



DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA DATE: SEPTEMBER 2, 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. 4807-15 – Killefer Square**

SUMMARY

The applicant proposes to rehabilitate a historic school building for use as dormitory rooms and to construct nine new buildings with 65 units of apartment-style student housing. The Spanish Colonial Revival style school building is listed separately in the National Register of Historic Places. The proposed student housing use will require approval of a Specific Plan for the development. Prior to embarking on development of the Specific Plan, the applicant is requesting preliminary review by the Design Review Committee (DRC) to receive feedback on the proposed project, including rehabilitation of the historic building and the mass, scale and design of the new construction.

RECOMMENDED ACTION – PRELIMINARY REVIEW

Staff recommends that the DRC review the proposed project and provide comments to the applicant regarding the site plan, mass, scale, design and materials of the project and conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Applicant: Western States Housing Development Co.

Owner: Orange Unified School District

Property Location: 541 N. Lemon Street

General Plan Designation: PFI

Zoning Classification: R-3

Existing Development: 9,900 SF former elementary school building, constructed in 1931 and separately listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Two detached pre-fabricated classroom buildings and one storage shed, constructed between 1980 and 1991.

Property Size: 1.7 acres

Associated Applications: None
Previous DRC Review: None

PUBLIC NOTICE

No Public Notice was required for the preliminary review of this project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to rehabilitate the existing historic school building to contain 20 new dormitory rooms and to construct nine new buildings containing 65 apartment style student housing units. The major project components include:

- Demolition of non-contributing classroom buildings and storage shed.
- Rehabilitation of the historic building.
 - Restoration of historic building elements, including wood windows, clay tile roof, octagonal tower, courtyard corridor and outdoor stage.
 - Removal of classroom partitions and construction of new interior partitions to create dorm rooms. Existing doors to the exterior corridor around the courtyard will be removed and replaced with new recessed entrances in different locations.
 - Construction of a new dormer on the interior west elevation to create a loft area in the existing building volume.
 - Construction of large door openings at in the north and south elevations of west building wings, providing access to the courtyard.
 - Construction of free standing trellis shade structures and pool in courtyard.
 - Construction of a small addition on the south elevation of the building.
- Construction of nine new buildings, containing 65 apartment-style student housing units with two and three bedrooms.
 - The new buildings on the interior of the site are a maximum of 40 feet tall, containing 3 stories with a loft. The new buildings on the perimeter are a maximum of 32 feet tall, containing 2 stories with a loft.
 - The new buildings are designed with a smooth plaster finish, standing seam metal roof, and multi-light windows.
 - The buildings are linked by open air corridors on all levels.
- Construction of two levels of subterranean parking, providing 138 spaces, under the new buildings.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES DESIGNATION

The school building was designed in the National Register on April 7, 2015 under Criterion A (associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history) and Criterion C (embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a

significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction). The significance of the property is summarized in the designation form:

The Lydia D. Killefer School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Social History for its association with school desegregation in Southern California. The period of significance under Criterion A is 1942-1944, reflecting the year during which the school began the process of voluntarily desegregating, through the year that the desegregation process was completed. The desegregation of Killefer School is particularly significant as it took place prior to the *Méndez v. Westminster* ruling in 1947 that required schools in Southern California to desegregate.

The Killefer School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of a Spanish Colonial Revival schoolhouse in Southern California. It is a rare intact example of a schoolhouse that pre-dates the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake. The period of significance under Criterion C is 1931, the date the school was constructed (Section 8, page 10).

The following exterior character-defining features are called out in the designation form:

- Low-pitched roof
- Eaves with little overhang
- Arches above doors
- Terra cotta tile decorative vents
- Octagonal tower
- Stucco-clad exterior walls
- Asymmetrical façade
- Partially arcaded exterior walkway

Interior character-defining features that are called out include:

- Hallway arches
- Exposed rafters in northeastern classroom and north hallway

Two classroom buildings located to the north and south of the schoolhouse and one storage shed were constructed between 1980 and 1991 and are identified as non-contributing resources in the designation form.

EXISTING SITE

The existing site spans the full width of the block between N. Olive and N. Lemon streets. It is developed with a 9,900 square foot Spanish Colonial Revival style elementary school building, constructed in 1931. The building is one story with a basement and has an octagonal bell tower over the primary entrance on the east elevation. The schoolhouse has a U-shaped plan, surrounding an interior courtyard. A raised, partially arcaded, concrete exterior walkway runs on three sides of

the courtyard and serves as a corridor providing access to the classrooms and offices. At the center of the west elevation, facing the courtyard, the corridor expands into the courtyard area to create a raised stage with an arched surround. To the north and south of the schoolhouse are two non-contributing classroom buildings and a storage shed. The remainder of the site is paved for use as a surface parking lot.

EXISTING AREA CONTEXT

The property is located north of the Walnut Street northern boundary of the Old Towne Historic District. To the west are industrial and residential properties, zoned M-2 and R-2-6 respectively. To the south and east is a mix of single and multi-family residential properties, zoned R-2-6. Immediately to the north are residential properties and property owned by the Orange Unified School District, which operates the Richland Continuation High School. Property to the north also contains the non-profit Friendly Center and Killefer Park.

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

Staff is requesting the DRC provide comments on the site plan, mass, scale, design and materials of the proposed project and on the project's conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Secretary's Standards)*. In addition to the ten standards for rehabilitation of historic properties, the National Park Service (NPS) provides guidance on interpreting the Standards for specific project types. These include "Interpreting The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation" (ITS) bulletins, which provide examples of compatible and incompatible treatments to historic buildings under the *Secretary's Standards*. Staff referenced the ITS bulletins and other guidance published on the NPS website in the analysis below. The NPS publications are provided as Attachment 4 to the staff report.

Issue 1: Changes to the Historic Schoolhouse

The National Park Service provides specific guidance on rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic schools in conformance with the *Secretary's Standards* in several ITS bulletins (Nos. 11, 12, 20 and 40). The bulletins recommend preserving character-defining exterior and interior features, including corridors/circulation systems, classroom partitions, doors, and windows. Generally, compatible treatments for historic schools include inserting new uses into existing classroom spaces. This approach limits the removal of spaces and materials that are important to the character of the historic school. According to ITS Bulletin 40, corridors are "almost always character-defining features of historic buildings." Preservation of historic corridors includes the volume of the space, circulation patterns, openings onto the corridor, and finishes. According to the ITS bulletins, existing corridors and door openings should be retained to the greatest extent feasible. In some cases, existing doors may be fixed in place in corridors to allow more flexibility of the layout of interior spaces inserted into classrooms, while still retaining the patterns and materials of the doors in the corridor.

NPS also provides guidance on additions to mid-sized historic buildings. According to ITS Bulletin 3, an addition will generally meet the *Secretary's Standards* if it is located at the rear or on a secondary or inconspicuous elevation; if its size and scale are limited and appropriate for the historic building; if it does not obscure character-defining features of the building; and if it is designed to be clearly differentiated from the historic building.

The applicant proposes to rehabilitate the exterior of the historic school building, including repairing historic windows and restoring the historic clay tile roof. The project includes removing the interior classroom partitions, creating a new loft space in the historic building with addition of a dormer on the west elevation, and removing and repositioning the existing classroom doors onto the exterior walkway. The courtyard will be reused as a common recreational space for the development with a swimming pool. The applicant is also proposing an addition to the secondary south elevation. The proposed addition is located on the secondary south elevation, set back from the primary street-facing elevation. It is connected to the historic building through a small hyphen with skylights.

Staff requests that the DRC provide comments on the following, along with any other issues related to changes to the historic building:

- Removal of classroom partitions and corridor doors
- New door openings on the courtyard
- Reuse of courtyard as common recreational space with pool and trellis shade structures
- Addition to south elevation

Issue 2: Compatibility of New Construction

The NPS website provides specific guidance on new construction within the boundaries of historic properties. Generally, the design, density and placement of new construction should respect the overall character of the site. This includes:

- Related new construction – including buildings, driveways, parking lots, landscape improvements and other new features – must not alter the historic character of a property. A property’s historic function must be evident even if there is a change of use.
- The location of new construction should be considered carefully in order to follow the setbacks of historic buildings and to avoid blocking their primary elevations. New construction should be placed away from or at the side or rear of historic buildings and must avoid obscuring, damaging, or destroying character-defining features of these buildings or the site.
- Protecting the historic setting and context of a property, including the degree of open space and building density, must always be considered when planning new construction on an historic site. This entails identifying the formal or informal arrangements of buildings on the site, and whether they have a distinctive urban, suburban, or rural character. For example, a historic building traditionally surrounded by open space must not be crowded with dense development.
- As with new additions, the massing, size, scale, and architectural features of new construction on the site of a historic building must be compatible with those of the historic building. When visible and in close proximity to historic buildings, the new construction must be subordinate to these buildings. New construction should also be distinct from the old and must not attempt to replicate historic buildings elsewhere on site and to avoid creating a false sense of historic development.
- The limitations on the size, scale, and design of new construction may be less critical the farther it is located from historic buildings (“New Construction within the Boundaries of Historic Properties, Attachment 4).

The applicant proposes construction of nine new buildings containing apartment-style student housing. The maximum height of the buildings (40 feet) is positioned at the center of the development to limit visual impacts on the historic building and the neighborhood. The buildings

step down to 32 feet on the perimeter to interface with the surrounding neighborhood. The historic schoolhouse is 23 feet tall with a 33 foot tall tower element.

The new buildings surround the historic schoolhouse at the rear and north side. To the west, the new construction is 20 feet, wall-to-wall, from the historic building. To the north, one new building is approximately 8 feet from the north wall of the historic building. The new buildings also are connected through a series of open air corridors on all levels, which increases the appearance of the mass of the new construction in relation to the historic building.

The proposed buildings have a smooth stucco finish and gable roofs covered with standing seam metal. The smooth stucco finish is similar to the finish of the historic schoolhouse, while the standing seam roofs reference the partially industrial character of the neighborhood. The large multi-light windows are intended to reflect the scale and appearance of the historic windows in the schoolhouse.

Staff requests that the DRC provide comments on the following, along with any other issues related to the new construction:

- Site plan and density, including distances of new buildings from the historic schoolhouse and open space.
- Mass and scale of the new buildings, including the interface with the historic building and with the surrounding neighborhood of single and multi-family residences and industrial and institutional properties.
- Architectural features and materials, in relation to the design and materials of the historic buildings.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Photographs
3. National Register of Historic Places designation for Killefer School
4. National Park Service guidance on rehabilitation and the *Secretary's Standards*
5. Plans

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