



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

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REPORT TO THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

File #: 2015-7302

Location: 221 North Mathilda Avenue (APN: 165-27-010)

Applicant / Owner: Spear Street Capital

Proposed Project:

RESOURCE ALTERATION PERMIT to a Sunnyvale Heritage Resource for the former Mellow's Nursery site to allow alteration of the setting with redevelopment of the site with a three-story, office building with a four level parking structure. The project includes relocation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the historic house on a reduced area of the site in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Reason for Permit: A Resource Alteration Permit is required to allow changes to the exterior appearance of a heritage resource through relocation, alteration, construction and/or demolition.

Environmental Review: The project is exempt from additional CEQA review per CEQA Guidelines section 15168(c)(2), (3) and (4). The project is within the scope of the Peery Park Specific Plan Program EIR. The environmental impacts associated with the proposed development are adequately addressed and analyzed in the Peery Park Specific Plan Program EIR and/or can be substantially mitigated with the imposition of uniformly applied development policies and standards.

Recommendation: Approve the Resource Alteration Permit that incorporates mitigation measures identified in the certified Peery Park Specific Plan Program EIR.

Project Planner: Momoko Ishijima, (408) 730-7532, mishijima@sunnyvale.ca.gov

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant's proposal includes redevelopment of a 4.3-acre former plant nursery site with a 3-story commercial office building totaling 144,264 square feet in floor area (80% FAR) and a 4-story parking structure with partial sub-grade parking. As part of the project the applicant will also facilitate the restoration and adaptive reuse of a 1,252-square foot historic house on site.

The project includes the demolition of a garage and two storage sheds. The project site is listed on the City of Sunnyvale Heritage Resource Inventory. The City of Sunnyvale Municipal Code (SMC) requires review of any project that proposes construction, demolition, relocation, or material change to any historic resource. Sunnyvale Municipal Code (SMC) section 19.96.030(g) states that the Heritage Preservation Commission is required to review all applications for permits regarding heritage resources, heritage resource districts, landmark site or landmark district designated

structures that involve changing use, exterior alteration or demolition, and approve, disapprove, or approve as modified said applications. All related environmental documentation shall also be reviewed.

See Attachment 1 for a map of the vicinity and mailing area for notices.

The Historical and Architectural Evaluation conducted by Archives & Architecture, LLC provides an overview of the historic qualities of the site including the historic house. Attached to that report is a Primary Record for the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR 523A form) that provides a detailed architectural description and historical background and context (Attachment 4). The form also provides a historic evaluation. The following staff report sections provide brief highlights from the DPR document and other supplemental reports provided by the applicant.

Background

The project site traces back to the original Rancho Pastoria de las Borregas which was granted by the Mexican government to Francisco Estrada in 1842. Martin Murphy Jr. acquired the rancho in 1850. In 1887 San Jose realtor W.E. Crossman acquired 200 acres from the heirs of Martin Murphy Jr. This acquisition later became central Sunnyvale. Records indicate that the Mellow property was associated with the W.E. Crossman family but there is no clear indication that he lived on the property or in the house. Tony and Eva Mellow operated the Mellow Nursery on the site from the late 1940s. The original site was approximately 10 acres. It was split in the 1960s when the Santa Clara County built Central Expressway and created Sobrante Way to provide an onramp to the expressway.

The site has been listed in the City of Sunnyvale Inventory of Heritage Resources since 1979. In 1991 the property was surveyed as part of the analysis to bring light rail to Sunnyvale. The property evaluation at the time found the site eligible for the National Register of Historical Resources. The lightrail project was not a City initiative. No action was taken by the state regarding a historic designation. The property was submitted for consideration again in 1995 but no action was taken by the state. The property is listed in the State Historic Property Data File as eligible for the National Register.

Architecture

The site is a surviving example of the earliest turn of the twentieth century residential development in Sunnyvale. The one-story house on the site was constructed around 1906. Records of the design of the house were published in 1907 in an architectural plan book by the local architectural firm of Wolfe & McKenzie. Cottages and bungalows of the period were often referred to as Colonial Revival with distinctive classical details. The style was popular during the early years of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Property Condition

A Property Condition Assessment was conducted for the Mellow house in 2015 by AllWest Environmental, Inc. This document is a technical report that analyzes the site condition, parking, exterior building envelope, roof systems, structural integrity interiors, mechanical systems, electrical

and gas systems and other factors. The report does not constitute an opinion of the historical value of the house to the City of Sunnyvale or its residents. That report is found in Attachment 5.

In Summary the reviewing architect found the condition of the house to be “Poor” based on site visits and a review of available on-line permit histories from the City of Sunnyvale. A “Poor” rating is for a condition that demonstrates a uniform run-down appearance, damaged building elements or inoperable building systems present. The report states that the overall condition of the house is such that an extensive and complete rehabilitation of the structural and non-structural building elements, both interior and exterior, will be required to return the house to a habitable condition. Complete new mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems will also need to be installed.

The remaining site has three other structures, two of which were built just before the mid-twentieth century - a two-car garage and a larger equipment building. To the rear of the equipment barn are the remains of a small older barn that was original to the site. It is in a collapsed state.

In order to formulate a strategy for preservation of the historic resource, the applicants commissioned a more specific Preliminary Building Enclosure and Structural Assessment by Simpson Gumpertz & Heger in Attachment 6. This report provides a preliminary analysis of the steps needed to bring the house up to a usable condition. The report found that despite severe deterioration in some areas - such as the roof - the majority of the existing structure and building enclosure components appear to be largely intact and suitable for restoration.

Proposal for Historic Site and House

The applicant’s proposal is to redevelop the 4.3 acre site with an office building and related parking structure. Part of the plan is to move the historic house to a new location approximately 100 feet to the north and slightly west on the site. The house would be relocated and restored to its 1907 appearance and rehabilitated for reuse as a stand-alone meeting facility, as an adjunct to the larger office development on site to the west (Site and Architectural Plans, Attachment 3).

The applicant’s proposal has been evaluated by Carey & Co. an architectural and preservation firm with extensive experience in rehabilitation and reuse of historic structures. Details of the plan are described in the Carey and Co, Report in Attachment 7 including an analysis for adherence to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Environmental Determination:

A Program-level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared for the PPSP which identifies potential impacts resulting from the proposed development intensities in the Plan area. Certification of the EIR included a mitigation monitoring program with provisions to reduce the potentially significant impacts to a less than significant level, although some impacts will remain as significant unavoidable after mitigation. The City Council adopted Statements of Overriding Consideration in conjunction with the General Plan Amendment and the Specific Plan (PPSP) in acknowledgment of the presence of the remaining significant and unavoidable impacts. The adopted Statements of Overriding Consideration are deemed by the certification of the EIR to be applicable to subsequent

projects that are consistent with or that implement the PPSP's goals and objectives. As the lead agency, the City of Sunnyvale implements the adopted Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) monitoring program for each subsequent project that includes the approved mitigation measures of the EIR.

The project is within the scope of the PPSP Program EIR and is therefore exempt from additional CEQA review per CEQA Guidelines section 15168(c)(2) and (4). The City has completed a checklist and determined that no new anticipated environmental impacts will occur and no new mitigation measures are required (Attachment 8). The Program EIR Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program are included by reference for this project.

The MMRP includes two specific mitigation measures regarding the rehabilitation and reuse of the historic Mellow nursery house. The MMRP and these specific mitigation measures are incorporated by reference.

MM CR-1 Historical Record of Property: In the event of demolition, redevelopment, or alteration of Mellow's Nursery and Farm, a historical record including photographs and artifacts shall be incorporated into the Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum. A qualified historian shall complete thorough photographic and historic documentation on Mellow's Nursery and Farm to be incorporated into historical records prior to and development.

MM CR-2 Preservation and Relocation of the Mellow's Nursery House: Future development of the Mellow's Nursery site shall consider preserving and relocating the historic house on site. If such action is feasible, a subsequent cultural resource evaluation shall be prepared to determine if the relocation and rehabilitation of the historic house on site retains its historic qualities and complies with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties.

Neighborhood Impacts / Compatibility

The action under consideration by the Heritage Preservation Commission is a Resource Alteration Permit for the modification of an adopted Sunnyvale Cultural Resource to accept a reduced site area and determine the appropriateness for rehabilitation plans for the historic Mellow house.

The applicant has proposed a new development on the former Mellow's Nursery site. The office project will be reviewed by the Planning Commission for consistency with the newly adopted Peery Park Specific Plan. If the applicant's plans are approved the Mellow Nursery site will be redeveloped with an office building and a parking structure in addition to the rehabilitation and relocation of the heritage house. This type of redevelopment has been anticipated in the City General Plan and zoning map since the site was also zoned to allow office and industrial use prior to adoption of the Peery Park Specific Plan. If redeveloped, the site will no longer provide any appearance of its former use as a nursery or agricultural remnant. Selective trees will be retained. Most remaining orchard trees and other trees on site will be removed as part of the development.

As part of the proposed office redevelopment the existing significantly degraded house will be

relocated slightly north on the same site. The house will be rehabilitated and restored to its 1907 appearance and adapted for reuse as a meeting space in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standard for Treatment of Historic Properties.

The house will still maintain a readily visible presence to the public on N. Mathilda Avenue. Although there had been inquiries to consider moving the house closer to Mathilda Avenue from staff and from the public at the community outreach meeting the specific setting was chosen to preserve a number of existing mature protected trees including a significant Coast Live Oak and Southern Magnolia.

The house is located on private property and is not open to the public. In the future the house will remain closed to the public but may be open on some occasions.

Other than a temporary period of construction, the impact of the rehabilitation of the historic site is positive in that the community will continue to enjoy a Heritage Resource in an improved condition that will be maintained in an appropriate manner to insure its longevity. The landscape setting around the house will also be improved and compatible with the history of the house due to preservation and maintenance of exiting trees. In addition, the applicants have been conditioned to install a plaque on the perimeter of the site (on Mathilda Avenue) that has information on the heritage resource and will be visible to the public.

Public Contact: 1,015 notices were sent to surrounding property owners and residents adjacent to the subject site in addition to standard noticing practices, including advertisement in the Sunnyvale Sun Newspaper and on-site posting. The meeting agenda was also posted on the City's web site and public bulletin board. No letters or calls were received from the public by staff.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Find the project is consistent with the Peery Park Specific Plan Program EIR and mitigations outlined in the MMRP and that no additional CEQA review is required, make the Findings in Attachment 2 and approve the Resource Alteration Permit for a modified setting and relocation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the historic house subject to the Conditions of Approval in Attachment 10.
2. Approve the Resource Alteration Permit with modifications.
3. Deny the Resource Alteration Permit.

RECOMMENDATION

Prepared by: Gerri Caruso, Principal Planner

Reviewed by: Amber Blizinski, Principal Planner

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity and Noticing Maps
2. Recommended Findings
3. Site and Architectural Plans

4. Historical and Architectural Evaluation
5. Property Condition Assessment
6. Preliminary Building Enclosure and Structural Assessment
7. Analysis for Adherence to The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the treatment of
Historic Properties
8. CEQA Checklist
9. Colored Rendering
10. Conditions of Approval