson and it went to the RDRC and Planning Commission, both recommended approval. The City Council reviewed the previous project and stated two primary concerns:

1. They did not like the architecture and felt the site and building design did not actually reflect craftsman architecture.
2. Concerns with the appropriateness of a change in a land use from industrial to residential. The Council has yet to make a decision on the intended land use change.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman said part of the Council's opinion was that the existing industrial building has been in the community a long time and there is sentimental value to it. He clarified what was before the Committee is a different plan than before.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman said City staff has some concerns with the number and type of requests being made. A variance reduction in the required setback for the industrial building comes with the nature of wanting to preserve the building. If you want to keep the façade, you have to do a variance to reduce the setback on the long building frontage. Staff does not have concerns with that variance request, as it is a discretionary decision as to whether the façade should be preserved. Staff has concerns with the setback variance for the new building that replaces the small office building on the corner. There is some recent history of vehicles running into that building. Staff feels that the corner building should have a landscaped setback, particularly if there are going to be residential units there. There is also a variance request for lot coverage. Staff's position is that while it is a unique site in terms of the shape of the lot, the applicant is requesting a waiver of the entire front setback, yet they still don't meet the lot coverage requirements. Staff has concerns with that and feels the lot coverage is being driven by trying to provide too many units, too much parking etc., and staff is not comfortable with the request. There is a request to have front private patios on the west side of the property encroach into the required setback from Commonwealth Avenue. Staff's position is that the building can be re-located or designed to not have the encroachments into the setback.

However, staff is not overly concerned with this request, as there is no other setback on that frontage as existing, but it is a matter of design. A bigger staff concern is the design of the site. The landscaping is lacking adjacent to driveways and the corridors of buildings and walls. There is no landscape to visually soften between buildings and the paved areas. At the entry to the property, there is very little landscape provided on either side. The line of sight at the entry leads to a parking space. Staff has concerns with the site design at this point. Although staff is recommending continuance of the project, there are significant concerns and staff is leaning toward recommending denial of the project. Staff would like to have a discussion as to what can be done to fix this project. The concerns relate to the design, not necessarily the land use issue. Staff may ultimately recommend denial of the project on the land use basis alone.

Committee Member Duncan said the site plan is a function of how many units you need to get on this project. Everyone would agree if the applicant would reduce the number of units, the open space and minimum development standards would be met, and the project would probably be more favorable to the Committee and staff. He said he did not like the fact that the required open space has not been met and that there are variance requests. However, Committee Member Duncan likes the adaptive re-use program and thinks the idea is awesome. He stated he likes how it was treated with the main building and thinks it is unique and would like to see it go forward. Committee Member Duncan said that adaptive reuse project alone is really the project and the rest of the buildings have been “plopped” on here, to make it financially viable, but it hurts the project. He said it is difficult, because he wants to see a project with the “preservation” concept move forward. He is torn on this project. The landscape plan needs to work into the sustainability concept. Landscape can be integral in the shading of the long exposed surfaces of the south facing building. There will probably not be too many nice trees along Commonwealth Avenue sidewalk since space is limited and said that can be re-worked if some of the site plan components can be reworked. Committee Member Duncan said they have done a neat job with the main building and applying some adaptive reuse techniques. Other than that, there are some difficult issues that need to be addressed.

Committee Member Larsen said generally speaking he likes the project. Architecturally, it is rare we get a true contemporary project to come before the RDRC. He mentioned that the site is difficult and he likes how they worked with the existing building. He likes that they will have numbers on the garage. He noted that on the elevations it stated “aluminum windows painted white” and thinks in some ways they have taken great strides to maintain the integrity of the existing building. He said whatever they add to it should do the exact same thing or be in the same ideology and would suggest aluminum windows (no paint). Committee Member Larsen said when he looks at the elevations, he loves the composition and the fact that it is not the exact same bay of windows and don’t have to telegraph each individual unit, which he appreciates. He asked if the stucco would be consistently flat and the only delineation is the color and the reveal. Mr. Pugh confirmed that there would be a change of materials and depression.

Committee Member Hoban said I think you “hit the nail on the head” when you said the community was looking to save the building in some facet. He said although he was not at the meeting, but did watch some of the Council meeting and agreed with the comments made. He stated he thinks the applicant is going in the right direction and the project has a way to go to satisfy everybody’s needs. Committee Member Hoban said he thinks it is a unique opportunity to get as “green” as we can. He knows the applicant is not going to get a LEED certificate, and does not feel it is necessary. He stated just knowing that type of concept is being looked at in Fullerton is a great attribute to the project. Regarding the setbacks on the east side, he supports what staff is saying. If the building is being taken down, then the new building needs

to be in compliance. Committee Member Hoban said he is disappointed that the project has gone from 49 to 68 units. He understands markets change, but hopes it is not all based on the six-month swing of the California market. He recommends reducing the units, and thinks the applicant is cramming too much stuff onto the lot. In his opinion, the whole project is based on the structure that is there. He thinks it is great they are addressing so much parking, but the excess parking might be what needs to be reduced to get an increase in the open space. Committee Member Hoban was concerned with the long stretches of driveways. Obviously the one long stretch is necessary, but since there is a cover it may slow traffic and if we get more green and pockets of landscape that may also slow traffic. But, the southern side along the block wall could be easily seen as a "hot rod" area especially by the railroad tracks. It needs some kind of break to intentionally slow traffic. He said there are a lot of details to go, but it is definitely going in the direction he would like to see. He would like to see the project labeled more as live-use, or back to where there are custom shops or artisan kinds of things on the lower floor. He inquired if by chance, there are more market studies that support these type of things. He made a motion to continue the project.

Chairman Daybell said he was concerned with any beams spanning the driveway. He said he was definitely against the setback variance on Basque Avenue. He thinks the open space needs to be closer to what the City requires. He thinks 30,000 sq. ft. versus 40,000 sq. ft. is too much of a difference. He said there are too many units for this particular site. Chairman Daybell is concerned with a 16-foot wall along the railroad and the wall of the old building along Commonwealth Avenue. He said the project is starting to look almost like a prison, a big confined space where people would have a hard time exiting, but he would not recommend turning down the project for that reason alone. He said he could not support a variance to encroach the private patios into the required street (Commonwealth) setback for the most westerly units. He does not think that variance should be allowed. Chairman Daybell said he would agree with the Committee on the concept of recycling the old building as proposed, but does not see that recycling the building combined with brand new buildings is a solution that is good for the City.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman asked if the applicant would like to ask for clarification or provide alternative approaches that they would like to get the Committee's feedback on.

Public hearing opened.

Mr. Pugh said just for clarification, because it was given to them as a directive, they need to understand if they are being re-directed especially related to the building on Basque Avenue. He understood that there was a desire to save the building. If they are to preserve the building assemblage, then they would need the setback variance on Basque Avenue. The concern is that they are getting direction from one hand and a different direction from another.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman clarified that the question to the Committee is if they were to preserve the building by retrofitting it and add the proposed second story with a similar architectural style, would the Committee be comfortable with the variance. He explained for the applicant's benefit, the RDRC is expressing their views as to what their opinion is on the proposal before them, and what they would recommend to the City Council and Planning Commission. The Committee is not necessarily giving the applicant direction, but identifying concerns.

Ms. Prijatel said they were given the direction that the appearance of the corner building combined with the other long building was just as important. Initially, they were going to

preserve the corner building. Because of the style and more modern look, it was not going to be difficult to make it look even better than it does now. If they were able to save the façade of that building, she does not think they would be able to retrofit the whole thing. They were told by some Council members to save the façade of the office building on both street frontages.

Chairman Daybell asked how about preserving it as it is as an office building instead of converting it to residential use. Acting Chief Planner Eastman indicated that staff's perspective of preserving the façade of the building, has not been historically identified. There is some sentimental value to it, but it has not been classified with unique historic value. Acting Chief Planner Eastman said, to demolish the building and rebuild or redesign it; why could the building not be pushed back to meet the required 10-foot setback?

Acting Senior Planner Eastman said if the office building was converted a recreation center, the City could consider that as part of the useable open space. Ms. Prijatel did not know if they can push the units back, but understands the direction of meeting the setback for a new residential building or do something to create more open space for the project. Chairman Daybell said that intersection is not a residential intersection so there is some merit to maintaining the commercial building appearance. He said it is something to consider.

Committee Member Hoban does not know what Council said specifically on the saving of the office building. Although he likes the office building, it is not important to him for the project. Adaptively reusing the long manufacturing building was more integral to the project. If the corner office building was not even there and it became open space it would become a corridor and an opening to the entire residential complex. He said he understands if Council is going in a different direction, that is their decision. He understands it is his job to give a recommendation, which has yet to be determined. If removal of the building is not going to happen, then he would move toward the Chair's suggestion to look at it as more of a community center, possibly some retail, similar to the Village Market on the opposite street corner.

Public hearing closed.

Ms. Prijatel asked if it could be continued to a date certain. Chairman Daybell said he would like to see a minimum of a month. Acting Chief Planner Eastman said time is needed for revisions and staff to review and formalize the conditions and review changes. He would like to see the meeting be continued to the meeting after next. Chairman Daybell stated staff and the Committee would like to see something that is good and long term for the City.

MOTION by Committee Member Hoban, SECONDED by Committee Member Larsen and CARRIED unanimously by all voting members present to CONTINUE project to the November 9, 2006 meeting.

STAFF/COMMITTEE COMMUNICATION:

The Committee and staff discussed the RDRC vacancies.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman provided information to the Committee regarding the AB1234 Training.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting ADJOURNED at 5:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ruth Leopold
Clerical Support