



CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

411 West Ocean Boulevard, 3rd Floor • Long Beach, CA 90802 • (562) 570-6194

August 12, 2019

CHAIR AND CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSIONERS
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve a modification to a previously approved Certificate of Appropriateness (Case No. HP17-459) to modify conditions of a project located at 240 Long Beach Boulevard. The building is a designated historic landmark known as the Acres of Books building. (District 2)

APPLICANT: Onni Group
315 W. 9th Street
Los Angeles, CA 90015
(Application No. COAC1907-01)

THE REQUEST

The applicant requests modification to the previously approved project conditions that require salvage and reuse of existing brick from the building to be used in the reconstruction of the landmark building. The applicant requests approval to use new brick in lieu of using the building's salvaged brick, as conditioned.

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 feet in area and rectangular in form, constructed of masonry brick, with a bow truss roof structure. The front facade was rebuilt after the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake into its current Streamline Moderne facade. The building extends nearly the entire length of the parcel from its Long Beach Boulevard frontage to Alamo Court (rear alley). Acres of Books was designated as a Historic Landmark in 1990 and its designation recognizes its Streamline Moderne facade and the association of the building with the former bookstore owned by Bertrand Smith (Exhibit B – Landmark Ordinance).

ANALYSIS

On November 13, 2017, a Certificate of Appropriateness application was approved by the Cultural Heritage Commission (Exhibit C – CHC Report & Exhibits 11/13/17). The approved scope of work includes the following:

1. Disassemble the building and salvage brick for reuse
2. Retain & preserve the front building façade
3. Expose portion of existing roof truss
4. Attach new building addition to the roof truss as an open patio
5. Reuse brick materials in front 70 feet of the reassembled building
6. Construction of new addition at rear 100 feet with new materials.

The subject project is part of a larger project to redevelop the entire block which was approved by the Planning Commission on March 1, 2018. The project site is bounded by Long Beach Boulevard to the west, Alamo Court (alley) to the east, 3rd Street to the north and Broadway to the south.

During the hearing process, conditions of approval were added by the Cultural Heritage Commission to the project relating to the building's brick exterior. The Commission included the reuse of the building's original brick as a condition, but also had concerns about the feasibility of reusing the old brick in the reconstruction of the new structure. At that time, the following conditions were added:

11. To the extent possible, brick removed as part of the demolition of the rear 170 feet of the landmark building shall be cleaned and reused in the project. The reuse of brick shall follow National Park Service guidelines for cleaning and reuse.
12. An engineer's report shall be provided to the Development Services Department estimating the percentage of brick to be salvaged and reused in the front portion of the building. The report shall also include the percentage of replacement brick to be used and materials samples shall be provided to Planning Bureau staff for approval.
13. That the project shall comply with all Mitigation Measures identified in the Historic Resource Impacts Report Addendum report prepared by Environmental Science Associates (ESA) and dated November 10, 2017.

To comply with the conditions of approval, including identified mitigation measures, the applicants had a team of engineers, architects, and architectural historians who specialize in historic buildings complete tests of the of the brick building walls (Exhibit D –Brick Salvage Feasibility Study & Preservation Plan). Specifically, the tests were performed to test the feasibility of the removal of both the exterior and interior brick. The existing brick walls consist of multiple wythes in width (estimated to be three wythes). The existing brick was identified as common brick and not face brick, which is typically used on more highly visible exterior façades. The tests concluded that the amount of

salvageable brick would be enough to only partially cover the required reconstruction of the front portion of the building, but that it would be feasible to salvage and reinstall salvaged brick as a veneer. While the report found that the use of original brick cut in half and used as a veneer is feasible, it also determined that new mortar would need to be applied throughout the newly constructed building. The report concluded that this approach results in less historical materials actually used and becomes contrary to the objective of preserving materials. The report additionally concluded that the strong brick mortar and thick cement plaster applied to interior bricks would make it more difficult to salvage the interior brick. As it relates to the interior brick, the report's recommendation concludes that these are common bricks and that replacement brick is readily available and can easily match or give the appearance of aged bricks.

As a result of the tests conducted and the above-described report's recommendations, the applicant is requesting removal of original Conditions No. 11 and No. 12 that relate to the reuse of the building's brick and proposes instead to use new brick. The new brick would have the appearance of being aged, would replicate the existing brick dimensions and profiles, and closely match the color and configuration of the existing bricks. Original Condition No. 13 (New Condition No. 11), requiring compliance with the mitigation measures identified in the historic resource impacts report prepared for the project, has been retained; though the mitigation measures have been complied with in part, there are additional mitigation measures that are still applicable to the project. More specifically, the applicant has complied with mitigation measures that required reuse of the original building materials, to the extent feasible, as determined by a historic engineer and in accordance with a rehabilitation plan. Though it has been determined that reuse of the building's existing materials would result ultimately in loss of historic fabric to an extent that the building would no longer retain its historic integrity and would be inconsistent with Secretary of Interior Standards, the project must still comply with other applicable mitigation measures, including: the requirement to prepare and record documents that memorialize the historical significance of the building for research purposes and the incorporation of an interpretative exhibit detailing the building's historical significance and its significance in Long Beach history in a publicly accessible location on site.

In light of the report's findings, the applicant was encouraged to bring the proposed modifications to the Cultural Heritage Commission, since the proposed project, as modified, would not be consistent with the Commission-approved conditions. Based on the technical study, the condition to reuse the brick is feasible to an extent, but it is not guaranteed to render enough salvageable brick to reconstruct the front portion of the building to a depth of 70 feet. Staff agrees with the report's conclusion that the brick used in the building is common and finding matching aged brick to be used in a reconstructed building would be reasonable. The side walls were never intended to be a visible feature of the building and the bricks used in those walls do not have distinguishable characteristics. Sanborn maps and historic photographs indicate the presence of abutting buildings which historically blocked the visibility of these walls. New bricks to be used in the reconstruction of the building will have an aged appearance and will replicate both the size and profile of the existing brick.

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. Staff recommends approval of the modification to the Certificate of Appropriateness to allow the use of new brick and to not require the salvage and reuse of the existing building's brick. While not all of the findings can be made in the affirmative for the proposed improvements, an environmental clearance—an addendum to the Downtown Plan Program Environmental Impact Report ("EIR Addendum")—was prepared for the larger redevelopment project, which includes the restoration and reuse of the Acres of Books building. The EIR Addendum was approved by the Planning Commission on March 1, 2018 as part of its consideration and approval of a Site Plan Review for a mixed-use project located on the block bounded by Long Beach Boulevard to the west, 3rd Street to the north, Broadway to the South and Alamo Court (a named alley) to the east.

The EIR Addendum (EIRA-02-17), and an addendum to a prior historic assessment of the Acres of Books Building, found the significant and unavoidable impacts to the building have already been analyzed and, subject to the mitigation measures of the Downtown Plan Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) and the updated Acres of Books historic assessment, incorporate all feasible mitigation measures, in accordance with CEQA. Given that the impacts of the proposed project have already been identified and disclosed and the proposed project is subject to these mitigation measures, staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness, subject to the revised conditions of approval (Exhibit E – Revised Findings and Conditions of Approval).

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines, this project was analyzed as part of the previously certified Downtown Plan Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) and a subsequent EIR Addendum (EIRA-02-17) that was prepared for this project. The EIR Addendum analyzed the proposed project in accordance with the Downtown Plan PEIR and determined that the project will not result in any new significant impacts that exceed those analyzed in the Downtown Plan PEIR with mitigation measures included (EIR Addendum EIRA-02-17). An addendum to a prior historic assessment of the Acres of Books building was prepared for the project as well. The historic addendum determined that, although the project would have significant and unavoidable impacts to a historic resource and result in an adverse change to the historic building, these impacts have already been analyzed and this finding is consistent with the analysis and conclusions presented in the Downtown Plan PEIR. Thus, the impacts to a historic resource will not be greater than those already analyzed in the Downtown Plan PEIR. Additionally, the development is subject to the Downtown Plan Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) that was adopted with the Downtown Plan PEIR. The MMRP is designed to ensure compliance with adopted mitigation measures during project implementation. For each mitigation measure recommended in the PEIR that applies to the applicant's proposal,

specifications are made that identify the action required and the monitoring that must occur. In addition, the party for verifying compliance with individual mitigation measures is identified.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Public notices were distributed on July 24, 2019. As of this date, no letters of correspondence were received.

Respectfully submitted,



ALEJANDRO PLASCENCIA
PRESERVATION PLANNER



PATRICIA DIEFENDERFER, AICP
ADVANCED PLANNING OFFICER



CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP
PLANNING MANAGER

CK:PD:AP

Attachments: Exhibit A – Location Map
Exhibit B – Landmark Ordinance
Exhibit C – CHC Staff Report & Exhibits 11/13/2017
Exhibit D – Preservation Plan & Brick Salvage Feasibility Study, March 2019 & May 2019
Exhibit E – Revised Findings & Analysis
Exhibit F – Revised Conditions of Approval