

From: Douglas Schmitz <REDACTED>

Date: October 10, 2022 at 5:51:06 PM PDT

To: bswanson@ci.carmel.ca.us, ekort@ci.carmel.ca.us

Subject: **Ulrika Plaza: Before the Planning Commission---12 October 2022**

Chairman LePage, Members of the Commission, Director Swanson, Associate Planner Kort:

In 1963, the late poet Archibald MacLeish penned "though the facts have changed, nothing has changed in fact."

And so, we meet again, as we did in April 2021, in March 2022, and for the scheduled but eventually spectral project of August 2022. Over the past eighteen months, the designs have been altered but the facts have not changed. Facts:

1. despite the unanimous consensus of the Commission in April 2021 that the project was too large, the pending proposal has not shrunk or been reduced in size.
2. the project is in the Service Commercial zoning district, a designation for a "distinct transition" regarding uses and size, the goal of the district being for "less intense activities." More square footage incubates more activity which is not consistent with the "less intense activities" standard of the Municipal Code.
3. Buildings 3 & 4 would be the ONLY two-story structures at the front property line along both sides of Dolores Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, a dramatic metamorphosis to the streetscape.
4. the proposed buildings fronting on Dolores Street, 3 & 4, lack modulation, violating a primary tenet of the City's design consultant, Nore Winter. Mr Winter proclaimed within the past two weeks that buildings along a commercial street should have "a rhythm." With the monolithic structures of Buildings 3 & 4, there is no "street rhythm" as is evidenced in most of the downtown. The downtown's existing "street rhythm" is attained by each shop having its own distinctive building frontage, not just a door along a 70' stretch of a continuous rampart as proposed with Building 4.

Simply stated, the proposal attempts once again to cram too much development onto the site. It is a fool's game to compare this proposal, as some in the community have done, to the once-upon-a-time approved Del Dono project. That project is a mirage; it was not built. Its usage for comparison is akin to some developers today in NYC using the Buckminster Fuller proposed 1960 Manhattan Dome as justification for contemporary projects. It too was not built.

Earlier this year, the City Council entered into a contract with Winter and Associates for redevelopment of the duet of design guidelines. There have been public workshops. The

Strategy Paper is before the Commission on the same day as Ulrika Plaza. Please note the statement on page six--- "some recent projects don't fit in. They don't respect some of the key design variables that relate to fitting in." In regard specifically to the downtown, page six manifests--- "Inappropriate mass and scale of some new buildings and additions in the downtown makes them appear too large." The Ulrika proposal not only appears too large, it would be too massive for the setting, for the site, and to its neighboring structures.

So, where to go from here? Some citizens want any project so as to eliminate the blight of "the pit." Other residents are concerned about the design and size. The Commission receives successive, redundant proposals from the developer at variance with its directives and disrespectful of Carmel's rich historical and architectural greatness. As the Eighteenth-century playwright Aaron Hill wrote "There is no merit where there is no trial." On the Twelfth Day of October 2022, let us seek a constructive path towards a meritorious plan.

A Possible Roadmap:

Carmel Plaza, the other large commercial development in the downtown, offers some guidance for the Fifth and Dolores site/project and for the Commission. Along its Ocean Avenue frontage, the Plaza is 200' in length. Yet the buildings only about the property line for approximately 60% of that frontage. The open, center section, approximately 80', provides for plantings, art, a fountain and public seating. In contrast, the Ulrika proposal is approximately 160' along Dolores Street but the pedestrian opening, the entrance to the "public courtyard" between Buildings 3 & 4, in only 30' or 18% of its frontage.

The sidewalk fronting Carmel Plaza is between 14'-15' in width. At Ulrika, it is 7'. There is in urban planning a guiding tenet relating the height of an adjoining building to its sidewalk, with variables for a community's heritage, platting, right-of-way design, etc. With Buildings 3 & 4 of Ulrika being approximately 25' in height at the Dolores property line, the sidewalk should be about double its existing 7' or 14-15', similar to the Plaza's.

To attain additional open space along the Dolores Street frontage so as to accommodate a wider sidewalk, the buildings should be moved back from the Dolores Street property line, thus creating a more open amenity, an enriched streetscape, seating and plantings. THE ONLY WAYS TO SOFTEN THE SIZE OF THIS DEVELOPMENT IS TO REDUCE THE SQUARE FOOTAGE AND ADD COPIOUS LANDSCAPING ALONG THE STREET FRONTAGES AND WITHIN THE "PUBLIC COURTYARD."

Unlike Carmel Plaza, there is only one public amenity proposed with this project, the sole concession to the community being intra-block connectivity for which the developer is receiving a density bonus, a bonus that only adds to the massive size of the project. There is no public seating proposed as now exists at the post office parking lot/green space and at the corner of the Carmel Foundation property (Carmelita Park) across Fifth Avenue from the proposed development. With only a 7' sidewalk, there will be minimal space for tree wells AND pedestrian passage. The greenery planters shown on the submittal sheets fronting Buildings 3 &

4 are diminutive in size and quantity. More greenery is needed. As Justice Douglas wrote in the 1954 landmark case *Berman v. Parker*----"It is within the power of the legislature to determine that a community should be beautiful as well as healthy, spacious as well as clean..."

The interior "public courtyard" is a misnomer, an inappropriate description of what isn't. It is NOT a courtyard. At 10', it is a pedestrian corridor for north-south passage. The western courtyard, at 20', is identified on Sheet A 201 as outdoor dining. For comparative purposes, consider the central courtyard of Carmel Plaza. It is wide, it is airy, it is open. Usage of the proposed Ulrika "courtyard" would be restrictive at 10'. It would be dark and it would be claustrophobic, entombed by its narrowness and the multi-story buildings shading its usefulness.

The plan for the property has been ill conceptualized. Instead of starting with the courtyard and providing openness for the stores and offices and eateries and a pleasant customer and pedestrian experience, the concept shoehorns the open space around the buildings. A redesign should commence with an authentic public courtyard, spreading open space towards Dolores Street with plantings, seating, art, a fountain. The buildings would then be designed around the courtyard. If multiple eateries eventually open within the development, as with Carmel Plaza, outdoor dining space would be available especially for restaurants or coffee shops located in what are now Buildings 3 & 4.

This re-design could probably be undertaken without altering buildings 1 & 2. It would necessitate reducing the size of buildings 3 & 4 and reorienting those structures. But the "sense of place"---buildings surrounding an authentic public courtyard with interior landscaping and seating, would enhance the project. As designed, who wants to be in the "public courtyard" that is only 10' in width with multi-story buildings looming and shadowing?

A few other thoughts: 1) the narrow walk proposed along the boundary with the Carmel Art Association is wasted space. The building (#4) should be brought to the southern property boundary and set back from its Dolores Street private/public line. Without moving the multi-story structure (Building 4) back, the visual impact on northerly bound pedestrians will be jarring---a small building (art association) with a front garden and then Building 4 looming. 2) the community needs a physical model of this project once an acceptable site layout is achieved. 3) There are too many external materials on the Fifth Avenue side of Building 2---stone, plaster, wood.

And finally....

At the end of the Peloponnesian War, Pericles addressed his fellow Athenians about the greatness of Athens. He said "we throw open our city to the world." We Carmelites open our city to the world and those visitors expect to experience a great municipality, a city with vitality upon its streetscapes, greenery, diminutive structures, a cultural richness, a proud heritage.

Pericles continued by praising the ancestors of Athens for their contributions to the quality and excellence of the city his generation had inherited, noting that those forebears "knew their duty and had the courage to do it." Their efforts, he vocalized, had created "the greatness of Athens."

Commissioners, this is the single, most lasting, most important project you will consider during your tenure. Whenever it is built, it will rest upon Carmel's landscape for decades or even a century or longer. But whatever is built must add to the architectural greatness of our city.

This is Carmel-by-the-Sea. We can do better than what is now proposed for the Ulrika Plaza. We can do better!

Respectfully Submitted,

Douglas Schmitz
Carmel-by-the-Sea

10 October 2022

Sent from [Outlook](#)