



Ulrika Plaza Design Narrative

Esperanza Carmel and Wald Ruhnke & Dost Architects are pleased to resubmit a revised design proposal for the Ulrika Plaza project in response to a wide range of input from the community, city staff, and Planning Commission members during the project's previous public hearings.

The redesign placed a strong emphasis on minimizing the project's mass and scale. We broke up the project into four smaller and distinct buildings which reduces the overall bulk and adds greater variety to the streetscape. Two of the residential apartments have been relocated to the ground floor, to further decrease the project's mass at the upper levels. Additionally, each building's facade is designed with a two-story frontage while mezzanine levels for each building are strategically placed in the rear. Together, these approaches work to dramatically reduce overall mass and visual impacts at the street level, and help the project fit the scale of the neighborhood context. Each building is connected by an intimately scaled exterior walkway that leads to 5th Avenue, Dolores Street, and the Pocket commercial complex on Lincoln Street. A hidden courtyard located in the rear of the site echoes many of the similarly hidden courtyards found elsewhere in the village.

The guiding principle for the project's architectural design is to synthesize various building styles evocative of Carmel's unique charm. The project is, indeed, an

intertwined yet harmonious blend of four such styles: Contemporary; Craftsman; Spanish Colonial Revival; and Tudor Revival. The resulting project fuses these styles as an expression of the eclectic nature of Carmel's downtown and residential building typologies.

Building 1, for example, reflects Carmel's few but significant non-traditional buildings that break away from well-known 'period-styles' and customary historical norms. The village has a rich history of embracing the work of distinctive, innovative buildings by such eminent masters as Frank Wynkoop, Olaf Dahlstrand, John Thodos, and Frank Lloyd Wright; Building 1 can be considered as an homage to these trail breaking designers by implementing their shared non-conformist design ethos in the creation of unique, often breathtaking spaces. The minimal sleek lines and use of natural materials at Building 1, as well as its voluminous interiors, liberates the structure from formulaic designs and highlights the creative freedom brought forth by progress and innovation--the hallmarks of contemporary architecture.

Building 2 captures the spirit of Carmel during its first boom years of the early 20th century when many of the village's domestic structures were constructed in the modest bungalow or Craftsman style. Building 2 incorporates the most essential components of the Craftsmen movement with such distinguishing features as ribbon-course cedar shingle siding, cedar roofing, natural stone accents, hand-troweled stucco walls, extensive gable overhangs, exposed rafter tails, wood brackets and pillars, grouped-together sash windows with patterned panes, and an earth-toned color palette.

Building 3 acknowledges Carmel's rich legacy of exquisite Spanish Colonial Revival buildings with a thoughtfully designed example of this much lauded period style. Building 3 is gracefully massed with low-pitched roofs and minimal eaves, while its asymmetrical composition expresses the informality typified by many early 20th century examples of this quintessentially Californian architectural style. Genuine terra-cotta clay barrel tile roofs adorn a prodigious use of hand-troweled stucco

wall surfaces, accentuated by casement windows, wooden balconies, an arcade, a towering chimney, and cast stone and ceramic tile embellishments.

Carmel is often associated with its enchanting Comstock fairytale cottages which, in many cases, are essentially cartoonish renditions of a Tudor Revival aesthetic. For Building 4, we opted to forgo any semblance of a fantasy-inspired approach and instead gleaned inspiration from the cottages' Tudor-derived design roots. Aside from the storybook cottages, Carmel is also home to several noteworthy and beautifully hand-crafted Tudor Revival structures that also contribute to the old-world charm of the village and form the basis for Building 4's design vision. Character-defining elements of Tudor Revival are represented in Building 4's use of hand-hewn, dark brown stained half-timbered trim, asymmetrical forms, multiple gables and steeply pitched roofs with genuine flat clay tiles, herringbone clay brick infills, tall, multi-pane windows, Tudor pointed cast-stone arches, and overhangs with decorative supports.

The four buildings that make up Ulrika Plaza will all be constructed with premium materials. The ground floor commercial spaces at each building include hand-crafted mahogany door and storefront windows. Natural materials are used for all the roofs, including two types of genuine clay tile, cedar shingles, and vegetative green roofs. Exterior materials are of equal high-quality: the project proposes a mix of stone veneer, clay herringbone brick, hand-troweled stucco, and ribbon course cedar shingles. Paving materials are composed of cobbles and flagstone. Amenities include an outdoor eating area and a natural stone-faced fountain in the courtyard, and a vibrant landscape palette that enhances the experience for pedestrians and residents. Additionally, each of the twelve apartments contains ample private usable open space.

Ulrika Plaza's previous public hearings brought forth many concerns, and we embarked upon an arduous, comprehensive, and responsive redesign as a result. By breaking the project into four distinct structures, the massing and scale of the project has significantly decreased. The intimate passageways between the

buildings lead pedestrians into a hidden courtyard, much like the secret paseos in other parts of the village. Additionally, all four buildings have a deliberate and careful attention to detail. Exhaustive research authenticating the project's character-defining forms and features was performed to complement the old-world allure of Carmel and to avoid an unworthy outcome of an ersatz nature.

Carmel deserves no less than a landmark project, conceived with the same spirit and finesse that has shaped the village's eclectic, quaint, and appealing charm.

Esperanza Carmel and Wald Ruhnke & Dost Architects have worked diligently at improving the design for Ulrika Plaza, and we look forward to gaining the support of the community and the Planning Commission through our latest efforts.