

Agenda Report

TO: City Council

DATE: May 17, 2004

FROM: City Manager

SUBJECT: **CALL FOR REVIEW: CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW FOR RAYMOND THEATER REUSE AND MIXED-USE PROJECT, 121-129 NORTH RAYMOND AVENUE**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council:

Environmental Determination

Acknowledge that on January 7, 2002 the City Council certified a revised final environmental impact report (revised FEIR) with findings of fact and a statement of overriding considerations for the Raymond Theater Reuse and Mixed-Use Project.

Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance

Acknowledge that none of the trees on the site qualifies as a protected native, specimen, or landmark tree.

Findings for Concept Design Approval

1. Acknowledge that the **memorandum** from Historic Resources Group (**ATTACHMENT E**) documents the rehabilitation/restoration of the Raymond Theater building and analyzes its compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.
2. Find that the proposed **rehabilitation and restoration of the exterior of the Raymond Theater building** is consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings;
3. Find that the design of the **adjacent new construction**—if modified to comply with the recommended conditions of approval—is consistent with the Citywide Design Principles in the General Plan, the Design Guidelines for the Central District Specific Plan, the Purposes of Design Review in the municipal code, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (new construction adjacent to a historic resource); and
4. Based on these findings, **approve** the application for concept design for the rehabilitation/restoration of the theater and the adjacent new construction with the conditions in **ATTACHMENT A**, which include three conditions that differ from the recommendation from the Design Commission: 1) retaining without modification the environmental mitigation measure for treatment of the exterior brickwork on the Raymond Theater building; 2) approving the proposed installation of 12 skylights in the roof of the theater auditorium; and 3) omitting the requirement that Pasadena Heritage "must...sign off" on its easement before a 50% design review of the project.

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE DESIGN COMMISSION

The recommendation from the Design Commission to approve the project with conditions includes all of the staff recommendation, with three exceptions, found in **ATTACHMENT B**.

BACKGROUND.

In January 2002, the City Council certified an environmental impact report for the Raymond Theater mixed-use project. The approval for the variances indicated a project with 61 residential units, 28,565 square feet of commercial, retail, and office uses, and new construction on the existing surface parking lot adjacent to the theater. At that time, the Council also adopted findings of fact and a statement of overriding considerations, and it approved four variances: one for height (permitting new construction up to 65 feet, the approximate height of the theater), a second to permit a five-foot setback for the new building on Raymond Avenue (to match the setback of the theater), and two others for parking. The approved project significantly changes the interior of the theater auditorium by fully partitioning the open space behind the existing balcony, by replacing and elevating the floor, and by removing the stage. The changes to the interior of the theater required the City Council to approve the project with a statement of overriding considerations.

The project submitted in late 2003 for concept design review has 25 units and 24 work-live units (classified as commercial space). It also has approximately 4,000 square feet of added retail area, primarily storefronts along the Holly Street elevation. Additional descriptions of the project and changes to it since 2002 are in **ATTACHMENT C** (Project Description).

On March 15, 2004 the Design Commission held a public hearing to review an application for concept design of the project. The Commission heard presentations from City staff, the design architects, and the preservation consultant for the project as well as comments from the public. At the conclusion of the hearing, it voted to continue its review of the application to the meeting on Monday, April 12 so that the applicant could return with the following information:

- Evaluate the environmental performance and the suitability of **opening the interior auditorium space to outside air** and sunlight and to moisture from the interior pool.
[On April 12th, the applicant responded by removing a lap pool from the interior of the auditorium space.]
- Analyze the **change in square footage** between the plans reviewed by the City Council in December 2001 and January 2002 (the "modified project") and the current project submitted for concept design review.
[On April 12th, the staff researched this information and presented the changes in a table comparing the two proposals; a copy of this table is attached to the Green Sheet memorandum about consistency of the current project with the approvals issued in January 2002.]
- Analyze the conditions between the **interior floor levels of the storefronts** on the Raymond and Holly elevations and the at-grade sidewalks.
[On April 12th, the applicants confirmed in writing that the storefronts would be level with the public sidewalks with no change in grade]

- Review an itemized list of all **historically significant items on the interior** that will remain and those that may no longer be preserved.
[On April 12th, the staff informed the Commission that the environmental mitigation measures authorize the Zoning Administrator to review these changes to the interior of the building.]

- Identify clearly **what is being changed in the building**: i.e., which walls are being opened, what is new and what is old, what is happening to the historic fabric of the building (including the secondary elevations and the openings in those walls for the new building at Raymond & Holly and the proposed exit corridors on the north elevation).
[On April 12th, the staff confirmed that this information would be presented during 50% design review.]

- Identify how the new construction adjacent to the theater may be built with **six stories instead of the five stories** described in the revised final environmental impact report certified by the City Council in January 2002.
[On April 12th, the staff presented the plans and elevations on file with the City Clerk, which are part of the record of approval for the Council's action on January 7, 2002 and which indicate that the new building is six stories in height.]

On April 12, 2004 the Design Commission conducted a second review of the application and issued a concept-level approval of the design. This approval has 18 conditions—along with 19 other items for further consideration during an advisory “50% review.” This decision largely corresponds with the recommendations, findings, and acknowledgements presented by the staff to the Design Commission. In three areas, though, there are differences:

1) CONDITION OF APPROVAL: Restoration of original unpainted surfaces on the brickwork of the Raymond Theater.

The Commission, in its decision, required removal of the existing red-colored paint to expose the original buff-colored brick. The staff believes this condition is premature because the historic preservation consultant working on the project has not evaluated the condition of the brick façade and the feasibility of removing the paint. An environmental mitigation measure (CR-2) for the project directs the applicant to “consider” removal of the paint and requires a historic preservation to evaluate the feasibility of removing the paint. Information from the consultant about the possible removal of the paint should be available during 50% design review.

2) CONDITION OF APPROVAL: Prohibition against skylights in the roof over the auditorium of the theater.

The 12 skylights proposed during concept design review are arranged in a symmetrical grouping above the flat roof of the auditorium. They are designed to extend through the suspended plaster ceiling above the auditorium and illuminate and ventilate the interior, which is an atrium for adjoining work-live units (see sheets 7, 8, & 9 in plans and elevations, **ATTACHMENT D**). The skylights are required by code to permit occupancy of the four levels of work-live space inside the partitioned auditorium (see longitudinal section on sheet 12, **ATTACHMENT D**). City staff has determined that the skylights as designed provide sufficient light and air to satisfy the requirements of §1202 and §1203 of the building code (subject to final calculations for operable area). The historic preservation consultant working with the development team identified appropriate locations for the skylights to minimize damage to the ornamental plaster relief in the ceiling (see p. 13, **ATTACHMENT E**).

The Design Commission objected to the introduction of 12 skylights inside the theater and adopted a condition of approval to prohibit them. They contended that introducing outside air and sunlight inside the theater auditorium would damage the finishes and plaster. They also contended that the skylights would enable windows and balconies from the work-live units to open into the reconfigured auditorium and reduce that space to a semi-public atrium with no viable retail or commercial uses. By adopting a condition of approval prohibiting the skylights, they believed that the space inside the theater would be protected from outside air and light and that the new commercial uses could operate in a private contained space without the intrusion of windows and balconies.

At the public hearing, the staff informed the Commission that many skylights already exist in Old Pasadena and that skylights are a traditional feature throughout the historic district. In this context, the staff suggested that the skylights could be a visually appropriate addition to the roof of the Raymond Theater. Conceivably, too, the skylights could be removed in the future and the roof and ceilings could be restored to their original condition. This potential for reversing the installation of skylights satisfies one of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (#10: *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired*).

The staff also explained that the environmental mitigation measures for the project address changes to the interior of the auditorium. We confirmed that a final decision about the skylights would rely on a staff-level evaluation of information and analysis provided by the historic preservation consultant that the skylights would not damage the historically significant surviving portion of the interior auditorium.

While securing environmental and zoning approvals for the project, the applicant had at one time proposed opening a substantial portion of the roof over the theater auditorium. A later alternative also described in writing the installation of skylights in the roof over the auditorium. The final project approval by the City Council, however, and the accompanying drawings on file with the City Clerk, do not identify skylights in the roof above the auditorium.

3) CONDITION OF APPROVAL: Requirement that before 50% design review Pasadena Heritage “must...sign off” on their rights under an easement.

Pasadena Heritage holds a historic preservation easement on the exterior of the Raymond Theater. The easement, which grants Pasadena Heritage a right to approve or to deny exterior alterations to the building, is a private contractual relationship between the property owner and Pasadena Heritage. Thus far, Pasadena Heritage has not conducted any formal reviews of the project. The Commission expressed an interest in coordinating its reviews of the project with the legally required reviews by Pasadena Heritage.

The staff believes that the negotiations between Pasadena Heritage and the developer are private and outside the scope of design review in the municipal code. Suspending design review until Pasadena Heritage issues a decision on the exterior changes to the building is an inappropriate condition for design review.

CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW.

Concept design, the first of two steps in the City's design review process, concentrates on schematic-level issues such as massing, orientation, roofline, wall openings, proportions, rhythms, and volumes. In this case, it also includes an evaluation of compliance with the

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings because the Raymond Theater is a contributing building in the Old Pasadena National Register Historic District. Design review is limited to the exterior unless there are "interior alterations which materially affect a structure's appearance from the public right of way" (§17.92.030 P.M.C.) or changes to the first-floor interior of the Castle Green Apartments, the City's only building with a historic designation of the interior (§17.52.040).

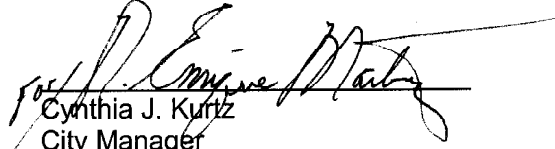
ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION.

The complexity and scale of the Raymond Theater project—the largest project in the Old Pasadena historic district since construction of the One Colorado project in 1991—require careful review through all phases of design development. As noted in this report, the decision of the Design Commission and the recommendations from staff are mostly congruent. The major difference is the recommendation from the Design Commission to prohibit skylights in the roof of the theater. The scope of design review, however, is to review exterior architectural treatments, and from this perspective the staff evaluated the importance of skylights to the exterior of the building. The skylights, though visible on the exterior, will not be a prominent feature, and there are many examples of skylights in historic buildings in Old Pasadena. As for the changes to the uses and spaces on the interior, the staff believes that these changes are within the range of a typical evolution of a project of this size as it progresses through design development.

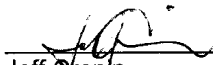
Fiscal Impact.

The call for review of this application does not affect revenues to the City. Applicants seeking land-use entitlements, including design review, are required to pay fees to the City. The City charges fees for both concept design and final design.

Respectfully submitted,


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