

ITEM 7-C

CITY OF ALAMEDA

Memorandum

To: Honorable President and
Members of the Planning Board

From: David Sablan
Planner I

Date: October 26, 2015

Re: **PLN15-0198 – 1926 Park Street – Applicant: Bridgett Shank on behalf of Park Esquire, LLC.** The applicant requests approval of Design Review and a Use Permit to construct an approximately 4,200-square-foot, five-building mixed use complex using repurposed shipping containers. Four (4) buildings will be single tenant office buildings, and one (1) building will be retail/café on the ground floor and a residential unit on the second floor and third floor. A Use Permit is required for ground floor office space and outdoor seating in the NP-G (North Park Street, Gateway) zoning district. This project is categorically exempt from further environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, Section 15332 – Infill Development Projects.

BACKGROUND

On September 14, 2015, the Planning Board held a public hearing to consider the applicant's request for approval of Design Review and a Use Permit to develop a mixed use development constructed out of shipping containers, which featured ground floor offices (staff report attached as Exhibit 1). At that meeting, the Planning Board voiced support for the Use Permit application to permit ground floor offices, but the Planning Board had several design related comments and continued the item to a later hearing date. The applicant has redesigned the project to address these comments. The project plans are attached as Exhibit 2.

ANALYSIS

Based on Planning Board feedback at the September 14, 2015 meeting, the applicant made the following design revisions:

Corner Design: The Board gave direction to incorporate a more dynamic design feature at the corner of Park Street and Blanding Avenue given the site's importance as a gateway property. It was understood by the Board that a project composed of shipping containers would require flexibility from the City's Design Review Manual due to the physical constraints of designing and constructing with shipping containers. However, flexibility from the design manual should be justified by a significant design feature at the street corner.



The applicant redesigned the corner mixed-use building to be three stories tall, with an overall building height of twenty-nine feet and two inches (29'2"). The second and third stories feature thirty foot (30')

long by eight foot (8') wide shipping containers that cut through the building at a sixty degree (60°) angle. This diagonal feature is cantilevered over the outdoor seating on the first floor and sidewalk and encroaches five feet and six inches (5'6") into the public right-of-way. The third floor provides access to a 295 square foot rooftop balcony that has a forty-two inch (42") tall wood and metal guard rail. This alteration in design results in a retail/café space that is 390 square feet and residential unit that is 900 square feet.

Park Street Elevation: The design changes for the corner building have resulted in significant changes the Park Street elevation. The corner building is now setback five feet (5') from the Park Street public right-of-way, allowing the entrance to the retail/café to front on to Park Street. Moving the structure back five feet (5') from the sidewalk allows the applicant to integrate a small outdoor public space in front of the building on Park Street, as well as provide a front entrance on Park Street that will provide handicap access that is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The outdoor seating area will feature a wood deck that is one foot (1') above grade at its highest point and will be surrounded by a wood and metal guard rail that matches the guard rail of the third floor balcony. The entrance to the residential unit has been relocated to the interior elevation of the building.

Color Scheme and Accent Materials: The color and materials for the project have been modified. The project now includes more extensive use of wood accents. The base color for the project remains dark gray, however the accent colors are now royal blue and green and are used more extensively through the site. The royal blue accent is used to add visual interest to the office buildings. The green accent color is used for diagonal containers to provide a visual connection to the adjacent Park Street Bridge. The standard cut-out for a window panel is eight feet and seven inches by six feet and eleven inches (8'7" x 7'6"), with anodized aluminum grids. The bottom two feet and four inches (2'4") of these window panel cut-outs are clad with naturally stained wood panels. Staff believes the revised color scheme and wood accents work well to enhance the appearance of the project.

Signage: At the request of the Board, the applicant evaluated how business signage could be incorporated into the design of the project. The applicant is proposing to allow individual office tenants to utilize a projecting sign that is 5 square feet and has an eight foot and six inch (8'6") minimum clearance to grade. These signs will project a maximum of three feet (3') from the building where the Sign Ordinance allows projecting signs up to four feet (4'). The applicant is also proposing a sign area of 50 square feet for the retail/café to be located on the Park Street elevation. These proposed signs are all compliant with the requirements of the Sign Ordinance.



Landscaping: The project has a landscape area of approximately 3,470 square feet, and is considered a "covered project" per Alameda Municipal Code (AMC) Section 30-58, which requires compliance with the Bay-Friendly Landscaping Guidelines. Staff has confirmed that the preliminary landscape plan incorporates a collection of non-invasive and drought tolerant plants consistent with the Bay-Friendly standards.

Storm water Treatment Requirements: The Board was concerned that storm water treatment measures would affect the appearance of the landscape area if the design requirements are not verified and understood during the project design phase. The applicant has completed a C.3 Storm water Requirements Checklist for this site plan, which has been reviewed by the City's Public Works Clean Water Program (CWP) staff. Since the site is currently a 100% impervious surface parking lot, the proposed modifications to the property for this project will actually reduce the amount of storm water runoff into the Estuary generated by the site.

Other Planning Board Comments:

The applicant also made the following minor revisions in response to Board comments:

- Lighting: The revised plans and conditions of approval address the location of accent lighting intended to serve as an ancillary design feature at night. Staff believes the proposed lighting locations will enhance the project during the night while avoiding excessive glare on adjacent properties and oncoming traffic.
- Shade Analysis: The applicant provided a shade analysis, which is included in Exhibit 2.
- Residential Open Space: The addition of the third floor balcony will provide 295 square feet of private open space for the residential unit on site, which exceeds the zoning ordinance requirements for open space for the residential unit.
- Waste Management Plan: The applicant has worked with the City's Public Works Department and the City's waste management provider, Alameda County Industries, to confirm that the project will be adequately served by trash bin service. The applicant proposes storing the required trash, recycle and compost bins in the alley between Tenant 5 and the adjacent building to the southeast of the site at 2420 Blanding Ave.
- Restroom: The applicant has proposed two unisex bathrooms, one standard stall and one handicap accessible stall, to serve the retail/café space and four (4) office buildings. The Building Official has determined that both bathrooms would be required to be handicapped accessible, however if the total occupancy load of the retail/café space and office buildings is below 50, then the project would only be required to provide one unisex bathroom. The applicant has stated that the occupancy load will be below 50, and will, therefore, be able to reconfigure the bathroom to meet requisite codes without impacting the footprint or exterior elevations of the project.
- Mechanical Equipment: The applicant has provided a cut sheet/detail of the proposed mechanical equipment and provided a site plan to indicate their planned locations (Exhibit 3).

PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS

Property owners and residents within 300 feet of the project's boundaries were notified of the public hearing and given the opportunity to review and comment on the proposal. Staff has received several comments from the public in support of the project and none in opposition.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This project is determined to be Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15332, In-Fill Development Projects, based on the findings found in the draft resolution (Exhibit 5).

RECOMMENDATION

Approve PLN15-0198 for Use Permit and Design Review based on the findings and conditions contained in the Draft resolution.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Sablan
Planner I

Exhibits:

1. September 14, 2015 Planning Board Staff Report
2. Project Plans
3. Colored Renderings
4. Applicant Statement
5. Draft Resolution