



# *DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE*

## AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA DATE: NOVEMBER 2, 2016  
TO: Chair Fox and Members of the Design Review Committee  
THRU: Anna Pehoushek, Assistant Community Development Director  
FROM: Marissa Moshier, Historic Preservation Planner  
SUBJECT: **DRC No. 4807-15 – Killefer Square**

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### **SUMMARY**

The applicant proposes to adaptively reuse a historic school building and construct new buildings for student housing. The Spanish Colonial Revival style school building is listed separately in the National Register of Historic Places. The Design Review Committee (DRC) conducted a third preliminary review of the project on October 5, 2016. The DRC commented that the site plan was an improvement over previous designs; however, the size, mass, scale and setbacks of the new construction did not appear to be compatible with the historic school or the surrounding neighborhood. The applicant revised the project by increasing the setbacks of the new construction on N. Lemon Street and reducing the height of some of the buildings. The applicant is requesting an additional preliminary review by the DRC to receive feedback on the revised project.

### **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 for conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and compatibility with the neighborhood.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Applicant: Western States Housing Development Co.  
Owner: Orange Unified School District  
Property Location: 541 N. Lemon Street  
General Plan Designation: PFI (Public Facilities and Institutions)  
Zoning Classification: R-3 (Multi-Family Residential)

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: 1.82 acres

Associated Applications: Specific Plan, Zone Change

Previous DRC Review: Preliminary reviews on September 2, 2015 and August 17, 2016

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

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

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes to convert the existing historic school building into student housing units and to construct new buildings containing additional student housing units. The proposal for rehabilitation of the historic school remains unchanged from the prior preliminary review. The major changes to the new construction include:

- Increase in the new building setbacks on N. Lemon Street from 8 feet to between 12 and 20 feet. The majority of the building walls will be set back 20 feet from the sidewalk. In some locations, stair wells will be set back by 12 feet.
- Reduction in overall height of largest new building. The building at the northwest corner of the site has been reduced from 58 feet to 47 feet. This includes the removal of one story of habitable area, so that the proposed building would be five stories, instead of six. The upper floor of this building will also be recessed an additional 17 feet from the building wall facing N. Lemon Street.
- Change from gable roof to flat roof for the majority of the new construction, including the three story buildings flanking the view corridor.
- The view corridor with playing fields and landscape areas allowing views of the historic school courtyard from N. Lemon Street has been retained.

## **HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

Killefer School was designated 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).

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.

The LSA Historical Resources Impacts Analysis dated July 2016 identifies a more complete list of character-defining features:

- Spatial relationships between the main schoolhouse and the adjacent residential properties and streets, including the configuration of the landscaped setback and walkways on the east side of the building
- Roughly U-shaped plan with courtyard
- Low-pitched roof with tower and chimney
- Narrow eaves with exposed rafter tails
- Asymmetrical east elevation
- Arched openings and transoms
- Stucco wall cladding
- Octagonal tower (with bell, hardware, round tile vents, and cover-covered wood lattice railing)
- Partially arcaded exterior walkways, including the square posts with chamfered corners and bull-nosed brackets that support the roof over the covered walkway
- Wood-framed, nine paned windows and their arrangement in singles and trios in the east elevation
- Wood-framed, three paned windows, including clerestory windows in the west façade
- Tiled steps and landings on the east elevation
- String course on arched entry in east elevation
- Copper rain gutters and downspouts
- Canale (round tile) vents
- Original carved wood doors
- Configuration of offices, classrooms, hallways, openings, etc.
- Hallway and other interior arches
- Wood floors
- Chalkboard supports and any original, intact chalkboards

- Original built-in cabinets, shelves, closets, etc.
- Exposed rafters in the northeastern classroom and north hallway

The applicant addressed treatment of the majority of the character-defining features of the building in the previous DRC review on October 5, 2016.

## **EXISTING SITE**

The site spans the 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 (20 feet tall) 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 a courtyard which opened onto a play yard when the school was in use. The courtyard is visible on the west side of the property from N. Lemon Street. 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 boundary of the National Register and local Old Towne historic districts. To the west are industrial and residential properties, zoned M-2 and R-2-6 respectively. Properties immediately to the west across N. Lemon Street are located within the boundary of the Old Towne historic districts. 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.

The surrounding area is characterized primarily by one story single family residences. The houses are modest with consistent front and side yards setbacks that create the established low-scale residential character of the neighborhood. The majority of the houses were constructed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and reflect a typical detached single-family residential pattern of development from that period. Industrial properties are located to the northwest of the project site, primarily along the railroad corridor. These properties contain one story warehouse and manufacturing buildings. The majority of the buildings are set back from the street and appear to be between 20 and 30 feet tall. Within the streetscape, the buildings appear as low-scale, horizontal developments (See Attachment 3: Context Photographs).

## **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).

For the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the property is considered to be a historical resource, because it is separately designated in the National Register. Under CEQA, the project must be evaluated for potential impacts to the historical resource. A project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of the historical resource may have a significant effect on the environment. Projects that are found to be in conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* are generally considered to have a less than significant impact on the historical resource.

The property is located across N. Lemon Street from the boundary of the Old Towne historic districts. Modest single-family residences within the historic districts face the project site. The historic districts are also historical resources for the purposes of CEQA, and the project must be evaluated for potential indirect and cumulative impacts to the character and significance of the historic districts. In addition, separate from the issues of potential impacts to historical resources, the project must be evaluated for potential impacts to the aesthetics of the existing neighborhood.

### **ANALYSIS/STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES**

Staff is requesting the DRC provide comments on the site plan, mass, scale, design and materials of the revised project, the project's conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Secretary's Standards)*, and its compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.

At the DRC review on October 5, 2016, the Committee commented that the revised site plan with the view of the historic school courtyard from N. Lemon Street was an improvement to the project's compatibility with the historic resources on site and in the surrounding neighborhood. The DRC requested that the applicant increase the setbacks of the buildings on N. Lemon Street and reduce the size of the new construction, including the appearance of mass in relation to the

historic school and the surrounding properties. The DRC also requested the applicant consider the privacy of adjacent properties, particularly for the residential properties to the northeast.

In response, the applicant reduced the height of the largest new building to 47 feet and five stories. The setbacks from N. Lemon Street were increased from 8 feet to between 12 and 20 feet. The upper fifth story of the largest building was also inset from the Lemon Street elevation by an additional 17 feet. The roof forms on the majority of the new construction have also been revised to flat roofs to allow additional habitable area in the smaller three story buildings. The site plan, with the view corridor at the center of the site, remains largely unchanged from the previous review, aside from the building setbacks.

Staff agrees that the proposed new construction is an improvement on the prior design; however, it remains a proposal for a large building in a neighborhood that is primarily low-scale development. Staff recommends that the largest building remains incompatible with the historic school or the neighborhood of primarily single story small residences. The DRC commented at the review on October 5, 2016 that typically a project with only three story buildings in this context would be a challenge to make compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Staff recommends that while the applicant has addressed some of the DRC's concerns with compatibility, the project remains out of scale with the historic school and the neighborhood. The articulation of the building mass does not reflect the typical pattern of modest houses on N. Lemon or N. Olive streets. The building also does not reflect the mass and scale of the larger industrial buildings to the northwest of the property, as it is substantially taller and closer to the sidewalk than those nearby warehouse and manufacturing buildings. The proposal also does not address the privacy of adjacent properties, particularly on the interface at the northeast side of the project. Staff recommends that the new construction will substantially change the character of N. Lemon Street.

Staff requests that the DRC provide comments on the revisions to the size, mass, scale and design of the new construction, its interface with the surrounding single and multi-family residences and industrial properties, and compatibility with the neighborhood.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Photographs
3. Context Photographs
4. Draft DRC Minutes, October 5, 2016
5. DRC Minutes, August 17, 2016
6. DRC Minutes, September 2, 2015
7. National Register of Historic Places designation for Killefer School
8. National Park Service guidance on rehabilitation and the *Secretary's Standards*
9. LSA Killefer Square Historical Resources Impacts Assessment, July 2016 (addressing earlier preliminary review project)
10. LSA Memorandum, dated October 21, 2016 (addressing current preliminary review project)
11. Plans, date stamped October 17, 2016

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