

# *City of Brisbane*

## *Agenda Report*

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Community Development Director via City Manager

**SUBJECT:** **7000 Marina Boulevard;** Transmittal of Appeal of the Planning Commission's approval of Design Permit DP-2-14 for exterior alterations to an existing office building within the SP-CRO- Sierra Point Commercial Zoning District. Westport Capital Partners, LLC, applicant; Marina Boulevard Property, LLC, owner; APN 007-165-120, and consider authorizing City Manager to execute a professional services agreement for architectural consultant services.

**DATE:** Meeting of September 2, 2014

### **City Council Goals:**

To provide for effective and efficient delivery of City services. (Goal #1)

### **Purpose:**

To consider retaining architectural consultant services as discussed in this report prior to considering the above-referenced appeal.

### **Recommendation:**

Authorize the City Manager to issue a Request for Proposal and execute a consultant agreement to provide architectural review services regarding the above-referenced application and appeal

### **Background:**

On August 7, 2014, the Planning Commission by a vote of 3 ayes to 1 no approved the above-referenced Design Permit application for exterior modifications to the office building at 7000 Marina Boulevard, commonly referred to as the Dakin Building. Pursuant to Section 17.52.020.B of the Municipal Code an appeal of the Planning Commission's decision has been filed by Councilmembers Miller and O'Connell. The appeal letter is attached, along with additional information submitted by the applicant.

Tonight's City Council meeting is intended to allow the City Council to consider the retention of architectural review services as outlined in the discussion section of this report prior to City

Council consideration of the appeal. **Tonight's meeting is not a public hearing to consider the appeal.** As such, it is not appropriate for the City Council to discuss the substance and/or merits of the project or the appeal at tonight's meeting

**Discussion:**

The attached appeal raises both subjective design issues and technical questions as to feasible design alternatives that could or should be considered. To facilitate the City Council's consideration of this appeal, staff believes it would be appropriate for the City to obtain expert architectural review services to evaluate the proposed application and issues raised in the appeal letter. The results and recommendations from this review would be available for the City Council and applicant prior to any scheduled public hearing on the appeal.

Obtaining the proposed architectural services would involve the release and circulation of a Request for Proposal and execution of a Professional Services Agreement. A summary of the proposed scope of work is attached. In order to expedite the completion of this task and allow for timely consideration of the appeal, it is recommended that the City Manager be authorized to execute this agreement with a cost not to exceed \$7,500. Staff anticipates it will take 45-60 days to complete this task.

Should the City Council choose not to authorize the retention of architectural review services, the public hearing on the appeal would be scheduled for the next available City Council meeting.

**Fiscal Impact:**

The City would be responsible for the cost of the proposed consultant services. Funds are available and would be allocated from the planning assistance fund from the 2014-15 Community Development Department budget.

**Measure of Success:**

For the City to obtain professional architectural review services to assist in the review of the appeal, thereby placing the City Council in a position to make a decision in an efficient and timely manner.

**Attachments:**

Case DP-2-14 Appeal Letter  
Architectural Review Services -Draft Scope of Work  
Applicant Correspondence



John Swiecki, Community Development Director



Clay Holstine, City Manager

RECEIVED

AUG 22 2014

Comm. Dev. Dept. Brisbane

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Fee: \_\_\_\_\_

Receipt No.: \_\_\_\_\_

APPEAL

I/We hereby appeal the action by the

- Planning Commission - August 7, 2014
- Zoning Administrator
- Planning Director

regarding Application No. Design Permit DP-2-14

for Renovations to existing building

at 7000 Marina Boulevard

The reasons for the appeal are: see attached statement  
(3 pages)

Name(s): Raymond C. Miller Terry O'Connell

Phone Number: (415) 467-8512 415-467-6210

Mailing Address: 224 Sierra Pt. Rd. 70 SIERRA PT RD  
Brisbane, CA 94005 Brisbane CA 94005

Signature(s): *Raymond Miller* *Terry O'Connell*

Date: August 18, 2014 8/18/2014

**Appeal of Planning Commission Approval (3-1) of  
Design Permit (DP-2-14)  
for renovations of existing building at  
7000 Marina Boulevard  
on August 7, 2014**

**Reasons for the Appeal:**

1. Insufficient attention to historical and architectural significance of building.

Neither the Planning Staff nor the Planning Commission demonstrated an awareness of the historical and architectural significance of what was originally known as the Dakin Building. The building was originally commissioned as a Class A corporate headquarters building by the Dakin family for their stuffed animal business. Theodore Brown, the principal design architect, said, "the successful incorporation of daylight in the project is largely based on a manipulation of the building's geometry, using calculated angles to capture and control sunlight." (firm web site)

In 1987 it was considered the finest new building in San Mateo County. In 1990 it was awarded semi-finalist standing in the international Quaternario competition for the recognition of innovative technology in architecture. In an August, 1990, article in *Architecture: The magazine of the American Institute of Architects*, the authors stated that, "The Quaternario judges focused on the technological aspects of the fenestration design where window angles were calculated to minimize interior glare and reduce over-illumination while at the same time reducing solar heat loading and subsequent demand for air conditioning as energy conservation techniques. The angled window projections effectively provide permanent sunscreens, obviating the need for interior blinds or shades."

In 1992 the Dakin building won a design excellence award from the American Institute of Architects. According to an *Examiner* article, the jury was especially impressed with the atrium and asymmetrical skylight (January 12, 1992).

No other building in Brisbane's history has ever achieved such architectural distinction. Because of its shimmering white appearance, the building acquired the nickname of "Luke Skywalker," in contrast to the first building built on Sierra Point with its smoky black glass exterior, which was known as "Darth Vader."

There are two General Plan policies that suggest we should be very careful before making major changes to such a unique, award winning building:

Policy 10 - Program 10a: Develop an environmental strategy for economic development. The strategy should include methods for encouraging the use of

renewable resources and the preservation and restoration of the unique features of the community for future generations (p. 52).

Policy 136: Encourage the maintenance and rehabilitation of structures important to the history of Brisbane (157).

2. Some of the applicant's planned physical renovations are severely detrimental to the integrity of the original design.

There are four proposed physical changes which we believe undermine the original design: First and foremost, the removal of the angular windows or fenestrations and replacement with flat window panes; second, adding black and yellow accents to the "pop-outs;" third, the black and gray screening of the utility turret on the roof; and fourth, the squaring off of the rounded entrance.

The staff report acknowledges that removing the angular fenestration system on the southern sides of the building would be the "most noticeable change in the building," resulting in a "flat appearance." In other words, one of the most distinctive qualities of the building would be destroyed. Architect Theodore Brown explained his approach as follows: "The southeast and southwest facades contain continuous integral sunscreens which shade and diffuse direct sun infiltration. The sun screens, inspired by canvas awnings, make a dramatic design statement, capping windows that slope outward at a 42-degree angle and creating glare free interior spaces, unobstructed views and its distinctive facade character." (Firm web site)

Removing the five-level angular window treatment from the southern sides of the building would take away the visually important "distinctive facade character" and make it into a "run of the mill structure" (Commissioner Munir). Retaining the pop-out boxes does not compensate for the removal of one of the "key elements of the building's architecture" (staff report). In fact, the resulting look would be disproportionate and unaesthetic.

Brown also notes that the theme of the building is "light." The white exterior "reflects the mood and colors of the sun, clouds and surrounding environs." Therefore, adding black, gray and yellow accents is incompatible with this conception. The black and gray screen proposed for the white turret on the roof is especially inconsistent with the aura of the building.

The white, round turret on the roof relates to and complements the white, rounded entrance design. Squaring off the entrance contradicts the original architectural vision. Adding black and gray accents to the entrance also compromises the white "light" affect.

A 1995 San Francisco Chronicle article on the Dakin building notes "its bold appearance of bright white porcelain panels and futuristic design, seeming to

embody the concept of good." "The Luke Skywalker white palace" far out matches the nearby "Darth Vader" building. "The differences between the two buildings go far beyond architectural good and evil. They show the choice between prepackaged architecture, in which individuals or even businesses are regarded as interchangeable, and a custom built home..." (April 17, 1986)

In light of the above, it is our view that the first required finding of design review cannot be satisfied by the applicant's proposal, particularly in the attributes stipulated above. ("The proposal's scale, form and proportion are harmonious, and the materials and colors used complement the project.")

3. Insufficient attention was devoted by the staff and the Commission to the investigation of architectural alternatives to the applicant's proposals that respect the integrity of the original design.

It seems to us that the applicant is more interested in making the two buildings at 5000 and 7000 Marina Blvd. alike than in preserving the architectural significance of the Dakin building. Yet one could anticipate that a Class A building would be highly marketable to tenants who want to make a statement.

We believe that much better architectural treatments exist than those proposed by the applicant. These alternative solutions should primarily address preserving the integrity of the original Dakin building design. Furthermore, we believe that these solutions can effectively address some of the maintenance and work place concerns raised by the applicant.

We have the impression that the staff and the Commission accepted the applicant's premise of "sameness" rather than "distinctiveness." Therefore, no serious investigation of alternative architectural treatments for the Dakin building was carried out. We hope that these alternative architectural solutions can be collaboratively developed.

4. Because of the historical importance of the Dakin building's architecture to Brisbane, there should be greater public attention directed to any decisions involving major renovations.

With its highly distinctive architectural qualities, the Dakin building is really the major piece of public art in Brisbane. Before interfering with its original design, there should be a wider public discussion. Yet there was no public testimony at the Planning Commission meeting when the decision was made.

By bringing this issue to the Council level, more public attention can be devoted to the issues involved.

Submitted by Council Member Raymond Miller and Mayor Pro Tem Terry O'Connell  
August 21, 2014

**Draft Scope of Work- Architectural Review Services  
7000 Marina Blvd, Brisbane CA**

**Purpose**

To perform an architectural review of exterior design modifications proposed for an office building at 7000 Marina Boulevard, Brisbane. The building, commonly referred to as the Dakin Building, was built in 1986 and received several design awards.

The architectural review is intended to address the following items:

1. Evaluate the implications of the proposed design modifications on the architectural integrity of the existing structure.
2. Identify and evaluate alternative design solutions that would address the applicant's functional objectives while maintaining the building's existing architectural character.



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## **DAKIN BUILDING REVISIONS**

**PROJECT: Exterior Improvements to 7000 Marina Blvd.**

Brisbane, CA 94005

AUGUST 14, 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The scope of work for the existing building at 7000 Marina Blvd. intends to create a more cohesive campus-like link to the adjacent building at 5000 Marina Blvd. Improvements are meant to reorient circulation between the two buildings, provide a more integrated aesthetic, and connect with the strong natural setting of the site.

The revised design of Building 7000 focuses and builds on the most celebrated portion of the building, its northern atrium. According to the *SF Examiner*, the American Institute of Architects praised the building in 1990:

“Its chief strength is the atrium, with its views of the San Francisco Bay and asymmetrical skylight.”

The proposed alterations seek to enhance the most celebrated & functionally appropriate portion of the building, its central atrium by including operable doors and an exterior deck.

The building at 7000 Marina Blvd. (also known as the Dakin Building) upon its completion in 1986 was praised for its attention to the functional requirements of its original tenant, the R. Dakin Toy Company. That year, the *SF Chronicle* lauded the building for its analogy to:

“a custom built home for a family controlled company that has been in the Bay Area for years.”

Dakin required the mitigation of direct sunlight to reduce harm to its products. This resulted in the creation of an angular window system to the north, which substantially reduced the amount of daylight entering the building & obscured views out of the building.

The current building owner seeks to reuse (and once again customize) the building for a new type of tenant, one that requires the maximization of natural light and increased connections to the outside environment. The proposed building alterations will adapt the building to this new use & function, one that the original building fenestration does not allow for. Existing “pop-outs” in the northern facade are retained and adjusted to allow for more daylight and exterior views.

The proposed alterations at the building entry remove the existing revolving door and its supporting curved entryway in order to more strongly position the building entrance in its connection to Building 5000. Alterations also allow for more clarity of way-finding & circulation, increased accessibility, and functional orientations that will encourage pedestrian activity on the site.

These revisions will allow for an even more harmonious connection between the Dakin Building and its beautiful natural setting.

Sincerely,

SETH HANLEY  
ZACHARY MEADE  
DESIGN BLITZ