



Staff Report and Recommendations

Agenda of April 12, 2021, Item 9a

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency • Planning Division

800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009-1740 • (805) 654-5042 • vcrma.org/divisions/planning

I. APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER:

Applicant/Property Owner: Kim Pheng
1313 Vida Drive
Oxnard, CA 93030

Architect/Designer: Frank Rogue
Oxnard, CA 93030

II. REQUEST:

Request for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) (Cultural Heritage Ordinance (CHO) §1366) for façade alteration and demolition activities in order to partially abate violations at a masonry commercial building located at 11085 Azahar Street in the unincorporated community of Saticoy (Site of Merit). The scope of work also includes authorization of an existing concrete block wall along the property's primary frontage (Case No. CH20-0007).

III. LOCATION AND PARCEL INFORMATION:

11085 Azahar Street, Ventura, CA 93004 (unincorporated Ventura County)
Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 128-0-012-410

Historic Designation: Site of Merit

The subject property consists of approximately 0.26 acres and contains a 636-square-foot commercial building, three detached, accessory residential units in the rear, and two small commercial buildings. In addition, the Site of Merit designation encompasses a parcel abutting the southwestern side of the subject property which includes a larger, simple, utilitarian industrial/commercial building associated with the Brigham and Steele Blacksmith Company and under common ownership. Figure 1 depicts the location of the project site in the broader vicinity in the Saticoy community; Figure 2 provides a closer image of the project site; and Figure 3 provides an image of the affected commercial building's primary façade.

Figure 3 – Primary Façade of Subject Building with Alterations



IV. PROJECT SCOPE:

The applicant requests the Cultural Heritage Board (CHB) approve a COA in order to partially abate violations associated with unpermitted work, including façade alteration and demolition activities. More specifically, unpermitted work cited in the violation case (Case No. CV19-0237) includes the following:

- Stuccoing of building exterior (previously painted masonry);
- Demolition of former recessed entryway, window elements, and door and replacement with a clear aluminum frame commercial door and windows;
- Enclosure of side window openings;
- New electrical, new subpanels, new exterior lights/fixtures;
- Interior modifications and remodeling, including framing-in of an interior door to create two separate sections/areas and electrical, plumbing, utility, and other mechanical and building work; and
- Authorization of the unpermitted relocation and construction of a concrete block wall and gate along the primary frontage of the property.

In order to abate violations, the applicant is required to demolish non-permitted residential unit improvements (bathroom and framing) and bring the concrete block wall into conformance. The COA is required in conjunction with requested Zoning Clearance Case No. ZC20-1011 and other required permits from the Ventura County Planning Division and Building and Safety Division. (Refer to Exhibit 1 – Site Plans

and Elevations). Records of prior site alterations consist of improvements to the legal non-conforming accessory residential units in the rear of the property in 2013 and 2016. Around this time, the property owner constructed a concrete block wall and gate along the primary frontage of the property (see Figure 3 above). The concrete block wall is in violation of the wall height and material requirements of the Old Town Saticoy Development Code (Sec. 8119-1.8.3).

V. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The subject building is a single-story, 636-square-foot commercial structure with a rectangular floor plan. Prior to alteration, the building had a recessed, one-step entryway with large display window openings, apparently filled with wood boarding and covered with metal bars, splayed returns with apparent sidelights and a front door with transom above. The primary façade rose to a simple upper parapet and the structure's brick masonry exterior was exposed and painted white. Additionally, two apparent window openings were evident on the western side of the building and similarly filled, likely with wood boarding. Figure 4 provides an image of the commercial building in its former condition prior to alteration.

Figure 4 –Subject Building Prior to Alterations



Source: Google Maps 2016

The property was surveyed as part of the *Saticoy Historic Resources Survey and Context* dated February 2014. As mentioned, the subject property is abutted by the Brigham and Steele Blacksmith Company building to its southwest, the last remaining building from a blacksmith shop located on the site since 1902 (Refer to Exhibit 2 – 11085 Azahar Street DPR Form). The blacksmith site is known for its association with the establishment and early development of the railroad town of Saticoy between 1887-1912. In 1938, George W. and Cleola Sullivan, also a blacksmith, purchased the property from Mildred Steele. At some point, most of the original buildings were demolished. The small masonry commercial building affected by the project was constructed around 1941 and historical uses have included the Saticoy Cafe in 1954 and a pool hall called Bill & Lucille's Place by 1971, which included a bar. Although the historical associations for this building are different than the Brigham and Steele building, at the time of survey the building was identified as one of the earlier extant and relatively unaltered commercial buildings in Saticoy from the contextual period 1912-45 and consequently contributes to the significance of the parcel. At that time, the false front commercial storefronts typical of Western frontier towns gave way to more substantial buildings built using masonry and concrete.¹

¹ San Buenaventura Research Associates, *Saticoy Historic Resources Survey and Context*, February 2014, page 17.

Following County adoption of the *Saticoy Historic Resources Survey and Context*, the property located at 11063-85 Azahar Street was designated as a Site of Merit on May 23, 2016.

VI. CHO ANALYSIS AND STAFF CONCLUSIONS:

The Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance (CHO) § 1366, requires that the Cultural Heritage Board issue a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) in the case of proposed demolition activities at a Site of Merit. The COA is an authorization which indicates that any proposed action, including maintenance, alteration, restoration, rehabilitation, remodeling, addition, change of use, demolition, subdivision, or relocation of a designated or potentially eligible Cultural Heritage Site will not adversely affect the designated Cultural Heritage Site’s values or unduly compromise the eligibility of a potential site to become a designated Cultural Heritage Site.

CHB Staff determined that the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (“Secretary’s Standards”) may be useful to the CHB in their evaluation of the property and the proposed scope of work. CHB Staff determined the standards for rehabilitation are appropriate for this request and evaluated the exterior portion of the proposed scope of work against these standards. Each one of the applicable Secretary’s Standards is outlined in the table below with corresponding comments from CHB Staff.

| Standards | Staff Comments |
|--|--|
| #1 A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. | The property will continue to be used for commercial uses following removal of non-permitted residential unit improvements. Staff determined that this Standard has been met. |
| #2 The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided. | The Secretary’s Standards ² encourage the retention of historic features that contribute to the interpretation of the significance of a historic property. Further, the storefront is noted as the most important architectural feature of many historic commercial buildings. ³ Commercial buildings constructed during the property’s period of significance typically included a conventional |

² Weeks, Kay D., *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995, pgs. 35-37.

³ Jandl, H. Ward, *National Preservation Brief #11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts*, National Park Service, September 1982, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/11-storefronts.htm>.

| Standards | Staff Comments |
|---|---|
| | <p>three-part facade (display windows above bulkheads and an upper facade with cornice).⁴</p> <p>Alterations to the subject building include demolition of the recessed entryway, front door, and what framing materials remained of the display windows. In addition, two side window openings and the building’s exterior masonry were plastered over. The features removed or altered appear to have constituted character-defining features of the property.</p> <p>Staff determined the alterations are not consistent with this Standard.</p> |
| <p>#3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.</p> | <p>It does not appear that conjectural design features are proposed to be added to the historic property with the intent to create a false sense of historical development. Therefore, Staff determined this Standard has been met.</p> |
| <p>#4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.</p> | <p>There do not appear to be changes to the property that have acquired historic significance in their own right. Therefore, Staff determined this Standard has been met.</p> |
| <p>#5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.</p> | <p>At the time of survey evaluation, the property was noted as one of the earlier extant and relatively unaltered commercial buildings in Saticoy from the contextual period 1912-45 and consequently contributed to the overall significance of the parcel.</p> <p>Distinctive features that characterized the property as an “unaltered commercial building” in Saticoy from the identified context period likely included the recessed entryway, large display windows, exposed masonry, and simple upper parapet. A recessed entry design would extend the display area and help to draw pedestrian onlookers into the business. The large display windows allowed for ample display of merchandise; many displays typical of this period were raised on frame or brick</p> |

⁴ San Buenaventura Research Associates, *Saticoy Historic Resources Survey and Context*, February 2014, page 12.

| Standards | Staff Comments |
|---|---|
| | <p>bulkheads to display the merchandise closer to eye level.⁵</p> <p>Based on the removal or substantial alteration of the character-defining features identified above, Staff determined this Standard has not been met.</p> |
| <p>#6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.</p> | <p>As mentioned previously, the former display windows and side windows appear to have previously been filled in with wood boarding prior to their removal. In addition, the front door was removed and replaced. Further, the former exterior exposed masonry has been plastered over with stucco</p> <p>Because these materials have already been removed, it is impossible to assess their suitability for repair rather than replacement. Similarly, it is not possible to fully assess whether any masonry deterioration, including disintegrating mortar, spalling bricks, or stone, was present. Consequently, the removal of remaining elements of these features and alteration of features, prior to an assessment of their condition, does not fully meet this Standard</p> <p>Based on the above, Staff do not find this Standard has been met.</p> |
| <p>#9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.</p> | <p>The new front door and windows consist of a clear aluminum commercial product and do not appear to be a historically appropriate style, material, or design for a commercial property in Saticoy from the contextual period 1912-45. The original window framing material is unknown, although display windows and doors from this period were typically large sheets of glass joined together with wood, copper, or aluminum frames.⁶ Moreover, the size, location, and configuration of the windows have been changed with the removal of the recessed entryway, the splayed returns have been lost, the apparent sidelights have been lost, and the size</p> |

⁵ Wisconsin Historical Society, “Restoring or Rebuilding a Historic Storefront,” <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS4167>.

⁶ Ibid.

| Standards | Staff Comments |
|--|--|
| | <p>and location of the door and accompanying transom has been changed.</p> <p>In addition, changes to exterior cladding material will often constitute a substantial alteration, particularly if the proposed cladding is different than the historic materials.⁷ Applying coatings such as stucco to masonry that has been historically unpainted or uncoated to create a new appearance, such as is the case with the subject property, is not a recommended treatment.⁸</p> <p>Based on the above, Staff determined this Standard has not been met.</p> |
| <p>#10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.</p> | <p>The scope of work does not include new additions and/or adjacent related new construction. Therefore, Staff determined that this Standard has been met.</p> |

VII. OLD TOWN SATICOY DEVELOPMENT CODE (NCZO SEC. 8119-1) ANALYSIS

The Code Compliance case for this property (Case No. CV19-0237) cites the relocation and construction of the concrete block wall as a violation of the wall height and material requirements of the Old Town Saticoy Development Code (Sec. 8119-1.8.3). CHB Staff has evaluated the wall component against the relevant provisions of the Old Town Saticoy Design Guidelines (Saticoy Area Plan) and Old Town Saticoy Development Code contained in Sec. 8119-1.8.3 - Fences, Walls and Hedges. Each one of the applicable provisions is outlined in the table below with corresponding comments from CHB Staff.

⁷ San Buenaventura Research Associates, *Saticoy Historic Resources Survey and Context*, February 2014, page 36.

⁸ National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, “Building Exterior Masonry,” <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehab/masonry01.htm>.

| Old Town Saticoy Design Guidelines, Chapter 6, Section C.2 | Staff Comments |
|--|---|
| a. Fences and walls should be constructed of material that complements the design of the principal building. | The existing wall is constructed of concrete block without stucco or cap. Staff determined this material would be compatible with the existing building, provided other requirements identified herein are met. |
| b. Use drought tolerant planted/living hedges, such as toyon and manzanita, to provide screening. | Landscaping screening is not presently proposed. The incorporation of landscaping for screening purposes is recommended to the extent feasible, consistent per Ventura County Landscaping Ordinance No. 4577. |
| c. Minimize fence and wall heights while ensuring that fences/walls perform screening, noise attenuation, and security functions. | Refer to the discussion of wall height requirements in Sec. 8119-1.8.3 (b) below. |
| d. Solid perimeter walls should be architecturally treated on sides that are visible to the public and incorporate landscaping to prevent or discourage graffiti. | The existing wall is not architecturally treated on the side visible to the public, nor is landscaping presently proposed. The incorporation of landscaping for screening purposes is recommended to the extent feasible. |
| Sec. 8119-1.8.3 - Fences, Walls and Hedges | Staff Comments |
| a (2): Concrete block walls are prohibited when visible from a public street, trail or walkway, except when located underground or when fully covered in stucco or a decorative masonry facing material. | The existing concrete block wall is visible from a public street. In order to bring the wall into conformance with this requirement, the wall must be fully covered in stucco or a decorative masonry facing material. |
| <p>b. Height: When located within a Primary Street or Side Street setback, the maximum height for solid fences, walls or hedges shall be 3 feet. When the fence, wall or hedge is see-through, transparent, or a combination (see Sec. 8119-1.8.3(c)), the maximum height shall be 5 feet. When located within a side or rear yard setback, the maximum height shall be 6 feet.</p> <p>c. Transparency: A see-through or transparent wall, fence or hedge shall provide at least 50 percent visibility throughout the fence. For a combination fence or wall (solid plus see-through), the solid portion of the wall shall</p> | The existing solid concrete block wall and gate appear to be approximately 5 feet tall. In order to bring the wall into conformance, the solid portion must be lowered to 3 feet; if a combination solid plus see-through wall is desired, the upper portion shall provide at least 50 percent visibility throughout and shall not exceed a total height of 5 feet. |

VIII. STAFF CONCLUSION:

Based on the above considerations, the unpermitted alterations appear to constitute substantial alterations to the property's storefront, one of the most important architectural features of many historic commercial buildings. Namely, demolition of the recessed commercial entryway, alteration of the size, location, material and configuration of the windows, and introduction of a historically inaccurate cladding over the exterior masonry represent substantial changes to character-defining features. Further, the relocated and constructed concrete block wall is a violation of the wall height and material requirements of the Old Town Saticoy Development Code (Sec. 8119-1.8.3) and must be brought into conformance with the aforementioned provisions. Staff recommend the CHB adopt the below conditions related to the scope of work in order to conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*. As with any restoration activities, a false sense of history shall not be created by adding conjectural features, features from other properties, or by combining features that never existed together historically.

- **Recommended Condition #1: Front Entry Restoration.** Prior to issuance of zoning clearance, the applicant shall submit revised plans reflecting replacement of the missing recessed front entryway based on documentary and physical evidence. The plans shall reflect replacement of missing features consisting of the recessed entry, splayed returns, transom, and glazing. Materials shall be appropriate to context, such as masonry exterior cladding, transom, and door glazing.
- **Recommended Condition #2: Display Windows.** Prior to issuance of zoning clearance, the applicant shall submit revised plans reflecting new display windows utilizing a design and framing approach appropriate to the building's context, in addition to any additional specific recommendations from the CHB.
- **Recommended Condition #3: Concrete Block Wall.** Prior to issuance of zoning clearance, the applicant shall submit revised plans reflecting the wall and gate's conformance to the height, transparency, and cladding requirements of Sec. 8119-1.8.3 of the Old Town Saticoy Development Code, in addition to any additional specific material recommendations from the CHB.
- **Recommended Condition #4: Exterior Stucco Cladding.** The applicant shall retain a masonry restoration professional or a trained material conservator to assess and determine whether the exterior masonry can be feasibly restored, including through the preparation of a test panel to ensure underlying masonry

has not been irreversibly damaged. The professional shall prepare a report of their feasibility findings and provide the report to CHB Staff for review and confirmation of the findings. Prior to issuance of Zoning Clearance Case No. ZC20-1011, the applicant shall submit revised plans reflecting any CHB staff recommendations regarding treatment of the exterior masonry in order to be consistent with the *SOI Standards*.

With adoption and adherence to the above-recommended conditions, Staff determined the project would conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* and would neither adversely affect the significant architectural features nor adversely affect the character of historical or aesthetic interest or value of the site, pursuant to the requirements of the CHO Section 1366-3(a).

IX. OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW HARDSHIP:

At the CHB public hearing on this matter, if desired, the property owner is provided the opportunity to present facts and evidence demonstrating a failure to grant the requested COA would cause an economic hardship as provided by CHO §1366-3(d).

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

No public comment regarding this item has been received to date.

XI. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Pursuant to CHO Section 1366, the following sets of actions are available to the CHB. Staff is recommending the CHB approve the COA with inclusion of the recommended conditions identified above.

A. To Approve the COA:

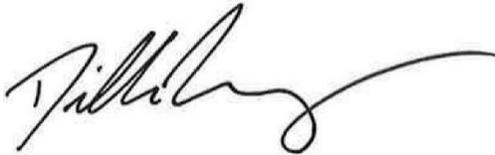
1. **CONDUCT** public hearing, **RECEIVE** oral and written testimony, and **CONSIDER** the Planning Division Staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto;
2. **FIND** that the proposed project does meet the requirements of the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*; and
3. Based on the preceding evidence and analysis, **APPROVE** the Certificate of Appropriateness (Cultural Heritage Ordinance [CHO] § 1364-12) with any Cultural Heritage Board or Staff recommendations

determined necessary to conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*.

B. To Deny the COA:

1. **CONDUCT** public hearing, **RECEIVE** oral and written testimony, and **CONSIDER** the Planning Division Staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto;
2. **FIND** that the proposed project does not meet the requirements of the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*; and
3. Based on the preceding evidence and analysis, **DENY** the Certificate of Appropriateness (Cultural Heritage Ordinance [CHO] § 1364-12).

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Reviewed by:



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Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1 – Site Plans and Elevations
- Exhibit 2 – 11085 Azahar Street DPR Form
- Exhibit 3 – Photo Exhibit