



Bluff Park Neighborhood Association

April 22, 2019

Alan Burks, AIA LEED AP, Chair
Cultural Heritage Commission
City of Long Beach
333 West Ocean Boulevard
Long Beach, California 90802

RE: 3065 E. Ocean Boulevard in the Bluff Park Historic District: Demolition of Existing Garage and Construction of New Garage in Conjunction with Subdivision under Separate Entitlement

Dear Mr. Commissioner Burks:

The Bluff Park Neighborhood Association (BPNA) would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Mr. Israel Weinberg of 3065 Weathering Heights LLC, the Long Beach Development Services Planning Bureau, and the City of Long Beach Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) for the engagement with the neighborhood on this development project and to encourage continued discussion and partnership with us.

GARAGE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Coming in May 2019 to the CHC is Mr. Weinberg's proposal to demolish the existing historic 2-vehicle garage and build a new 2-vehicle garage for the property at 3065 E. Ocean Boulevard, referred to as "Weathering Heights."

The BPNA understands that this application comes as a conditional requirement stipulated from the City's Planning Commission approval decision on July 6, 2017, to subdivide the lot. The subdivision approval resulted in the current garage being situated on the newly created, now empty lot just north of the property and where it is anticipated Mr. Weinberg and his team will eventually design and build a new single-family home fronting Paloma Avenue.

We are grateful the new garage design is aesthetically appropriate to the property and to its neighborhood surroundings in terms of style, mass, scale and materials, as required in accordance with the *Bluff Park Historic Landmark District Ordinance* passed in 1982 by the Long Beach City Council and in accordance with the *Bluff Park Historic District Design Guidelines* passed in 2018 by the CHC and the City Council.

ASSOCIATION'S ASK

The BPNA's concern and ask for the garage proposal relates to expected negative impacts on the neighborhood's street parking.

The BPNA kindly requests the owner continue to work collaboratively with the Association, the City's Planning Bureau and the CHC to find reasonable ways to mitigate impacts on street parking from the tenants who do and will in the future reside at 3065 E. Ocean Boulevard.

MULTI-UNIT RESIDENCE

Since the 1940s, the four units inside the home have been rented. As such, the City of Long Beach Planning Bureau now considers the number of residential units (namely, four) and number of dedicated parking spots (namely, two) as conditions that have been "grandfathered" into acceptance. We appreciate such a situation would not today be permissibly created under the current zoning and historic district protections.

We understand if this property had not been “grandfathered” in, the City would require 2 parking spaces for each residential unit. With four units, we would expect up to eight (8) vehicles and the need for eight (8) parking spaces.

The residents living in the four units of 3065 E. Ocean are now able to park in the existing 2-car garage and in the empty expanse of the back yard. It is well known that at any time at least a few vehicles can be seen parked outside in the backyard. Once the lot subdivision is complete, the yard space currently being used for parking will no longer be available to the tenants, likely resulting in some to park on nearby streets.

DRIVEWAY APPROACHES OFF OF E. OCEAN BLVD AND PALOMA AVE

We appreciate and support the City’s desire to retain the curb cut along E. Ocean Boulevard from which the current garage is accessed via a long driveway. Retaining access via that curb cut to the existing driveway will help preserve a defining feature of the home in the original approach and intention of its porte cochere.

Because the existing driveway approach after removing the current garage will lead to a dead-end, and also because the driveway is narrow in width, its practical utility for parking will be limited at best. Although physically possible, it seems unlikely tenants will choose to park there, especially more than one in tandem.

Additionally, we expect the new driveway created off of Paloma Avenue in front of the newly planned 2-vehicle garage will offer 2 additional parking spots. However, again the practical utility will be limited since they will need to be in tandem to the vehicles parked inside the garage. This new driveway will also effectively eliminate one to two parking spots on the street.

The BPNA questions the likelihood that the two driveway approaches will be consistently and enforceably utilized for the tenant parking, and the BPNA suspects this situation will likely lead to more parking on the nearby streets.

PARKING MITIGATION CONSIDERATION

While we understand creating additional parking is not and cannot be required, the BPNA would appreciate any ideas, efforts and design modifications, as allowable and feasible, to situate the tenants’ parking on-site.

The Bluff Park Historic District is already parking impacted, being a wholly residential neighborhood comprised of many single- and multi-family homes, along with rental and condominium complexes. The neighborhood is frequently visited and its streets are used as a destination for recreation at the two adjacent public parks (namely, Bluff Park and Bixby Park), the beach, the business corridor along E. Broadway, and the Long Beach Museum of Art.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

The uniquely historic, majestic and story-filled property, located prominently at the corner of E. Ocean Boulevard and Paloma Avenue, was originally a single-family home, is located in an R-2-L zoned area, and is a contributing structure in the Bluff Park Historic District neighborhood. Even compared to other significant properties in the Bluff Park Historic District, there are few that are as visually awe-inspiring and history-laden as is this property, which has remained largely unchanged on the outside and has beginnings linking it to the Port of Long Beach.

The following is from the *Orange County Register*:

“The history of the 1913 home is well-known and has been reported on several times by local media. Actor W.C. Fields rented the home for 12 years in the 1930s, and newlywed film stars Clark Gable and Carole Lombard vacationed there in the 1940s.... In 1978, while in the midst of their extensive scraping, [then-current owners] the Fadgens were visited by the 86-year-old son of C.J. [Clinton J.] Curtis, who commissioned the home to be built in 1912. He had heard the home had been purchased, so he came to visit and told the couple the story of the home, the family that lived there and his father, ... [who was] president of the Los Angeles Dock and Terminal [C]ompany.... At one point during World War II, the home was divided into four residential units for naval officers.”¹

The book Port Town: How the People of Long Beach Built, Defended, and Profited from Their Harbor describes how Clinton J. Curtis helped lead the effort to build the harbor and coordinated vast sums of money to bring international commerce to the city of Long Beach. Mr. Curtis built and lived in the house with his family for over 30 years.²

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Since at least as far back as 2014, the BPNA and its leadership have engaged in discussion about this property with the neighborhood residents, with the City's Planning Bureau, and, most recently, with the owner Mr. Weinberg and his contracted architect Mr. Robert J. Tavasci on a number of occasions, and we believe that these discussions, relationships and collaborations have been positive and highly worthwhile. Mr. Weinberg has certain rights and a degree of latitude to build, maintain and improve his property as he desires, and we do not mean to infringe upon our valuable relationship with him or his rights. We truly thank Mr. Weinberg and Mr. Tavasci for their ongoing engagement with us and sensitivity to the neighborhood's needs.

On January 20, 2019, the BPNA convened a meeting with the owner, architect, residents and association board officers in a collegial conversation over the current garage proposal. We greatly appreciated Mr. Weinberg's and Mr. Tavasci's care and concern for our neighborhood, hearing about parking impacts and mitigating ideas, and the needs and responsibilities of living and owning property in our historically designated residential neighborhood. The BPNA cherishes the opportunity for ongoing dialogue, including as design concepts are conceived and developed for the subdivided empty lot with a new single-family home being built facing Paloma Avenue.

ASSOCIATION MISSION AND PURPOSE

The Bluff Park Neighborhood Association Board of Directors represents the collective voice of those who live, own and rent in the Bluff Park Historic District, which is generally bounded by E. Ocean Boulevard to E. Broadway and by Junipero Avenue to Loma Avenue. The BPNA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity with a mission of historic preservation and cohesion. Celebrating nearly 47 years as an association, the BPNA has as its purpose to foster a sense of unity, collaboration, community service and goodwill for all of the city; to protect, preserve, safeguard and beautify the Bluff Park Historic District; and to support its neighborhood residents and their environment.

The BPNA Board appreciates the various stakeholders and decision-makers in their desire to better our community, to value historic and residential neighborhoods, and to build strong and respectful collaborations and relationships.

Thank you very much for the consideration given to this letter, in helping mitigate parking impacts where possible, and in your partnership as this garage and development project moves forward.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Mallin MD, President



Megan O. Barry, Vice President of Historic Preservation

cc: Gina Casillas, Planner, Long Beach Development Services Planning Bureau
Christopher Koontz AICP, Planning Manager, Long Beach Development Services Planning Bureau
Suzie Price JD, Councilwoman, 3rd District City of Long Beach

¹ <https://www.oregister.com/2014/01/30/bluff-heights-home-a-weathering-heights-love-story/>, Accessed April 6, 2019

² Published by City of Long Beach, Edition 1, June 2015, <https://porttown.polb.com/>, Accessed April 6, 2019