



CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

333 West Ocean Boulevard, 5th Floor • Long Beach, CA 90801 • (562) 570-6194 • Fax (562) 570-6068

November 13, 2017

CHAIR AND CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve a modification to a previously approved Certificate of Appropriateness request to restore and rehabilitate the front building façade, disassemble and reconstruct the northerly portion of the existing building with reuse of original building materials, demolition of rear portion of building, and a new addition. The building is located at 240 Long Beach Boulevard and is a designated Historic Landmark building known as the Acres of Books building. (District 2)

APPLICANT: Urbana Development, LLC
425 E. 4th Street, Unit E
Long Beach, CA 90802
(Application No. HP17-459)

THE REQUEST

The applicant requests to modify a previously approved Certificate of Appropriateness for restoring and rehabilitating the front building façade of the existing building, disassemble and reconstruct the northerly portion of the existing building with reuse of original building materials, demolition of the rear portion of building, and construction of a new addition. The building is located at 240 Long Beach Boulevard and is a designated Historic Landmark building known as the Acres of Books building.

BACKGROUND

The subject property is located on the east side of Long Beach Boulevard between 3rd Street to the north and Broadway to the south (Exhibit A – Location Map) within the PD-30 (Downtown Plan Area) zone. The property is developed with a single-story commercial building constructed in 1924. The building is approximately 12,000-square-foot in area and rectangular in form, constructed of masonry brick, with a bow truss style roof structure. The front façade was rebuilt after the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake into its current Streamline Moderne façade. The building extends nearly the entire length of the parcel from its Long Beach Boulevard frontage toward the rear alley. Acres of Books was designated as a Historic Landmark in 1990 and this designation recognizes its

Streamline Moderne style façade and the association of the former bookstore owned by Bertrand Smith.

The subject property and the entire block are former Redevelopment Agency (RDA) properties that are now owned by the Successor Agency. The entire block is developed as surface parking lots and the subject building is the sole building on the block. The Successor Agency is responsible for former RDA properties and has entered into an agreement to sell the property. The buyers of the property will develop the site.

At the October Cultural Heritage Commission meeting a Study Session was conducted to introduce the Commission to the proposal for the Acres of Books building within the context of the Broadway Block project. The purpose of the Study Session is to provide the Commission the opportunity to better understand this complicated development project, and the opportunity to provide valuable project feedback to staff and the development team.

The Acres of Books project is part of an overall new development project that includes development of the entire block and is known as the Broadway Block. The block is bounded by Long Beach Boulevard to the west, Alamo Court (alley) to the east, Broadway to the south and 3rd Street to the north. The Broadway Block project includes a 21-story residential high rise building at the corner of 3rd Street and Long Beach Boulevard, a new 7-story mid-rise building at the corner of Broadway and Long Beach Boulevard, an interior open courtyard style plaza, commercial/university space, a bicycle “velo lounge”, two levels of subterranean parking and a two-story parking structure.

ANALYSIS

As discussed at the October Commission Study Session, a proposal similar in scope of work was approved by the Cultural Heritage Commission for the Acres of Books building in 2010. That project included removal of the rear 150 feet of the building and retaining the front 100 feet of the building for adaptive reuse. The overall project also included an additional 11,000-square-foot collaborative arts center to include artist studios, gallery space, a multi-purpose classroom, and an outdoor courtyard. The applicant seeks to modify that past approval with the proposed project.

This revised proposal includes removal of the rear 170 feet of the Acres of Books building, disassembly of the front 70 feet of the building and re-assembly of the front portion of the building on-site with the original brick materials, retaining and restoring the front building facade in place, and construction of a new addition to the rear of the building (Exhibit B – Plans & Photographs).

In accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, the applicant proposed using two methods to distinguish the existing from the new addition. The new rear addition will be finished with a polished CMU brick with red brick accent to distinguish the new construction from the original building in front. Also, an open patio using reusing the building’s existing roof truss which physically connects the front and new

rear portion of the building is also incorporated to distinguish the new and original building. In the new addition, the roof will replicate the original in size, scale and materials of the original building. New 14-foot tall rectangular windows with upper transom windows will be included along the side elevations in both the front and rear portions of the building.

CEQA AND SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS

The Historic Resource Evaluation for this project is an addendum to the previously prepared Cultural Resource Assessment included in the 2010 Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the Art Exchange project (Exhibit D – Historic Resource Evaluation). This addendum along with the prior Historic Resource Assessment will be included in the further environmental review that will be required for the overall project. The Planning Commission is the body authorized to act on all CEQA documents, but this assessment informs the Commission's decision.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) are different. Whereas the Secretary of the Interior's Standards provide general guidance on projects and their rehabilitation, the standard for CEQA are more specific. Under CEQA, a project that would physically detract, either directly or indirectly, from the integrity and significance of the historical resource such that its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places National Register, California Register or as a local Landmark would no longer be maintained, is considered a project that would result in a significant impact. The building removal and reassembly are significant impacts under CEQA. However, the restored front façade and reassembled building can still retain eligibility as a designated Historic Landmark.

LANDMARK ORDINANCE

Based on Commission feedback during the Study Session on this proposal, the Commission may want to consider amending the building's character defining features identified in the Landmark Ordinance C-6763 (Exhibit E – Landmark Ordinance). Specifically, the Commission can consider the only character defining feature to be the building's front façade and removing the features located behind the front building wall from the designation. This action would require recommending amendments to the Landmark Ordinance to the City Council and their adoption. If the Commission feels it is appropriate, staff could return to the Commission with a revised Ordinance at future date.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has analyzed the proposed project and has determined that the project meets the requirements set forth in Title 21 of the City's Zoning Code, Section 2.63.080 (Cultural Heritage Commission) of the Long Beach Municipal Code, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. With conditions, Staff supports approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project. All the findings can be made in the affirmative for the proposed improvements, as these

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

November 13, 2017

Page 4 of 9

improvements are compatible in overall scale, massing, proportions, materials and colors to the architectural style of the existing structure on the property and in the context of the District. Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the conditions of approval (Exhibit C – Findings and Conditions of Approval).

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE


Public notices were distributed on March 27, 2017. As of this date, no objections have been filed as it relates to the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Pursuant to Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines, this project is covered by the Downtown Plan (PD-30) program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and no subsequent Environmental Impact Report is required.

Respectfully submitted,


CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP
ADVANCE PLANNING OFFICER


LINDA F. TATUM, AICP
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER
LFT:CK:AP

Attachments: Exhibit A – Location Map
Exhibit B – Plans & Photographs
Exhibit C – Findings & Conditions of Approval
Exhibit D – Historic Resource Evaluation (addendum)
Exhibit E – Landmark Ordinance