



DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA DATE: APRIL 6, 2016
TO: Chair Fox and Members of the Design Review Committee
THRU: Leslie Aranda Roseberry, Planning Manager
FROM: Marissa Moshier, Associate Planner – Historic Preservation
SUBJECT: **DRC No. 4669-13 – Eidenmuller Office Building**

SUMMARY

The applicant proposes to revise the design of a previously approved railing for a new elevator tower and exterior stair at an office building at 615 E. Chapman Avenue. The building is a contributor to the Old Towne Historic District. The new elevator tower and exterior stair were approved as part of a Design Review project to repair fire damage to the historic building.

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/Owner: Dr. Gerald Eidenmuller
Property Location: 615 E. Chapman Avenue, Old Towne Historic District
General Plan Designation: Old Towne Mixed Use (0.6 FAR; 15 du/acre) (OTMIX-15S)
Zoning Classification: Old Towne Mixed Use-Spoke Street (OTMU-15S)
Existing Development: Two-story Craftsman medical office building, constructed c. 1914 as a single family residence
Property Size: 6,057 square feet
Associated Applications: Variance No. 2229-13
Previous DRC Project Review: July 3, 2013 and August 21, 2013

PUBLIC NOTICE

No Public Notice is required for this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Categorical Exemption: This project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per State CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Class 1 – Existing Facilities) and 15331 (Class 31 – Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation) as the project involves a minor alteration to a previously approved railing on an elevator tower/exterior stair addition to a historic building in conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is requesting a modification to a previously approved railing on a new elevator tower/exterior stair at the rear of a historic medical office building in the Old Towne Historic District. The building was damaged by fire in late 2011. The previously approved project consisted of:

- Removal of an exterior stair and balcony
- Construction a free-standing, two-story elevator tower with an exterior stair at the rear of the building to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. The elevator tower is 29 feet 8 inches in height and clad in wood lap siding.
- Two small additions to the rear of the building

The DRC reviewed and continued the project on July 3, 2013 and recommended approval of the project to the Planning Commission on August 21, 2013. The Planning Commission approved the project, including a Variance for the height of the elevator tower, on September 16, 2013. A building permit for the project was issued in May 2014, and construction is nearing completion.

The previously approved project included a glass railing with wood posts and a wood top rail at the balcony and walkway of the new exterior stair at the rear of the building. The glass panels were proposed to be divided by steel mullions, echoing the divided lights on the building’s historic windows.

The new proposal for the railing consists of 4x4 wood posts with a single pane of clear glass spanning the distance between the posts. The railing does not include a top or bottom rail. The posts will have a simple beveled top. The applicant is requesting the modification to reduce the maintenance and cleaning requirements for a glass railing with multiple, small panes and to increase the visibility of the rear elevation of the historic building.

At three small sections of railing on the new balcony and exterior stair, the applicant is proposing a wood railing system. The applicant has already constructed these sections of the railing and provided photographs of the proposal. In one section of railing, the proposal is for a wood square picket railing with a top and bottom rail, similar to the historic balcony railing. This railing section provides a transition between the half wall and railing of the historic balcony and the new glass railing. In two other locations, the applicant is proposing wood gates/screens to screen the view of mechanical equipment on the roof of an adjacent property and to provide access to a first floor roof area for maintenance. The two wood gates are made of salvaged material from the historic building.

EXISTING SITE AND AREA CONTEXT

The property is located on the north side of the 600 block of East Chapman Avenue. It is flanked by two single-story non-contributing contemporary commercial buildings. North across an alley from the subject property is a historic single-family residential neighborhood. Houses immediately adjacent to the alley facing Cleveland and Harwood Streets, respectively, are single story bungalows.

Structures across the street to the south are primarily single story with the exception of a 2-story contemporary office building. The single story structures consist of a contributing Streamline Moderne medical office building (c. 1930), non-contributing contemporary office building, a 1½ story contributing Craftsman residential structure (1912) used as an office, and a contributing single story Mediterranean Revival residential structure (c. 1925) also used as an office.

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 No. 1 – Balcony Railing

When the project was initially reviewed by the DRC in 2013, the applicant proposed a minimal glass railing with large glass panels and wood posts. At the meeting in July 2013, the DRC discussed the contemporary design of the glass railing and recommended that the applicant consider more traditional, historically referenced elements for the railing design. In response, the applicant proposed a design that divided the large glass panes into smaller panels beneath the top rail to reference the divided light windows of the historic building. Steel mullions were incorporated into the larger glass panels to achieve this effect. The balcony top railing was proposed to have a wood top rail, while the vertical elements will be a combination of painted steel and wood posts.

After considering the maintenance required for the approved railing system, including cleaning the large number of individual glass panes, the applicant is requesting a revision to the design to allow a railing with large glass panels and wood posts. The applicant mocked up a sample of the approved railing with divided lights and provided a photograph of the mock-up in Attachment 6. With this mock-up, the applicant also realized that the approved design would obscure more of the rear elevation of the historic building and would compete with the historic building elements.

Staff recommends that a contemporary, minimal design for the railing on the rear elevation of the building is appropriate for this property. When the previous non-historic stair and railing were removed after the fire, one of the goals of the project was to reveal the historic rear elevation of the building. The proposed glass railing allows the majority of the building's rear elevation to be visible from the parking lot at the rear and from Pine Street. The proposed railing is clearly differentiated from the historic elements of the building and reflects the fact that the elevator tower and exterior stair are new additions to the historic building. The historic building's decorative wood siding and shingles will be more visible and celebrated through the glass panels.

In addition to the glass railing, there are three areas of proposed wood gates/screens at the new balcony. These wood elements are either adjacent to the historic building walls or are adjacent to the historic balcony railing on the east side of the building and provide a transition between the historic building elements and the new glass railing. The wood gates screen views of mechanical equipment on adjacent roofs and provides access to historic building elements that would otherwise be difficult to maintain. Improving access to all areas of the building supports the long-term preservation of the building. The gates are constructed of salvaged materials from the historic building and the design is compatible with the historic building and the new elevator tower/stair.

Staff recommends that the DRC finds that the proposed revised railing is in conformance with the *Secretary's Standards* and the 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 recommended 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.F.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 design and materials of the glass railing are compatible with the historic building and the new elevator tower/stair addition. The glass railing will reveal more of the historic building elements from the rear elevation, and the minimal design is clearly differentiated from the architectural style and character of the historic building. The proposed project 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.F.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 design and placement of the new railing requires minimal change to character-defining features of the building and the site. In conformance with Standards 2 and 5, the new railing retains and preserves the building’s historic features, including the decorative shingles and historic balcony railing. The materials and features that characterize the property will not be removed. In conformance with Standards 9 and 10, the new railing is compatible with the architectural features of the historic building, and is differentiated from the historic building through its simple materials and design elements. 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.F.3).*

Projects located within 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.F.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 7 in the staff report, including modifications required by the conditions of approval, and as recommended for approval by the Design Review Committee.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
 8. 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 615 E. Chapman Avenue
4. DRC Minutes from July 3 and August 21, 2013
5. Applicant Letter
6. Previously Approved Railing and Mock-up
7. Plans for Revised Railing

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