



DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA DATE: SEPTEMBER 16, 2015
TO: Chair McCormack and Members of the Design Review Committee
THRU: Leslie Aranda Roseberry, Planning Manager
FROM: Marissa Moshier, Associate Planner - Historic Preservation
SUBJECT: DRC No. 4817-15 – Watson’s Soda Fountain & Café Rehabilitation

SUMMARY

The applicant proposes to rehabilitate the existing storefronts and add signage for a restaurant/bakery at 116-120 E. Chapman Avenue in the Plaza Historic District. The restaurant will retain the historic “Watson’s” name.

RECOMMENDED ACTION – FINAL DETERMINATION

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

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Applicant: William Skeffington, Our Family Restaurant Group, LLC
Owner: Shucri Yaghi
Property Location: 116-120 E. Chapman Avenue
General Plan Designation: OTMIX 15
Zoning Classification: OTMU 15
Existing Development: 6,500 SF restaurant in 11,650 SF two-story commercial building
Property Size: 6,970 SF
Associated Applications: Conditional Use Permit No. 2985-15 for a modification from the existing Alcohol Beverage Control Type 41 License to a Type 47 License, reviewed separately by the Planning Commission.
Previous DRC Review: None

PUBLIC NOTICE

No Public Notice was required for this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Categorical Exemption: The proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per State CEQA Guidelines 15301 (Existing Facilities) because the project involves minor alterations to the exterior of an existing restaurant and 15331 (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation) because the project is limited to rehabilitation of existing storefronts in conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Secretary's Standards)* and the Old Towne Design Standards. In conformance with the *Secretary's Standards*, the proposed rehabilitation is compatible with the character of the historic building and retains historic features to the greatest extent feasible. There is no environmental public review required for a Categorical Exemption.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to rehabilitate an existing storefront in the Plaza Historic District. The major project components include:

- Remove non-historic blue canvas awnings on north and east elevations.
- Repair and replace combed finish stucco above the storefronts.
- Replace existing storefront doors with new clear anodized aluminum doors.
- Paint brick storefront elements on north elevation.
- Repair existing blue glazed tile bulkhead on north and east elevations.
- Repair existing flat canopy with aluminum roof edge above the storefronts.
- Install new pass-through window in existing aluminum storefront on east elevation. The pass-through window is clear anodized aluminum. An 8 inch deep stainless steel transaction shelf will be installed below the window, at 34 inches above grade as required by the California Building Code for accessibility. The shelf will be recessed in a pocket below the window and will pull out from the wall when in use.
- Install new 36 inch metal railing and gate to enclose the covered outdoor dining area on the north elevation.
- Install new signage. The new signs consist of a 66 square foot exposed neon sign at the canopy edge on the north elevation, a new 15 square foot blade sign at the northeast corner of the building, and new window decals on the north and east elevations.

EXISTING SITE

The existing site is developed with a two-story, 11,650 square foot commercial building constructed circa 1900. The subject business occupies the ground floor tenant spaces addressed as 116-120 E. Chapman Avenue. The building is a contributor to the National Register of Historic Places-listed Plaza Historic District. Watson's Drugs, which included a pharmacy and lunch counter, has occupied the 116 E. Chapman Avenue space for decades.

HISTORIC BUILDING ELEMENTS

The period of significance for the Plaza Historic District is 1888 to 1930. The ground floor storefronts at 116-120 E. Chapman Avenue were altered after 1930; however, staff recommends to the DRC that components of the storefronts have taken on significance over time and should be considered contributing elements. The 120 E. Chapman storefront at the northeast corner of the building was remodeled by Van de Kamp's Bakery in the late 1940s. Van de Kamp's was founded in Los Angeles in 1915 and expanded into 320 bakeries and outlets by the 1940s. The Van de Kamp's remodel included installation of a new metal storefront system, blue glazed tile bulkhead, and a windmill-shaped blade sign at the corner of the building. The blade sign has been removed, but the storefront and bulkhead are intact. Although these changes occurred outside of the Plaza Historic District's period of significance, staff recommends that the DRC consider the storefront to be a contributing element of the building, because it is a good example of a mid-century storefront that reflects the evolving commercial development of the Plaza during this period.

The larger Watson's storefront at 116 E. Chapman was also altered circa 1950 with a recessed metal storefront system, including display cases on opposite sides of the storefront. One of the display cases has been removed, and brick veneer was added to the bulkhead and column in front of the double doors after 1977. Although the bulkhead materials have been altered, the location of the storefront and the display case have been retained, and staff recommends that the DRC consider these elements to be contributing to the building.

EXISTING AREA CONTEXT

The property is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of E. Chapman Avenue and S. Orange Street in the Plaza Historic District. Surrounding properties are zoned OTMU-15 and consist of a mix of retail and office uses.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

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

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

1. **Architectural Features.**
 - a. The architectural features shall reflect a similar design style or period.
 - b. Creative building elements and identifying features should be used to create a high quality project with visual interest and an architectural style.
2. **Landscape.**
 - a. The type, size and location of landscape materials shall support the project's overall design concept.
 - b. Landscaping shall not obstruct visibility of required addressing, nor shall it obstruct the vision of motorists or pedestrians in proximity to the site.

- c. Landscape areas shall be provided in and around parking lots to break up the appearance of large expanses of hardscape.
3. **Signage.** All signage shall be compatible with the building(s) design, scale, colors, materials and lighting.
4. **Secondary Functional and Accessory Features.** Trash receptacles, storage and loading areas, transformers and mechanical equipment shall be screened in a manner, which is architecturally compatible with the principal building(s).

ANALYSIS/STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

Issue 1: Compatibility of Storefront Rehabilitation

As described above, the existing storefronts are contributing elements to the historic building that have taken on significance over time. The proposed project retains the important character-defining features of these storefronts, including location, design and materials. The project will uncover concealed historic features, including the small flat canopies over the storefronts on the north elevation. The new design features, colors and materials are also compatible with the historic building. The existing brick veneer on the 116 E. Chapman Avenue storefront was added to the storefront after 1977 and is not a character-defining feature of the building. The Old Towne Design Standards typically do not allow painting of unpainted masonry; however, staff recommends that painting is appropriate in this case, because the veneer itself is not a historic feature of the building. At the 120 E. Chapman storefront, the clear aluminum new pass-through window is placed on a secondary elevation and fits within the existing storefront system to limit the impact to historic materials. The proposed shelf below the pass-through window uses similar materials and is placed to limit the impact to the historic glazed tile bulkhead. Staff recommends that the DRC find that the proposed project is compatible with the historic building and is in conformance with the *Secretary's Standards* and the Old Towne Design Standards.

Issue 2: Signage

The proposed signs meet the applicable sign requirements of Chapter 17.36 of the Orange Municipal Code and the Historic Preservation Design Standards for Old Towne. The signage placement and design are based on historic photographs of Watson's Drugs and Van De Kamp's bakery from the 1950s (see Attachment 4: Historic Photographs). The exposed neon sign on the canopy edge on the north elevation is similar in design and materials to the "Watson's Drugs" sign from the mid-century period. The proposed blade sign reflects the Van De Kamp's windmill blade sign placed at the corner of the building in the late 1940s. The proposed exposed neon, aluminum materials, colors and type face are appropriate to the building and context of the Plaza Historic District. Staff recommends that the DRC find that the proposed signage is in conformance with the *Secretary's Standards* and Old Towne Design Standards.

ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

None.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND REQUIRED FINDINGS

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

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

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

The proposed project is in conformance with the Old Towne Design Standards, which are the prescriptive design criteria for projects within the Old Towne Historic District. The project retains the character-defining features of the existing historic storefronts, including recessed entrances, clear anodized aluminum storefronts, and glazed tile bulkhead. The proposed design, colors and materials of the new elements, including the pass-through window and signage, are compatible with the character of the historic building. The proposed project is consistent with the context of the Plaza Historic District and does not adversely affect the historic building or the Historic District.

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

Projects found to be in conformance with the Old Towne Design Standards are generally considered to be in conformance with the *Secretary’s Standards*. In conformance with Standard 1, the proposed storefront design minimizes changes to the defining characteristics of the building and the Historic District while allowing for the new restaurant use within the existing space. In conformance with Standard 2, the proposed exterior alterations retain the character-defining features of the historic storefronts and the historic streetscape in the Plaza. In conformance with Standard 4, the design and materials of the existing storefronts have acquired historic significance in their own right and are being preserved with the proposed design. The proposed project is in conformance with the *Secretary’s Standards*.

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

Projects located with the Old Towne Historic District must comply with the Old Towne Design Standards and *Secretary's Standards* (as applicable). As described above, the proposed work conforms with these design standards.

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

This project does not involve residential infill development. The *City of Orange Infill Residential Design Guidelines* do not apply, and this finding does not apply.

CONDITIONS

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

1. All construction shall conform in substance and be maintained in general conformance with plans and exhibits labeled Attachment 5 in the staff report (date stamped received September 9, 2015), including modifications required by the conditions of approval, and as recommended for approval by the Design Review Committee.
2. An encroachment agreement shall be obtained through the Public Works Department prior to installation of any fixture or street furniture in the public right of way.
3. The applicant agrees to indemnify, hold harmless, and defend the City, its officers, agents and employees from any and all liability or claims that may be brought against the City arising out of its approval of this permit, save and except that caused by the City's active negligence.
4. Except as otherwise provided herein, this project is approved as a precise plan. After any application has been approved, if changes are proposed regarding the location or alteration of any structure, a changed plan may be submitted to the Community Development Director for approval. If the Community Development Director determines that the proposed change complies with the provisions and the spirit and intent of the approval action, and that the action would have been the same for the changed plan as for the approved plot plan, the Community Development Director may approve the changed plan without requiring a new public meeting.
5. Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall pay all applicable development fees including but not limited to: City sewer connection, Orange County Sanitation District Connection Fee, Transportation System Improvement Program, Fire Facility, Police Facility, Park Acquisition, Sanitation District, and School District, as required.
6. Construction permits shall be obtained for all construction work, as required by the City of Orange, Community Development Department's Building Division and Public Works Grading Division. Failure to obtain the required building permits will be cause for revocation of this permit.
7. All structures shall comply with the requirements of Municipal Code – Chapter 15.52 (Building Security Standards), which relates to hardware, doors, windows, lighting, etc. (Ord.

7-79). Approved structural drawings shall include sections of the security code that apply. Specifications, details, or security notes may be used to convey the compliance.

8. The final approved conditions of approval shall be reprinted on the first or second page of the construction documents when submitting to the Building Department for the plan check process.
9. If not utilized, project approval expires twenty-four months from the approval date. Extensions of time may be granted in accordance with OMC Section 17.08.060. The Planning entitlements expire unless Building Permits are pulled within 2 years of the original approval.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Photographs
3. Survey Forms for 112-120 W. Chapman Avenue
4. Historic Photographs
5. Color and Materials Board (to be provided at DRC meeting)
6. Plans (date stamped September 9, 2015)

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