



City of Burlingame

BURLINGAME CITY HALL
501 PRIMROSE ROAD
BURLINGAME, CA 94010

Meeting Minutes Planning Commission

Monday, August 10, 2020

7:00 PM

Online

- e. 1214-1220 Donnelly Avenue, zoned DAC - Application for Mitigated Negative Declaration, Design Review, Amendment to the Downtown Specific Plan and Zoning Code to allow a multi-family residential use, Conditional Use Permit for building height, Condominium Permit and Lot Merger for construction of a new three-story, 14-unit mixed use commercial/residential building (John Britton, applicant; Britton Trust, property owner; Gary Gee Architects, Inc., architect;) (309 noticed) Staff Contact: Ruben Hurin

Attachments: [1214-1220 Donnelly Ave - Staff Report](#)
[1214-1220 Donnelly Ave - Attachments](#)
[1214-1220 Donnelly Ave - Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration](#)
[1214-1220 Donnelly Ave - MMRP](#)
[1214-1220 Donnelly Ave - Materials Binder](#)
[1214-1220 Donnelly Ave - Plans](#)

All Commissioners have visited the project site. There were no ex-parte communications to report.

Planning Manager Hurin provided an overview of the staff report.

There were no questions of staff.

Chair Tse opened the public hearing.

Mark Hudak and Gary Gee, represented the applicant.

Commission Questions/Comments:

- > *Was at the site today looking and noticed that there are power poles and power lines running across the back of the property now. Was wondering if there is a plan to deal with that. (Gee: The plan is to keep the power pole there. It is shown on sheet A2.1, there is a little notch in the garage and it was on our survey. We realized the power pole was there in some of the buildings along the back, so we made provisions to keep that power pole there.) Will it be within grabbing range if you're standing at the railing? (Gee: We could survey the height of that and we can coordinate for some of those to be relocated. Thank you for bringing that up.)*
- > *Noticed that the mail area in the lobby is dedicated just for mail. Have you considered, as this project evolves, the change to lockers and the need for package delivery which seems to be so much more a part of multifamily buildings now? (Gee: We have considered it, we have a locked room off the lobby. Behind the elevator, there's a utility room that is locked with a keypad or fob to allow deliveries of packages. It's around the corner, no one sees it and it's a secured room. That's what we plan to do with it.)*
- > *There's a rather large three-story downspout on the front wall by the stairway. Any thought of internalizing or maybe going around the corner on the minor wall? (Gee: There's flexibility to relocate that around the corner. We could try to incorporate that around the side wall. We can accommodate that request.)*

> Am concerned with the change in the location of the planters that were previously along the rear wall. Understand that by putting the planters along the rear wall, you need to have a more solid wall that creates a taller railing, and therefore a taller wall to the rear yards. But it sounds like your team is now more familiar with what's happening on the neighboring side of those properties. Doesn't the planter you had before create a buffer so people on the patio are three or four feet away from that wall? (Gee: That was original intent. That's why we put the planters there to keep the people away from the edge. During the last hearing, there was concern expressed about the height of that wall, so we removed it to lower the height. Most of the aerial views we saw in the back of those buildings are concrete or asphalt, and a lot of the things that are being stored there are used construction materials. It's not really that much of an active open space or lawn area that you might envision some people using. It's more concrete back there along the wooden fence.)

> Honestly, I didn't have as much of a concern with the height of the walls because there was a buffer created with those planters that kept the users up on the patio away from that guardrail. Now, there's a metal guardrail and it's less solid. People are going to lean on that rail while having their conversation, and they're looming over what could be some rear yards in the future. Understand what you're saying that right now they are paved areas and carports and fully recognize that this is a minor detail that we're picking at. Generally, this is something that you might think a little further on and talk to the developer a little bit more. But if that were the case, the change to the planter location could come back to us as an FYI, as a revision or even just administrative revision that is worked through with staff. It's not a major piece of the project, but it is a detail that is going to be important to making that patio space comfortable for the users and for the neighbors. (Gee: I appreciate your input. That was a dilemma we faced because originally we were trying to keep it away from the edge. That's why we had the planter there. The feedback I got from the Commission in the last presentation was that they felt that wall looked too massive. We didn't show a lot of the detail that was there in the landscaping. After taking inventory, we started to realize the wall is not as high, and we proceeded with removing the planter and adding the metal railing so it looks shorter.)

> Was wondering if there is a hybrid approach of a wall that has landscaping growing over it, to help soften that view from the north side. It would also work as a sound buffer and a visual barrier from both sides.

> The building has come a long way, I really do like the project. But maybe you can strip away some of the detail or the trees and the awning. The ground floor is really great. Looking at the second and third floor, especially the tower, it's a blank wall with a few windows put in it. There was a suggestion for some Juliet balconies or some metal work somewhere. Having recessed the windows is going to be great. In the arch openings you have added those fake downspouts, which is a good touch. But don't know if there's an opportunity to recess that wall a couple of inches to emulate a railing on the upper floor. The stair tower is really striking. In the previous meetings, we talked about a Juliet balcony or enlarging the windows, this could still take one more pass. The renderings make it look great, but you're focusing on the first floor and it's all in one plane as you go up, even in the center. There's some articulation with the beam or the columns as they approach each level and there's the recesses, but there are a couple of blank flat spots on the front of the building that can use a little more articulation.

Public Comments:

> There were no public comments.

Chair Tse closed the public hearing.

Commission Discussion/Direction:

> Really appreciate the changes that have been made. They are subtle but critical. Really like the idea of changing the stucco color on the center mass along the facade, it adds to the architecture.

> In regards to the added detailing that has been done, it helps a lot with the scale. Seeing the stair tower as a calm solid that is reminiscent of the Casa Baywood architecture, which is so striking in some of its very plain and substantive pieces of its facade. Not bothered by that solid because it's a simple piece to the facade that bookends, at least on that one side, this overall facade that has a lot of

articulation and things going on. It's a stairwell, so you expect to see some peek-a-boo windows into those landings.

> In terms of a piece of utility, that long downspout will have more details to it, there would be brackets and attachments. It could actually be an ornamental piece. Can take it to the interior and will be more serviceable once it gets to the inside.

> The main concern, which is minor and not a deal-breaker, is to get the landscaping right along the back patio. Would ask for the architect to revisit that with the developer. If they wanted to bring those planters back along that backside, they could work that through with staff. Would leave it to staff as to whether or not that would need to come back as an FYI. Otherwise, the project is approvable at this point and should move forward.

> I like the stairwell, could have some detail there, but do agree that with so much going on with all the other surfaces, we do want to be careful not to make every surface a feature wall. Not having seen this the first time, would also agree that having those planters at the patio on the back may give a little buffer. Appreciate that you listened to the Commission and you made an effort towards it, but would rather be seated closer to the building rather than actually using the space right up against the railing and looking at the neighbors' stuff and/or being seen. It would be more comfortable as an outdoor space to be closer to the building and take advantage of shade opportunities that the building creates, and make it a nice place to be because we're hoping that people will use it and not just have it as just an open space.

> We are looking at two dimensional drawings, renderings and want to see this move forward. In the process of building this project and detailing it out, would like to ask the developer and the architect to look at the building as it's going up. If you feel that it looks a little blank or a little plain, don't be shy about coming back and asking about additional ornamentation because it's a big enough project and appreciate that you put a lot of work into it. This doesn't necessarily need to be the final decision on all the small fine details. So if you see something as you're building it that you like, please come forward or try something out that might add to the articulation on the front.

> It's such a beautiful project and you've made such great strides. You've done some great work and appreciate the changes.

> Would also like to see a little bit of a buffer along the rear wall. We don't know what those properties to the rear might eventually do, and it might preserve some space between some common areas there. Like the idea of the planters, but overall, this is a great project. So thank you for all your hard work.

> Would prefer the planters along the rear as well. Like the suggestion about looking at some kind of hanging landscaping that might grow over the edge that might help soften that too.

> Thank you so much for working through these rounds of discussions with us and carefully listening to all of our comments. This street side on Donnelly Avenue is going to add liveliness to the street. I like the articulation in and around of all these openings and am excited to see this project built.

Commissioner Terrones made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Sargent, to recommend approval of the application to City Council. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Sargent, Comaroto, Terrones, Tse, Gaul, and Schmid

Absent: 1 - Loftis