



PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Planning Application No:	17/11
Project Name:	8220 Old Redwood Highway Exterior Modifications
Assessor Parcel No:	144-274-008
Street Address:	8220 Old Redwood Highway
Applicant:	Avila Bunch Architects
Owner:	Marc Fields & Catherine Choi
General Plan Designation:	Specific Plan
Zoning Classification:	Historic Core Planning Area, Downtown Specific Plan
Filing Date:	July 26, 2017
Meeting Date:	September 5, 2017
Report Authored By:	Jon-Paul Harries
Action:	Variance to the required percentage of first-floor openings along the primary frontage of a commercial building and Preliminary and Final Design Review
Recommendation:	Grant a Variance to the required percentage of first-floor openings along the primary frontage of a commercial building and approve Preliminary and Final Design Review

I. Description of Request and Proposal

The application is for design review of exterior modifications to a commercial building located at 8220 Old Redwood Highway (site of the former Exchange Bank).

The exterior modifications consist of new and enlarged windows facing Old Redwood Highway, replacement of the entry door, new wall and soffit cladding, paint, and new exterior lighting. The additional and enlarged windows result in a significant increase in the area of openings on the first-floor's primary frontage; however, a variance is required because the percentage of frontage openings will be less than the design standard of 65% set forth in Downtown Specific Plan.

In the rear of the building, new wall cladding and a new exterior door will be added. The

new exterior door will exit into a new patio area that will be enclosed by a six-foot high cedar fence. To accommodate the rear patio, minor modifications to the parking configuration are also proposed.

No changes to the building's size or dimensions are proposed.

The application also includes placement of signage on the façade of the roof cornice and adjacent to the front entry door.

II. Background and Previous Actions

The subject building was constructed in 1954 to accommodate a branch of the Exchange Bank, which occupied the building until late 2014. Since the initial construction, the City has issued building permits for a 931 square foot addition, relocation and enlargement of the front windows, placement of window awnings, changes in signage, and the placement and subsequent removal of an ATM. Other City permits authorized routine maintenance not visible from the public right-of-way.

On August 17, 2017, the Design Review Committee reviewed the proposed design and request for a variance. No design changes were requested by the Committee and the Committee recommended that the Planning Commission grant a variance to the required percentage of first-floor openings and approve Preliminary and Final Design Review.

III. Design/Planning Considerations and Issues

The structure is located within the Historic Core district of the Downtown Specific Plan (SPD) area and building design is governed by the development standards set forth in the SPD.

The SPD provides for shopfront frontage types on commercial block buildings and sets forth the following six design standards for structures within the Historic Core district:

1. Minimum 12 feet to maximum 16 feet tall, as measured from the adjacent sidewalk.

The distance from the adjacent sidewalk to the bottom of the cornice measures 12'-6" and thus conforms to the design standard.

2. The corresponding storefront(s) opening(s) along the primary frontage shall comprise 65% of the first floor wall area facing the street and not have opaque or reflective glazing.

As proposed, the new and enlarged windows and entry door will comprise 41% of the first floor wall area facing the street. The Planning Commission must grant a variance from the 65% openings coverage standard in order to approve the design review. As described below and in the findings included in the accompanying resolution, staff believes the findings to approve the

variance can be made and is recommending approval of the variance.

The existing windows and door comprise 24% of the street-facing wall area. The proposed project includes enlarging (vertically) two street-facing windows and adding a third matching window. Another window will also be added adjacent to the recessed entry that will face the street and wrap around the recess and return to the glass entry doors. While the area of openings falls short of the design standard, the proposed design results in a balanced appearance that nearly doubles the area of street frontage openings.

The design also ensures the structural integrity of the building is not compromised by taking advantage of the existing window framing. Given the requirement for a bulkhead (see design standard #4 below), in order for the applicant to meet the 65% openings design standard, nearly 100% of the remaining wall area would need to be comprised of glass openings. This would require substantial structural modifications to the entire structure, which is cost-prohibitive and would likely result in no changes to the windows' size.

A recommended condition of approval requires that the windows and doors are not opaque or reflective.

3. Individual storefronts may be recessed from the frontage line.

The building front is not recessed from the frontage line; however, the entry door is recessed from the building's frontage line and facade.

4. A bulkhead is to transition between the opening(s) and the adjacent grade. The bulkhead shall be between 24 inches and 36 inches tall (aluminum storefront or spandrel panel may not substitute for a bulkhead).

Currently, vertical board siding extends from the sidewalk to the bottom of the cornice. There is a horizontal trim board that runs along the length of the front façade beneath the windows (42" high), but no discernable bulkhead exists as envisioned in the SPD. The proposed design includes a dark grey stone veneer bulkhead measuring 26.5 inches tall (to the base of the enlarged windows) which conforms to the SPD design standard.

5. Awnings, signs, etc., shall be located 8 feet above the adjacent sidewalk and may project to a maximum encroachment of 8 feet or up to 2 feet from the adjacent curb face.

The proposal includes black fabric awnings located approximately 9 feet above the grade ensuring there is adequate room for passage beneath. The awnings will encroach approximately 2.5 feet.

6. Awnings shall only cover storefronts and openings so as not to cover the entire façade.

The proposed awnings will be located only above the windows and will not cover the entire façade.

Other proposed design features include the following:

Wall and Soffit Cladding and Paint

The applicant proposes to use light brownish-grey Sto (a stucco-like product) on the front and rear of the building. The front and rear facades will also utilize horizontal rough-finished cedar wood boards to accent the walls and provide a rustic finished appearance. Cedar boards are also proposed along the soffit of the cornice except in the rear of the building where the soffit will be painted a color similar and complementary to the cedar. All elevations of the cornice façade will be painted a charcoal grey. The front wall also incorporates a dark grey stone veneer that wraps around the south-west corner and recessed entry. The same stone is then incorporated into a bulkhead that runs beneath the storefront windows. The front façade wall treatments wrap around the corners and extend approximately 8 feet down the side walls. The materials on the remaining portions of side walls will remain the same (vertical wood boards and cinder block) and will be painted to match the Sto.

Exterior Lighting

All existing soffit lighting will be removed and replaced with up/down sconce lighting (see Exhibit B) along the front, rear, and southern walls. The lighting will be placed approximately seven feet high and spaced approximately 12 feet apart.

Signage

The application includes placement of business (RE/MAX Marketplace) signage. The applicants propose to use unlit individual silver metal letters that will sit proud of the cornice façade. The area of letters measures approximately 35 square feet. They also propose individual metal letters attached to the wood accent wall adjacent to the entry. These letters will incorporate lighting behind the metal letters causing the letters to be backlit. This area of signage measures approximately 9 square feet. The total area of proposed signage equals 44 square feet. The City's sign regulations would permit up to 64 square feet of signage on this structure. The regulations also allow signage in up to 20% of window coverage.

Rear patio

The applicants proposed to enclose a 1,100 square foot area behind the building to create an outdoor patio for use by employees and clients. The patio will be enclosed with a six-foot high cedar fence and will be accessed from a new exterior door and two gates leading to the rear parking area.

There are no Cotati Land Use Code provisions that would prevent the installation of the patio area; however, the patio area may not be used for outdoor display, sales or storage.

Parking

The subject site currently has 20 parking spaces. Six spaces are located on the subject

parcel and 14 spaces are located on the adjacent parcel (APN 144-274-007) accessed from Charles Street. The proposed patio will require reconfiguration of the subject-parcel parking spaces, which will result in a loss of one space for a proposed total of 19 parking spaces. The proposed use, a realty office, requires 11 parking spaces. Therefore, there will be sufficient parking to accommodate the proposed use after the proposed modifications are completed.

IV. Environmental Review

The application is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301 (Existing Facilities) of the CEQA guidelines, as the project consists of minor exterior alterations to an existing structure.

V. Summary and Staff Recommendation

The application proposes design features and door and window alterations to an existing building that result in a street-facing facade that is architecturally balanced and attractive. The design is somewhat modern in appearance yet also includes rustic elements that complement Cotati's downtown and historic core area. The changes also bring the building either into compliance or much closer to compliance with the design standards set forth in the downtown specific plan. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission grant the Variance for the proposed window coverage and approve Preliminary and Final Design Review for all proposed exterior modifications and signage.

Attachments:

EXHIBIT A - Visual Simulations of 8220 Old Redwood Hwy.pdf

EXHIBIT B - Exterior lighting for 8220 Old Redwood Hwy.pdf