

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
REDEVELOPMENT DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM

FULLERTON CITY HALL

Thursday

May 22, 2008

4:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m. by Chairman Hoban

ROLL CALL: COMMITTEE MEMBERS Chairman Hoban and Committee
PRESENT: Members Daybell, Silber, and Lynch

COMMITTEE MEMBERS Vice Chairman Cha
ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Acting Chief Planner Eastman,
Associate Planner Kusch, Clerical
Assistant Flores, and Clerical Assistant
Muhaidly

MINUTES: MOTION made by Committee Member Daybell, SECONDED by
Lynch and CARRIED unanimously by all voting members present,
to APPROVE the March 27, 2008 minutes AS WRITTEN.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

New BUSINESS:

Item No. 1

PRJ08-00154 – ZON08-00049 / ZON08-00050 APPLICANT RUSSELL A. KHOURI AND
PROPERTY OWNER: UNIVERSITY PLAZA LTD Review of site and architectural plans
for a two-story commercial building measuring approximately 12,875 square feet on
property located in a Community Improvement District at 2720 Nutwood Avenue
(generally located on the southeast corner of Nutwood Avenue and Langsdorf Drive) (O-P
Zone) (Categorically exempt under Section 15332 of CEQA Guidelines) (AKU)

Associate Planner Kusch gave a brief overview of the project and explained that the
property is located on the southeast corner of Langsdorf Drive and Nutwood Avenue,
between Langsdorf Drive and the 57 Freeway, across from CSUF. The property was
previously used as a restaurant and had burned down in December 2007. The applicant
requests to construct a two-story commercial building of approximately 13,000 square
feet. In terms of probable uses, the first floor would be small restaurants (less than 13
seats each) and the second floor would consist of offices. The property is in a Community
Improvement District and in an area in which the City is considering a future Specific Plan,
including adoption of design standards for architecture and streetscape. This future
Specific Plan is pending development by the City. After the RDRC reviews the project, the

project will move forward to the Planning Commission for consideration of a Conditional Use Permit for the land use. Among the issues will be the adequacy of parking for the use.

Associate Planner Kusch stated that there are three steps to processing the proposed project: (1) the RDRC review, where the RDRC will look at the design concept envisioned by the applicant and confirm that it is compatible with the surrounding areas. As an example, he noted California State Fullerton's new building across Nutwood; (Associate Planner Kusch referred to the photos of California State Fullerton's new building, attached to the Staff Report); (2) to determine whether the project articulates the design features education oriented residential, commercial and office uses in the area; and (3) the Planning Commission to consider the site plan, mainly the adequacy of parking, which may determine whether the proposed project is a one-story building or two-story building. After the completion of these steps, the project would then be brought back to the RDRC for a review of final architecture and landscape plans.

Associate Planner Kusch stated that the proposed building included some of the design elements of California State Fullerton's new building. The northwest elevation depicted a curved entry, similar to California State Fullerton's new building on the street corner. Both buildings also include extensive glazing with window eyebrows. The proposed materials for the building include plaster with trim and accent colors, a cornice molding and anodized aluminum store front windows with clear glass and tubular steel trellises. Staff noted a concern with the visibility of an exterior stairway, depicted on the east elevation photo, and its aesthetic discrepancy from the appearance of the surrounding buildings. This portion of the building is directly adjacent to Off Campus Pub (now the Cantina Lounge), which is currently being remodeled. There is a safety concern with loitering on and underneath the stairway.

Associate Planner Kusch explained that with the exception of the stair structure, Staff believed the proposed architecture was complimentary to the surrounding properties, including California State Fullerton's building. Staff recommended that any proposed signage would require a signage program, presented by the applicant, for review by staff and RDRC. Associate Planner Kusch referred to the plans, depicting the office-professional portion of the building, and stated that there was a potential issue with the building setback. The required setback for the building was a minimum of 15 feet from Nutwood Avenue. The plans reflected a patio area and a path of travel to access this particular side of the building, and Staff's concern was that any improvements, other than landscaping, did not encroach into that setback area. Based on the site plans, there could be encroachments in that area, which would require the building footprint to be shifted. The site design was also working around a constraint—an electrical transformer, which serves the subject property and the adjacent building. The transformer is adjacent to a courtyard area on the south side; there are also patio areas proposed on the north side, adjacent to Nutwood. The transformer area could serve a dual purpose by accommodating bicycle racks.

Associate Planner Kusch stated that staff requests the RDRC review the materials and provide comment regarding the project's architectural design, as well as provide direction and suggest revisions as necessary. He stated that Staff was not recommending any design conditions since the project will require revision. Staff is looking for feedback and direction from the RDRC.

Committee Member Daybell asked why the transformer was present and whether it was an Edison transformer. Associate Planner Kusch deferred the question to the applicant.

Committee Member Daybell inquired about the past parking areas for the previous building that had burned down. Associate Planner Kusch replied that the parking mostly had not changed.

Committee Member Daybell asked if the land was owned by one owner and whether it was one parcel. Associate Planner Kusch answered affirmatively to both questions.

Chairman Hoban asked if the transformer would feed the new building as well as the adjacent building. Associate Planner Kusch answered affirmatively.

Chairman Hoban inquired about the issue of parking and whether the building would determine the parking or the parking determine the characteristics of the building. Associate Planner Kusch clarified the issue of parking was not in the purview of the RDRC's review; however, the parking may have impacts on the building as it relates to square footage or the site layout. He stated the outstanding Code question is related to the adequacy of parking.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman clarified that there was an existing Conditional Use Permit which allowed for shared parking between the office and two restaurants that previously occupied the area. A second story may be added onto the proposed building, but parking requirements needed to be met for a two-story building, or the Planning Commission needed to approve a Conditional Use Permit for the proposed land use. Before a presentation was brought before the Planning Commission relating to the project, architectural and design issues need to be considered.

Member Silber arrived at 5:25pm.

Public hearing opened.

Russ Khouri, Applicant, clarified the transformer was a Southern California Edison transformer that feeds the Cantina Lounge (formerly known as the Off Campus Pub), as well as the proposed project. Mr. Khouri referenced the plans and showed the location of the transformer's feed and main supply. He stated that if the transformer was relocated, it would have a large impact on the new tenant of the proposed building. As an alternative to relocating the transformer, he would try and mask the transformer with landscape.

Mr. Khouri stated he was applying for a conditional use permit for the new building because he was not following the exact footprint of the former building.

Mr. Khouri stated his intentions were to cater the building to the California State University, Hope University, office building tenants, surrounding tenants and the hotel across the street by offering office use on the second and first floor (if able to lease) and also some small fast-food type of uses (such as a juice bar or bagel shop). The applicant stated he was not interested in a full restaurant because he wanted to compliment the use of the surrounding theme of the college and office building use. The proposed building's first floor would be divided into five suites, although one tenant occupy two of the suites if needed.

Mr. Khouri stated that in regards to the exterior stairway, his intention is to enclose the area underneath the exterior stairway as a utility closet. He explained that this enclosure would also prohibit loitering underneath the stairway. It is a possibility that a wrought iron gate could be installed at the bottom of the stairway (locked after business hours) to prevent anyone from going up to the second floor after hours. The door on the second floor would also be locked.

Mr. Khouri stated that adding the second story was a design that was thought to compliment the architecture of the surrounding areas. In his view, the amount of parking was hindered because required spaces were for areas such as restrooms and lobbies. He struggled with the idea of providing parking for a restroom and asked for relief in the number of spaces required because he would be bringing a nicer building to a redevelopment area.

Mr. Khouri stated the building did meet the setback requirements, other than the proposed patios, which were provided so the tenants could relax and enjoy the view from these areas. Mr. Khouri referenced the plans and stated he could eliminate a portion of the patio space and replace the space with landscaping, as there was also patio/courtyard use in another location of the building. He stated that the area for parking took into account that all of the first floor would be leased to restaurant use and would require all of the patio space; however, it was possible not all the first-floor tenants would be leased to a restaurant use and require patio space.

Mr. Doug Ely, Project Architect, stated the design approach to the building started as a response to the high-energy street (Nutwood) adjacent to the building as well as to the curved façade of California State Fullerton's building, across from the proposed building. Mr. Ely referenced the plans and showed where the California State Fullerton building and Hope University building were located in relation to the proposed building. He stated the materials used for the new building were intended to relate back to the materials that were on site. Mr. Ely referenced the plans and clarified that the outdoor patios and trellis areas were proposed in order to give "life" to the location because students from California State Fullerton were expected to frequent the location due to the quick service type restaurants within the building.

Mr. Ely stated that the building had a cornice molding that was carried throughout the design, and the parking lot side of the building would also have a patio area. He referenced a photograph of a stairway and stated the exterior stairway on the proposed building would be similar to the one presented in the photograph. The stairway presented in the photograph was 10 feet away from the adjoining building and contained a metal stair; whereas the proposed stairway was almost 16 feet from the face of the stair to the adjoining building. Mr. Ely stated he was not clear why the exterior stairway looked enticing for loitering, but suggested he could install an iron gate up at the bottom of the stairway to prevent loitering. If the stairway had to be moved as a result of the loitering issue, it would become an enclosed portion of the building, and there might be a building code issue; the Building Department would need to be consulted to discuss how close it could be to the adjoining structure.

Chairman Hoban asked if Mr. Ely could clarify what he meant by enclosing the stairway and asked if by enclosure, he meant the stairway would become an interior part of the building. Mr. Ely responded affirmatively, but clarified there might be building code issues in terms of adjacency of adjoining structures. Mr. Khouri suggested the stairs could be "enclosed" with a roof so the stairs would not go inside the building.

Committee Member Daybell asked if the stairway was the sole access to the second story. Mr. Ely referenced the plans and clarified that there was also access through the lobby elevator and through two stairwells on the second floor, one stairway located on the interior of the building (with the bottom portion of the stairway on the first floor) and one stairway located on the exterior of the building.

Mr. Ely referenced the Nutwood elevation on the plans and stated they envisioned a lively environment, with umbrellas and tables, where activity from the street could be seen. It would not be residential in character.

Mr. Khouri referenced the plans and stated that, in terms of parking, when the Tai restaurant occupied the area, there used to be a straight curb near the building, and they had picked up a few more parking spaces because the curb had been removed. Acting Chief Planner Eastman clarified that the parking shortfall was not an issue for the RDRC to discuss; however, the parking lot design was within the purview of the RDRC.

Public hearing closed.

Committee Member Daybell stated he liked the idea of the change in use, because the single restaurant idea had not worked very well. He stated he would like the northeast corner of the building to have more of a curvature to it in order to match the west side and enhance the building. He also stated he liked the idea of the exterior stairway. He believed he would have a problem with the stairway if it was the sole entry to the second level, but because it could act as a fire escape and would be enclosed underneath for the utility closet, he was in favor of it. Other than the northeast corner, he stated he had no other issues with what was being proposed and liked the idea of office space on the second floor but would like to see something other than restaurants on the first floor.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman clarified that the concern was loitering under and on top of the exterior stairway. Past night-life activity at the adjacent pub required police presence on a regular basis and it was anticipated that the new owner of the facility will continue the night-life activity. Because of this, it was encouraged that the project be designed to prohibit access underneath and on top of the stairs. He stated that Staff planned to work with the applicant on this design.

Committee Member Lynch referenced the plans and asked if the rendering was the main entry to the building. Acting Chief Planner Eastman answered affirmatively.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman stated there could be a few design adjustments in order to provide more of a contemporary approach, which would balance with the California State Fullerton's building.

Chairman Hoban believed the two-story building was appropriate for the location. He believed the exterior staircase looked like a "tack-on" and was the building's focal point on the east elevation. He stated that unless the staircase could be designed more elegantly or creatively, the stairway should be brought inside the building and another exit created so that something more could be done with the south elevation. In regards to the trellis work, he liked the idea of having a patio cover and something to bring down to a pedestrian scale, but the trellis design was not contemporary enough. He liked the use of steel, but there needed to be a more contemporary design to fit with the functions that

would be inside the building. He stated that the current trellis design was a replica of the white vinyl trellis seen in a backyard and the fanning-out design gave more of a cottage-feel versus the sharpness and crispness of the contemporary building across the street.

Chairman Hoban inquired about the turret and asked whether the stucco was going to be a color different than the stucco of the rest of the building, or would the whole building be one color of stucco. Mr. Ely clarified the turret would have an accent color stucco, which would also be the accent color that is on the base of the building.

Chairman Hoban noted he would like to see some other element added to the base to provide weight to the building design, other than a stucco base with color—something like aluminum cladding or glass elements. He liked the articulation of the building (where it popped in and out several times) to create courtyard spaces and believed it was a nice effect.

Committee Member Daybell asked if the exterior staircase could be replaced with a spiral staircase. Mr. Ely explained an exterior spiral staircase would not meet existing code. Chairman Hoban asked Committee Member Daybell if he was referring to the exterior or interior stairway. Committee Member Daybell clarified he was referring to an interior stairway.

Committee Member Silber stated he was concerned with the building being in an education district because it serves as a “gateway” to the City and is seen at the 57 freeway. He stated there needed to be a certain level of seriousness to the design. Committee Member Silber stated the cornice is a concern, and more so, where the pedestrian enters the building. He stated there was an auto-oriented conception to the building and the service parts for the lease spaces were located on Nutwood (the “back of the house” is where people enter Fullerton). This is architecturally confusing for pedestrians coming from the California State Fullerton campus. If the pedestrians had to walk around the edge of the building to get to the front, there needed to be landscape to make it more attractive. Committee Member Silber also asked if people were expected to come down Nutwood Avenue and come between the two buildings. And if so, why is that area being treated as another “back of the house”. He also felt the exterior stairway (fire stairs) could be designed more creatively and could be seen as more than just a fire stairs. Committee Member Silber stated that the main concern should be how the applicant viewed the pedestrian who arrives at the building from across the street. He asked if people were supposed to drive their cars around to the parking lot in order to enter the building (which would further congest traffic) or if they should walk down the sidewalk on Nutwood Avenue and come in through the front of the building. He believed the Nutwood sidewalk was not a strolling path. He stated it also looked like a space in which only one tenant could enjoy as an amenity for people arriving from Nutwood Avenue. He would also encourage the applicant to join in with the surrounding property owners to work on the “Education District”. Member Silber asked if the RDRC was supposed to take action and Acting Chief Planner Eastman clarified they were not.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman clarified that the City was moving forward with a Specific Plan in terms of a design for the Education Village. Staff met with the Director of Redevelopment to discuss the current vision for the specific plan area; the vision for the education district is currently ambiguous. Acting Chief Planner Eastman explained the new building at California State Fullerton reflected the character of the University, The “higher learning” of the area will dictate the design theme of the “university village”. The

proposed building should take steps towards a more contemporary building as it addresses the corner.

Chairman Silber stated he was glad this meeting was being treated as a chance to review and comment. He hoped the applicant and the project architect can be patient with the process. He hoped a study session will be conducted for the specific plan, where the RDRC committee and Staff participated. He stated that there is a need to talk about expectations, versus a specific project, where parameters could be incorporated for a planning process.

Committee Member Daybell noted the problem with the project may be the fact that the front door of the proposed building was not facing Nutwood Avenue, but facing away from Nutwood Avenue.

Committee Member Lynch asked Acting Chief Planner Eastman about the specific plan for the area and asked if he considered the work they did with JPI (Jefferson Common's Project) as a benchmark for the area.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman clarified JPI was on the southern border to the "university village". The architectural design of the California State Fullerton Campus was used as a starting place for the JPI project. From that a contemporary design was developed. JPI is a new building that will drive the concept of the "university village".

Committee Member Lynch stated he thought it seemed appropriate that they follow the design of the contemporary California State University building due to the points discussed by Acting Chief Planner Eastman and the fact that the proposed building was so close to the contemporary building. In terms of the proposed building, Committee Member Lynch stated he liked the two-story building idea. He thought the current proposal lacked seriousness as a gateway to the City; it had a generic feeling and felt like a Starbucks Coffee "business model". He stated he would like to see the architect re-think the design and consider using other materials besides stucco—perhaps Reno or Luca bond type composite panels for cladding. Also using clear anodized window mullions and treatments outside, similar to the JPI Project, should be considered. The exterior stairs should also be put interior to the building.

Chairman Hoban asked if the Committee's comments clarified the RDRC's expectations. Acting Chief Planner Eastman said the comments were fine.

Associate Planner Kusch asked about streetscape and, in terms of locating the building, if staff should follow JPI's model, which incorporated public right of way and street furniture. Chairman Hoban explained the only reason the building had been pushed towards Nutwood was because of the transformer on the other side of the building.

Mr. Ely explained he had to pick the most predominant orientation for the entrance of the building, and because most people were expected to be parking in the parking lot and walking up to the building, the entrance should be located by the parking lot. The entrance location did not have anything to do with the transformer. He stated the concept of pushing the building towards Nutwood Avenue was difficult because of the building perimeters. He referenced the site plans and a pedestrian pathway fronting Nutwood Avenue. He believed once people walked around the building to get to the entrance the first time, locating the entrance on the next visit would not be an issue. He believed most

people would be arriving by vehicles; therefore, people could park in the parking lot and have the entrance conveniently in front of them.

Mr. Khouri added that the location of the entrance was also because of an attempt to have handicapped parking right against the building that can be near the other adjacent buildings.

Mr. Ely referred to Committee Member Daybell's comment about having more of a curvature on the northeast corner and stated that the corner lacked curvature due to the adjacent competing building (Cantina Lounge). There was a compressed space between the buildings; putting a curvature on the northeast corner would not be a viable because of the Cantina Lounge building looming so large at that particular location.

Mr. Khouri wants to offer tenants patio space, but clientele would have to enter from the south side of the building; there would be no access from Nutwood. The applicant stated he wanted there to be an outdoor atmosphere for the tenant but not portray an entrance to the building.

Committee Member Lynch referred back to Associate Planner Kusch's question about streetscape and stated that the streetscape was geared towards vehicle traffic only. He believed there should be benches, potted plants, bicycle racks etc. to accommodate pedestrians, regardless of the location of the entrance. Committee Member Silber agreed and asked why the pedestrian should be disadvantaged. The streetscape should be pedestrian-friendly.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman clarified that could be pots and bike racks on the Nutwood side, even though that would not be an entrance. He expressed apprehension with locating pedestrian features here when there is no functionality to that side of the building. The area loses the context which is to be provided. Acting Chief Planner Eastman explained the JPI project combined setback with pedestrian space because it: (1) was a large mixed use project; (2) had units with main entrances facing the street; and (3) Commonwealth Avenue to Nutwood Avenue was intended to be a pedestrian thoroughfare. He stated there was a fundamental issue of how the building was oriented that needed to be addressed if Nutwood is to have pedestrian features. Revisions should be made to the project to accommodate the concerns.

Chairman Hoban had to leave and Committee Member Daybell assumed chairman role. He stated he would like a "work-shop" environment to take place where there could be helpful dialogue.

Mr. Khouri stated he was concerned and felt he did not have enough time to complete a project that addressed all of the concerns. He stated he had been told to replace the previous building with an "eye-catching" building, and by the time he did this and allowed a large pedestrian access in the front of the building, he would have a large walkway that would widen and reduce back to what it was previously--leaving a section of the walkway different than everything else. He felt he had to consider changing the location of the entrance, which would shift the building and leave him with less square footage. He felt he had to consider a specific plan that had not been approved yet and felt he did not have a clear cut direction of what he was supposed to do. He stated he did not have much time because it would take longer than he expected to get the building constructed and was not receiving any income from the building. He was concerned that he would have to go back

to re-designing the project and may not be able to afford to build a two-story building if it took longer than he expected to get the project approved.

Committee Member Lynch stated that the RDRC did not want to take away square footage. He stated there was an opportunity to work with the applicant and build a nicer building with more square footage and better income.

Mr. Khouri replied he had nothing to follow in terms of a direction of accommodating the streetscape and other ideas of the RDRC. He stated that he had met with the Director of Community Development, and tried to meet with the Director of Redevelopment to get a better idea of the direction he should follow.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman clarified the RDRC can't design the project; their role is to provide comments and direction. He stated Staff and the RDRC had an obligation to respond to what the community identifies as important. He explained Staff's ability to forecast the specific concerns of this Committee was not possible, but Staff could understand the Committee's comments and try to direct the applicant and architect accordingly. He stated that Staff now has more clarity on the direction the applicant should take so that he may move forward with the project. He noted the Committee was currently providing comments and a resolution will not be decided at this time.

Committee Member Silber clarified that if the applicant felt the main movement was going to be from the parking lot towards the front entrance of the building, then the west elevation became very important. He stated it was important to show strength when it came to the role of the pedestrian in this environment and explained the applicant would have a stronger argument for relief from the parking requirement on mixed use. He stated there may be other opportunities the applicant hadn't considered yet. There may be opportunities to create a mezzanine setting on the ground floor commercial and create more commercial space in the two-story volume. He stated the applicant might have to lose some building footprint, but the architect could show the applicant how to turn the loss into an advantage.

Committee Member Daybell agreed with Committee Member Silber and stated the applicant should re-orient the building and encourage pedestrian access so that University customers did not have to get in their car and drive.

Mr. Khouri asked the Committee's opinion on whether he should bring back a one-story building. Committee Member Daybell replied that he would be disappointed and knew businesses that would like to move to Fullerton but could not find reasonable office space.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman asked the applicant how he had come up with the square footage numbers for the building. Mr. Khouri answered the footage was somewhat driven by parking; before a two-story was considered, it had to be confirmed that there was enough parking for the one-story building. The problem is that the calculations that were done on the building were based on the leasable square footage (versus the Code's Gross square footage).

Acting Chief Planner Eastman asked whether there was a specific date this project could be moved to. Mr. Ely inquired about the process they should take because the project had to go before Planning Commission and it sounded like there were some modifications that needed to be done. Acting Chief Planner Eastman recommended that the item be continued

to the next RDRC meeting and some schematics be worked out as to what the approach will be.

MOTION by Committee Member Lynch, and SECONDED, by Committee Member Daybell to CONTINUE TO A DATE CERTAIN of June 12, 2008 to allow the applicant the opportunity to revise the plans. Motion passed unanimously.

Acting Chief Planner Eastman explained the 10-day appeal process.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:

None

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comments.

STAFF/COMMITTEE COMMUNICATION:

None

MEETINGS:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nadia Muhaidly
Clerical Assistant