

Public Comment re 228 N Main St and APN 018-153-28, FILE NO.: UP 2-23, DR 3-23, and SP 8-23; February 14, 2024 Planning Commission Meeting

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Thu 2/1/2024 10:48 PM

To:cdd <cdd@fortbragg.com>

Cc:'Bear Poos' <jjbearpoos@gmail.com>

I support the development of this property. It is currently vacant and does not enjoy the maintenance that a building in use would.

Further, it would constructively expand the downtown/central business district (CBD) of Fort Bragg.

The proprietor's care in operation can currently be seen at its current location in the Boatyard Shopping Center.

While the premises there are somewhat casually kept, my hope is that the new location will afford both commercial and residential use in a constructive, attractive, and hygienic manner.

I support the development of this property as the intended uses are consistent with apparent community goals for development, remove abandoned and derelict property by use and occupancy, and increase constructive commerce, patronage, and use in the area.

Best Regards,

Andrew Jordan
Fort Bragg, CA

Initial Thoughts on UP 2-23, DR 3-23 & SP 8-23

Jacob Patterson <jacob.patterson.esq@gmail.com>

Fri 2/2/2024 3:33 PM

To:cdd <cdd@fortbragg.com>

Cc:Marie Jones <marie@mariejonesconsulting.com>

Community Development Department,

I reviewed the application materials for this project and want to share my initial thoughts. (I copied Marie because she was involved with the original application review based on correspondence in the project file.) First, I want to say that I am broadly supportive of this project and think it is an excellent fit for our CBD. That said, I do have a few questions, concerns and observations concerning some of the details, particularly related to the Design Review and the lighting for the signs.

The signs themselves appear to be very attractive, however, the sign materials were not clear. Staff notes indicated ambiguity about the lighting. Based on what I reviewed, it appears that the signs will be externally lit with spotlights. Ground-mounted spot lights are not dark sky compliant and the external sign lighting--our Citywide Design Guidelines encourage externally-lit signage over internal illumination--could be problematic. A great example of a complaint and attractive sign is the Baymont Inn sign, with its high-quality materials and down-cast external illumination. I recommend the same type of lighting for this sign and a requirement for high-quality sign materials (i.e., nothing plastic or vinyl). The application materials don't actually appear to be complete because we have mock-ups of the signs but little information about the sign materials. The signs should be wood, metal or an attractive composite material like the Baymont Inn sign. frankly, the lack of materials in the application should have been flagged among the issues that made the initial application incomplete. This results from the following applicable MANDATORY standard from the Design Guidelines "2. Signs shall coordinate with the building design, materials, color, size, and placement."

Regarding the overall Design Review, I also think the application is currently incomplete because there is not a color scheme or materials board included. In the least, we need to know the proposed color scheme of the building in order to evaluate the proposed exterior design's consistency with the Citywide Design Guidelines. IMO, the proposed changes to the building's exterior are not consistent with the Citywide Design Guidelines because the currently contrasting trim is proposed to match the main walls (I assume color-wise, even though the color is not disclosed in anything I was able to review.) More concerning is the proposal to remove nearly all of the architectural detail in the current building by removing the existing wood siding and replacing it all with stucco that covers the remainder of the building. This is going in the opposite direction as we should be requiring based on the various applicable components of the Design Guidelines, including the MANDATORY standards.

A great example is found on page 12:

1. Structures shall be well-articulated on all sides visible from public streets and views. The highest level of articulation occurs on the front façade, and on all elevations visible from the public right of way. This includes variation in massing, roof forms, and wall planes, as well as surface articulation. Avoid boxy and monotonous facades that lack human scale dimensions and have large expanses of flat blank wall planes visible to the public.

Making everything stucco and likely the same color without variation (including patching in stucco that almost never looks good unless it is executed perfectly) is in direct conflict with this mandatory standard.

Another example from page 12 is:

4. Architectural details and materials shall be incorporated on the lower part of the building facade to relate to human scale. These pedestrian scale elements can include awnings, trellises, windows, building base articulation, and changes in materials, textures, and colors.

Here, there are no varied materials in the lower portion of the building. If this project didn't involve voluntary changes to the facade of the existing building, I don't think we would need to review many of the standards in the Design Guidelines but since they are proposing to alter the exterior materials by removing the wood siding and replacing it with more stucco, we need to consider what the Design Guidelines require, encourage, and discourage concerning the exterior aspects that are being voluntarily changed from those on the existing building. (If all they were proposing was repainting, that would be a different story and we would mostly be talking about the proposed paint palette/color scheme but that appears to have been omitted from the application materials for some unknown reason.)

Page 12 also includes preferred standards, which seem to be undermined by the proposed removal of the varying exterior materials and replacing it all with mono-colored stucco:

Preferred Standards

1. Architectural elements that add visual interest, scale, and character such as projecting balconies, trellises, recessed windows, window and door detailing, or green garden walls should be incorporated to help articulate facades and blank walls.
2. Break up large building forms by vertical and horizontal variations in wall and roof planes, building projections, projecting ribs, reveals, door and window bays and similar design elements. To divide the building mass into smaller scale components, building faces over 50 feet long should reduce the perceived mass and bulk by one or more of the following: change of roof or wall plane; projecting or recessed elements, such as trellises, balconies, openings, etc.; varying cornice or rooflines; or other similar means.

IMO, they need to include some exterior variation to increase visual interest for this visually prominent building in the heart of our CBD.

Page 13 also provides applicable guidance:

Architectural Form & Detail

Mandatory Standards

...

2. Commercial development shall complement and/or incorporate design elements and features from the historic architectural styles of the Central Business District, such as bay windows, porches, projecting eaves, awnings, and similar elements that add visual interest to the development

Preferred Standards

1. Commercial development should include a higher level of architectural detailing and higher quality materials at the pedestrian level of the building.

2. Architectural style should be compatible with the surrounding character, including building style, form, size, materials, and roofline.
3. The use of awnings, canopies, recesses, and arcades is strongly encouraged to provide protection for pedestrians and to add interest and color to buildings. Awning placement should fit within the scale, proportion, and rhythm created by the distinct architectural elements and should not cover piers, pilasters and other architectural details. Awnings should be compatible in color and design with the buildings. Awning frames and supports should be painted or coated metal or other non-corroding material and designed to withstand wind loads.

In this case, none of these mandatory or preferred standards are demonstrated in the exterior building details. It almost seems as if the project architect was not aware of our Citywide Design Guidelines when she prepared the plans for this remodel. Of course, this is an existing building but any remodel that involves voluntary changes to a building facade still needs to meet our Design Review criteria, including the Citywide Design Guidelines to the extent feasible. That means not removing the only architectural details that provide any interest and increasing not decreasing the variety of materials. There is no reason why this building shouldn't have some art installations on the large blank walls, awnings over the doors and windows, or trellises to break up the large walls. However, with an existing building, we won't be doing things like changing the roof lines or making major site layout alterations but we still need to work with what we have and ensure that the exterior modifications don't leave us with a big boring stucco box with undefined colors.

Page 25 specifically covers remodels like this project (the underlines below are what concern me about this proposed exterior remodel):

Additions, Remodels, & Renovations

Mandatory Standards

1. The design of a proposed addition shall follow the general scale, proportion, massing, and detailing of the original structure. New additions shall be interpretations of, or improve upon, the design of the existing structure wherein the main characteristics of the existing building are incorporated or improved upon using modern construction methods. This may include:
 - a. Using similar proportions
 - b. Extending the architectural lines from the existing building to the addition
 - c. Sensitivity to the patterns of window and entrance spacing and openings
 - d. Harmonizing with existing colors and materials
 - e. Inclusion of similar architectural details (i.e. window/door trim, lighting fixtures, decoration)
2. Building materials used for the addition shall be of comparable or better quality than the existing building.

Preferred Standards

1. Introducing or changing the location, size, or style of windows or other openings that alter the architectural rhythm or character of the original building is discouraged.
2. When original decorative details and architectural elements were covered up in previous remodeling, these forgotten details should be restored and incorporated in the design of the remodeled building.

These standards do not appear to be met by this proposal, particularly the MANDATORY requirement to include similar architectural details because of the proposal to remove the contrasting wood siding and replace it with matching stucco. Now, old deteriorated wood probably needs to be replaced but it should be done with something other than stucco (other than perhaps on the lower walls that will no longer be aligned with the upper windows). Period-appropriate architectural details would involve

composite siding with vertical lines or even something different like metal panels or a row of tile or a tile mosaic around the building crown. Ironically, the eastern facade actually includes more architectural detail than the street-facing western facade and similar vertical elements could be incorporated into the western and southern facades rather than eliminating all architectural detail and variation by making everything the same stucco. Frankly, the architect should probably review the Design Guidelines and prepare altered external facades to reflect the mid-century character of the building rather than proceeding with the public hearing on the 14th (unless she can prepare them by then).

Please note that Chapter 3 of the Design Guidelines also applies to this project because it is in the CBD and the exterior of the building is being altered to a significant degree. The proposed exterior details fail to meet some of the applicable standards and should be modified, IMO.

I also have a few unrelated questions/observations:

1. Is there proposed bicycle parking and where will it be?
2. Where will the EV charging stations be located within the parking lot, if any?
3. Can the generator be relocated to a less visually-prominent location, ideally screened and on the building roof like the other mechanical equipment?
4. Is there an opportunity for an outside dining area, perhaps a few tables, if not a permanent cover over them? Perhaps along the northern elevation near to where the walk-up ATMS used to be?
5. How will they address the existing flooding and drainage issues at the southwestern corner of the parking lot?

Regards,

--Jacob

Public Comment -- 2/14/24 PC Mtg., Item No. 6A, Bear Pizza

Jacob Patterson <jacob.patterson.esq@gmail.com>

Sat 2/10/2024 12:01 PM

To:cdd <cdd@fortbragg.com>

Cc:Marie Jones <marie@mariejonesconsulting.com>

- Planning Commission,

Now that I have had a chance to read the agenda materials rather than just the application materials, I am happy to say that several of my concerns have been addressed (e.g., dark-sky lighting requirements) but I do still have some concerns about the exterior modifications. The two aspects that still concern me are removing the contrasting materials and colors in the areas currently sided with plywood, and the proposed window placement. However, I think you can still approve this project if you either disagree with my opinions concerning the design review or add some special conditions to address the issues. This is when not having a professional architect on the Planning Commission (or among planning staff) really makes me miss Jay Andreis, he was always on top of the design review details and had great suggestions on how to improve them to meet the Design Guidelines to the greatest extent feasible, which is an express requirement of the Design Guidelines that seems to get overlooked in many of our design reviews.

If you are fine with stucco replacing the wood elements, I suggest requiring the upper portion of the building with the current wood band to be painted a contrasting color from the base wall color. In fact, I suggest you require the entire building to be repainted with a consistent color scheme to remove the different exterior colors from where the Mendocino Chocolate Company store used to occupy part of the western facade. The building should have a coherent color scheme and they will obviously have to do repainting anyway since they are proposing significant stucco patching. I suspect they might intend to repaint anyway and it was unintentionally omitted from the application because some of the City's permit handouts are a little ambiguous and staff might not have highlighted it for them. You can accomplish a lot simply with paint even if a building lacks a lot of variation in architectural materials and design elements.

The other concern is the new window placement, particularly on the upper portions of the west and south elevations (the east and north seem fine as proposed). This building's architectural style and the current design, which is supposed to be extended to proposed alterations, involves evenly-spaced windows that are symmetrically placed relative to the SW corner of the building. This regular size and pattern of windows is part of the mid-century architectural style of the building. That extends to the vertical wooden panels that extend down from the windows. It would have been much better and in line with our Citywide Design Guidelines, to maintain a standard pattern of window size and placement on the upper west and south facades, with the new windows for the eastern residential units mimicking the pattern and placement of the existing windows to the west. However, I recognize that the interior layouts may have contributed to the new window placement but they should be as uniform, at least in size, if not in placement, to maintain the architectural character of the building itself. The proposed upper windows lack consistency with these design considerations because they are a mish-mash of shapes, sizes, and placement relative to each other as currently proposed.

I hope the project architect will attend the meeting so she can address any possible design amendments. Most well-designed buildings include some level of symmetry or consistent patterns

when it comes to window size and placement and we should expect that here to the greatest extent feasible balanced with interior layout limitations.

I recommend you craft additional special conditions to accomplish the following:

- Require screening of the generator proposed for the north.
- Require the building to be repainted in a consistent color scheme that involves color variation on different architectural elements (e.g., the top band).
- Require a different window layout for the upper floor that is as consistent as possible with the current window placement, relative symmetry, and consistent size and orientation.
- Permit them the option to add an exterior dining area even though they haven't requested it, including potential covered area on the north side.

Regards,

--Jacob

Follow-up Public Comment -- 2/14/24 PC Mtg., Item No. 6A, Bear's Pizza

Jacob Patterson <jacob.patterson.esq@gmail.com>

Tue 2/13/2024 11:19 AM

To:cdd <cdd@fortbragg.com>

Cc:Marie Jones <marie@mariejonesconsulting.com>

Planning Commission,

I was able to review the proposed upstairs floor plan for the four residential units this morning and would like to suggest a potential solution to my concern about the altered window patterns and sizes for the second floor of the former BofA building. The west facade is proposed to retain the existing three windows in their current locations, which is great. The south facade needs to accommodate windows for the four separate residential units. Currently, there are three types of windows proposed, single windows of a similar, if not the same, size and shape as the existing windows; double windows that are basically two of the single windows side-by-side in a single unit; and one smaller window for the main room of one of the units that needs to fit into the inside corner where the building juts out further to the south as it goes east. I looked at where the interior walls divide the space between the four units to determine where windows could not be located and it is feasible to reconfigure the windows in a manner that basically continues the flow of windows of the same size as the three retained windows on the west facade. This can be accomplished by breaking up the proposed double windows and replacing them with a series of single windows that are spaced out as evenly as possible and are of a uniform size and shape across the entire south facade except the one smaller window, which can still be the same height as, and aligned with, the other windows. There is one window into a bathroom and it should probably include opaque or obscured glass (e.g. reeded or another surface pattern).

The current window configuration is as follows (from west to east):

- 1st (western) unit has two single windows
- 2nd unit has two double windows
- 3rd unit has the small window and a double window
- 4th (eastern) unit has two double windows

The following recommended reconfiguration would be as consistent as is possible with the Citywide Design Guidelines without moving any internal walls or fixtures:

- 1st unit retains two single windows with potential minor spacing adjustments to maintain a pattern across the south facade
- 2nd unit could replace the two double windows with three single windows (evenly spaced in a row with the windows from the first unit)
- 3rd unit retains the small single window and replaces the double window with two single windows (evenly spaced with the windows of the 4th unit)
- 4th unit replaces the two double windows with three single windows (evenly spaced with the windows from the 3rd unit)

Please keep in mind that this alteration in the design would likely have no to a minimal financial impact to the overall construction budget. The only real consequence would be that the windows wouldn't necessarily line up with the likely interior furniture layout the same way as the current configuration because the double windows would be replaced with a series of single windows that are

a different shape so all windows would have the same height and be aligned across the south facade. Any of these windows could open to facilitate air flow if that was part of the purpose for proposed double windows.

I believe the thought was to have double windows next to dining tables in two of the units but there wouldn't really be any loss in overall window surface area or views by replacing the incongruent double windows with a series of single windows of uniform size and shape. These changes are directly related to the citywide design guidelines and to the particular changes proposed in this application. I think these changes along with painting and color scheme requirements in the form of new special conditions (i.e., not subject to your further review but for the Director to review and sign off on as compliant with the Commission's direction) would make this project as consistent as it could be with the mandatory and the applicable preferred design guidelines allowing you to comfortably approve it. These minor changes (from a feasibility and financial perspective) provide large community benefits in maintaining a more consistent and attractive building exterior at a very prominent location in our CBD.

I suspect that the current windows' shapes and placement are driven more by interior layout considerations rather than the exterior appearance but our Design Guidelines are almost exclusively concerned with a building's exterior components that are visible from the public right of way. Your job is to make sure these proposed projects meet our planning requirements and I strongly believe that these changes are necessary to do that. I have seen too many Design Reviews completely dismiss an applicable design guideline because of what is included in the application rather than try to get the project to be as consistent as is feasible with the applicable guidelines, which I want to emphasize is a mandatory requirement of the Citywide Design Guidelines themselves (i.e., even preferred guidelines are supposed to be followed as closely as it is practical to do so).

I think this project is great and fully support it but encourage you to make these changes, which I predict will not be objectionable to the applicant since they shouldn't increase their costs other than minor alterations to the existing plans by their architect or delay the project. That is why I am suggesting very specific recommended solutions to the concerns I have identified as part of my review as a member of the public. There is nothing I like less than people who can only identify problems but have no practical suggestions for solutions to the issues they identified.

Regards,

--Jacob