



DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA DATE: DECEMBER 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. 4816-15 – Dang Residences**

SUMMARY

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing buildings and to construct three new apartment buildings and one detached garage. The proposal includes a total of seven apartment units. One two-story building on the north side of the property will contain three apartment units. One two-story building on the southwest side of the property will contain one freestanding unit, and one two-story duplex building will be constructed on the east side of the property. The applicant is in the design development phase and is requesting an early preliminary review by the Design Review Committee (DRC) to receive feedback on the proposed site plan, 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, and design of the project and conformance with the Old Towne Design Standards and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Applicant/Owner: Guneeta and Sandeep Dang
Property Location: 655 S. Glassell Street
General Plan Designation: Medium Density Residential
Zoning Classification: R-3
Existing Development: 2,763 SF two story, single-family residence with attached garage constructed in 1942 and a storage shed
Property Size: 18,445 SF
Associated Applications: CUP 2994-15, MNSP 0827-15
Previous DRC Review: None

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing buildings and construct three new buildings containing a total of seven apartment units, along with one detached two-car garage. The major project components include:

- Demolition of the existing single family residence and storage shed.
- Construction of three new apartment buildings, including:
 - A two-story building containing four apartment units and five enclosed parking spaces on the north side of the property. Three of the units have four bedrooms. One unit has two bedrooms.
 - A two-story building containing one townhouse style unit on the southwest side of the property. The unit has four bedrooms.
 - A two-story duplex on the east side of the property, accessed from S. Orange Street. Each unit has two bedrooms.
- Proposed Floor Area Ratio of 0.52.
- 20 foot setbacks from both the S. Glassell and S. Orange frontages.
- A new driveway apron on S. Glassell Street.
 - Only the duplex will take access from S. Orange Street. The other two buildings, containing a total of five units, will take access from S. Glassell Street.
- Construction of a new detached two-car garage, providing parking for the duplex.
- An uncovered parking area along the south property line at the center of the site.

HISTORIC RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

The existing single family residence was evaluated in City's historic resources survey in 1991 and was found to be a non-contributor to the Old Towne Historic District. In 2009, as part of the update to the historic resources survey associated with the City's General Plan Update, Chattel, Inc. re-surveyed the property and found it to be a non-contributor to the Historic District, because it was constructed outside of the Historic District's period of significance (1888-1940). The following description was included in the updated survey form:

The double sized .423 acre property is two lots deep with frontage on both Glassell Street and Orange Street. The rear yard of the house fronts on the cul-de-sac at the southern terminus of Orange Street, a narrow street lined with historic single-family bungalows extending to the northeast. The Watson House is well set back from both streets, with prominent open front and back yards and located just at the edge of the Old Towne Historic District.

The form continues in the Opportunities section with:

May warrant special consideration for local planning. It was constructed in 1941 by Kellar Watson, Sr., founder of Watson's Drugs, the oldest business in the City of Orange and the oldest continuously operating pharmacy in the Orange County. Though the property does not meet the 1940 DOC restriction for Historic standing, it is a property of local historic interest due to its identification with a person of significant local importance and its striking interior architecture.

The applicant engaged LSA Associates, Inc. (LSA) to re-evaluate the property and prepare an updated Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) 523 survey form. The LSA report clarifies that the property was constructed by Kellar Watson, Jr., son of Watson's Drug founder, Kellar Watson, Sr. It finds that the building is not eligible for individual designation in the California Register of Historical Resources or at the local level. In summary, the report provides the following history of the property:

The property was purchased by Kellar E. Watson, Jr. in 1938 and the residence was constructed in 1942. As discussed in some detail in the attached DPR forms, Watson's father was the founder of the iconic Watson Drug Store and Soda Fountain, which is widely considered the City's oldest and best known business. Watson, Jr. followed in his father's footsteps, taking over the drug store after his father's retirement in 1928. Watson, Jr. served as pharmacist until his own retirement in 1965. During that time, he was well-known in the community both for his business and his community involvement (LSA Report: Page 1)

Although the DPR form states that the building was constructed in 1941, the LSA report indicates that it was constructed in 1942, based on the records of the Orange County Assessor. The LSA report's date is based directly on a primary source, and staff considers the correct date of construction to be 1942. LSA recommends updating the property's survey form to status code 6Z, meaning "found ineligible for National Register, California Register or local designation through survey evaluation," based on the following assessment:

Watson, Jr.'s residence is located within the Old Towne Orange Historic District, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1997. However, it is not a contributor to that district because it was built outside the period of significance (1888-1940). It is a modest example of an altered vernacular residence with Ranch style influences. Since its construction in 1942, the original windows have been replaced with modern vinyl windows, a non-original chimney was added, and additional parking was added in the rear. It is unremarkable from an architectural standpoint and its integrity has been compromised. In addition, no evidence was found indicating that Watson, Jr. used his residence for work or important social affairs and the community most closely associates him with the business that bears his name, retains the décor from his 1947 remodel, and is most representative of his life's work (LSA Report: Page 1).

The DPR forms attached to the LSA report provide additional information on the history of the property and the evaluation of its significance (See Attachment 3).

EXISTING SITE

The existing site spans the full width of the block between S. Glassell and S. Orange streets. It is developed with a 2,763 square foot single family residence with garage, constructed in 1942. Access to the site is taken from S. Orange Street only; there is no drive apron on S. Glassell Street. The two story house was built by local businessman Kellar Watson, Jr. and was occupied by the Watson family for approximately 50 years. There is a small storage shed on the north side of the property.

EXISTING AREA CONTEXT

The property is located immediately north of Hart Park within the boundaries of the Old Towne Historic District. The east side of the property fronts a cul-de-sac on S. Orange Street lined with a mix of single and multi-family residences that are contributors to the Historic District. The west side of the property fronts S. Glassell Street with multi-family residences to the north.

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, and design for conformance with the Old Towne Design Standards and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Secretary's Standards)*. The project is at an early stage

in design development, so the full elevations of the apartment buildings have not been developed. However, the applicant requested that the DRC review the project, so that the DRC's comments can be incorporated into additional designs for the site plan, mass, and scale of the development.

Issue 1: Demolition of Existing Buildings

Staff concurs with the findings of the LSA report that the property does not appear to be individually eligible for the California Register or for local designation. The property is associated with Kellar Watson, Jr. and the Watson family; however, that association does not appear to rise to a level of significance warranting designation as an individual historic resource. The National Park Service provides guidance on evaluating the significance of properties associated important people in *National Register Bulletin 32* (See Attachment 4). The National Park Service advises that "eligible properties generally are those associated with the productive life of the individual in the field in which (s)he achieved significance."

In the case of Kellar Watson, Jr. and the Watson family, the fields in which the family achieved significance are related to civic and business affairs. Watson, Jr.'s importance within these contexts is most closely associated with Watson's Drug and Soda Fountain at 116 E. Chapman Avenue. He served as owner and pharmacist for over 30 years, having inherited the business from his father. Watson, Jr. was a prominent Orange citizen involved in many community groups and civic organizations, but it appears that the significant work of his productive life was conducted primarily at Watson's in the Plaza. The Watson house at 655 S. Glassell Street was not closely associated with the operation of the business or with his civic service and does not appear to be eligible as a historic resource for its association with the Watson family (California Register Criterion 2).

The property also does not appear to be associated with broad patterns of California or local history (California Register Criterion 1) and is not a particularly important or distinct example of an architectural style (California Register Criterion 3). The building is a modest example of a vernacular single-family residence with some elements of Ranch style. In addition, the original windows in the building have been replaced with vinyl, impacting the integrity of the building.

Staff also concurs with the previous survey findings and the LSA report that the property is not a contributor to either the National Register or local Old Towne Historic District, due to its date of construction, architectural style and level of alteration.

Issue 2: Site Plan and Compatibility of Design

The applicant has provided a preliminary site plan of the development, thumbnail studies of potential elevations for the apartment buildings on the west side of the property, and more detailed elevations and floor plans for the duplex fronting S. Orange Street. Staff and the applicant are requesting the DRC's comments on the initial design of the project, so that comments can be incorporated early in design development.

The proposed new construction is two stories in height, ranging from approximately 23 feet to 26 feet tall. The majority of the development is concentrated on the north side of the property, which

is intended to provide a buffer between the adjacent residential properties and the open space and parking areas of this development. The mass, scale and design of the duplex unit is intended to reference and be compatible with the properties on S. Orange Street, while the four unit apartment building on the north side of the property references the larger scale of the multi-family developments on S. Glassell Street.

In order to reduce potential impacts to circulation, only a new two-car garage for the duplex will take access from S. Orange. The remaining five apartment units and additional parking spaces will take access from a new driveway on S. Glassell Street. The center drive on S. Glassell Street, flanked by two buildings, references a courtyard apartment design and is similar to other multi-family residential construction on this block. The proposed new two-car garage to the east is located at a 20 foot setback from S. Orange Street, in line with the front corner of the new duplex. This configuration, with the house and garage at the same front setback, is not common for this block and is not typical of the Historic District in general.

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

- Site plan, including the locations of the new buildings, open space, hardscape, parking areas, and compatibility of the site layout with surrounding properties and the Historic District.
- Mass and scale of the new buildings, including the interface with the surrounding neighborhood of single and multi-family residences.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. LSA Associates, Inc. Historic Resource Assessment and Updated DPR Forms
3. National Register Bulletin 32: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Properties Associated with Significant Persons
4. Plans (dated December 3, 2015)

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