

# Strawberry Design Review Board (SDRB)

## Approved Minutes

Public Meeting – Wednesday, October 4, 2021

Meeting location: Via Zoom.

Call to order: 7:30 p.m. by Joe Sherer, Chair

Board members present: Julie Brown, Penna Omega, Joe Sherer and Matt Williams

Board members absent: None

Other attendees: Jillon Augustine, Saleem Bukhari, Rory Crowley, Julie and Peter Dowell, Leslie Lacko, Emily Lavin, Heather Leonard, Emily Levin, Kevin McAuley, Britney Moss, Christopher Raker (architect), Elizabeth Rynecki, Rachel Seemen, Chad Sparks, Aline Tanielian, Leelee Thames, Anne Twining, David Yahid, Mike Yao (architect), Jillian Zeigler, and Katherine Lehmann, notetaker. Plus: AC, JR, Chris J, Geicher (architect), Luigi, & Sarah.

**Meeting minutes: from February 15 were unanimously approved: 4-0.**

There was a question about what to do if there is a follow-up question, and the chair suggested that it would be raised with the appropriate authorities.

Correspondence and announcements: None

Members of the Public who wished to comment on anything not on the agenda: None

### **AGENDA ITEM 1:**

McDonald's is upgrading and modernizing their existing building design, facade and signage at their restaurant located at 126 Redwood Highway and 600 Mill Lane.

**McDonald's Franchise Design & Sign Review (P3292):** The applicant requests Design Review and Sign Permit approval to construct a 165 square foot addition to an existing drive-through restaurant (McDonald's) on a developed lot in the Strawberry area of Mill Valley. The 165 square feet of proposed addition would result in a floor area ratio of 13 percent on the 24,330 square foot lot. The proposed addition would reach a maximum height of 18 feet above surrounding grade, and the exterior walls would have the following setbacks: 45 feet from the east side property line; over 50 feet from all other property lines. The project also proposes Sign Review application as part of a comprehensive change to the exterior of the McDonald's building. The request is to

remove and install new signage, including directional signage, wall mounted signage, reader board/menu signage, remove one of the signs at the north elevation and add new signage. Planner: Immanuel Becket.

**A. Architect Mike Yao** made a presentation of the building design, facade and signage.

- **Building:**
  - A drive-thru window is added to the existing building on the SE corner to facilitate taking orders.
  - A small utility closet is added, also on the SE corner.
  - Canopies are added.
- **Site:** Minor changes to the existing site.
  - **Elevation:**
    - Aiming to modernize the roofline by squaring the existing tiled roof with metal panels.
    - “Muted” paint colors: brickwork to be painted “Fairview taupe,” a brownish tan color, and the metal roof panels to be painted “Iron Ore,” a dark grey color, in order to blend in better with the surroundings.
    - White canopies on two facades and grey canopies on the drive-thru side, to break vertically.
  - **Signage:**
    - A 42-inch wall sign of the golden arches (4 feet by 3.6 feet) will be installed on the façade.
    - New 24-inch “wordmark” McDonald’s sign, (actually 16.5 feet tall x 2 feet wide), will also be installed on the façade next to it.
    - “Pay Here” and “Pick up Here” signs for the drive-thru section (both 10 feet by 3 feet long) above the drive-thru windows.
    - Existing Order Board will be replaced by a new one. (10 feet tall and 1 foot wide).
    - The existing presale board will be smaller and digital - 4 feet wide from previous 8-foot width.
    - Two directional signs on the entrance and at the exit.
    - The traditional large lighted “monument” sign near the street to be kept.

**B. INITIAL STRAWBERRY DESIGN REVIEW BOARD COMMENTS:**

- **Joe Sherer:**
  - Has no problem with adding an extra window to the drive thru.
  - Wondered why there was no mention on the plans of the large monument sign near the street.

- Mentioned the regulations for signage are quite clear and brief. The present proposed signage is in excess of the regulations, and wondered if McDonald's was planning to ask for a variance?
- **Penna Omega:** Noted that there are missing letters on the existing monument sign and asked if they will be repaired.
- **Julie Brown:**
  - Asked if McDonald's might have a new design for the monument sign, as part of its new signage plans.
  - Pointed out that in a previous meeting on July 20, 2020, with the "sign vendor" of McDonald's, many of the same points from that meeting were being raised again now at this meeting.
  - McDonald's has a green wall/hedge facing the street that is well kept and beautiful.
  - The drawings need to be updated. Missing information, Mistakes on elevation drawing, etc.
  - The buildings in the back of the property, which are used for garbage and storage, really need to be upgraded, as well. The back easement of the property joins a natural wetland and lagoon, which is a nesting site for blue herons, has a nice bike path, and is a lovely public resource for the community. This area must be carefully tended, and the trash from McDonald's needs to be collected and managed better.
  - It would be a great service to the community if McDonald's could help to maintain this area better.
- **Matt Williams** raised several questions:
  - Sometimes the line of cars on Frontage Road becomes too long and blocks traffic. (Kevin suggested that adding the second window will help this.)
  - Maybe there could be additional signage to guide traffic for "No Left Turn" as customers are entering, or leaving, the property?
  - Were the "accessory buildings" included in the original permit?
  - The Index of Drawings includes numbers that are not included in the package, especially the site plan. This should be corrected - either include the drawings or change the drawing index.
  - Recalls from the July 20, 2020 meeting with the McDonald's sign vendor, "You can either have the big sign on the street, or the new signs on the building, but you can't have both."
  - Recommends that McDonald's get the actual square footage of each sign they are proposing and decide if they are asking for a signage variance or not.

- Notes that A-31 and A-30 are missing drawings, and there is no actual site plan.
  - **Kevin McAuley:**
    - Said the current plan is to change the monument sign to LED lighting and make any needed repairs, but not to replace it.
    - Accepted that McDonald's needs to do more work with the signage, etc. and will come back with changes and corrections. Mentioned that he himself has lived there and has the message loud and clear.
    - Wondered if the DRB could give any design guidelines to avoid "spinning wheels."
- C. In the subsequent discussion, the following comments were made by members of the SDRB board:

- **DRBs cannot advise McDonald's on design, but only give their observations.**
- The new proposal primarily provides a backdrop for the new signage. This might give rise to some of the competition leading to "Logoville."
- The existing McDonald's tiled roof matches with many of the surrounding buildings, including the Smoke Shop and Strawberry Village.
- Buildings in the complex have a low profile, especially because they are next to residential areas and beautiful surroundings. Any "massing up" of signage or architecture could lead to competition by others to do the same.
- There was a lot of dark grey color in the proposed roof elevation.
- Increasing the height and massing is not desirable. It could lead to competition for bigger signs by others, and lead to a billboard effect along Redwood Highway.
- The building façade could still be modernized, using materials that could moderate the effects of massing.
- Major corporations, like McDonald's, surely have hybrid design packages. Does McDonald's currently have one of these for application somewhere else in this area? (Instead of completely getting rid of the Spanish tiles, etc. that characterize this area.)
- The bigger you get, the bigger the guys next to you get. "We aren't interested in that."
- Expanding the footprint with the extra window is not a problem, but creating a brown box is a concern.
- If you improve the rear section of the property to be more like the green wall, that would be so great.
- Look at the façade and the roof line at the West Elm store at Strawberry Village for possible inspiration.

- D. **Kevin McAuley**, with McDonald's, suggested that a mansard roof on the upper half of the rooftop could be an option. Similar to the *In & Out* burger nearby. (See photo below.)



E. **Mike Yao** said a new set of drawings will be submitted showing external garden furniture, as well as improvements in the external areas to meet the concerns of the community.

F. **PUBLIC DISCUSSION:** None

G. **Recommendations from the Strawberry Design Review Board:**

1. Continue the project with the SDRB observations and the previous notes from the meeting of July 20, 2020 in mind.
2. Improve documentation of signage showing existing and proposed, and their conformity to regulations.
3. Improve and supplement the architecture, landscape and signage so it is clear what is touched and proposed.
4. Make appropriate modifications to the architecture based upon the signage.

H. **Kevin McAuley:** Said McDonald's' next submission will probably be in one month.

I. **Motion to continue the project passed unanimously by the SDRB 4 to 0.**

## **AGENDA ITEM 2:**

Application by Peter and Julie Dowell, the new owners of Alto Tiburon Veterinary Hospital, located at 1048 Redwood Highway, Mill Valley, CA, for expansion of the existing building and addition of parking spaces.

**Yahid Use Permit and Design Review (P3300):** The applicant requests Use Permit and Design Review approval to construct a 1,096 square-foot addition to an existing, two-story, 1,754 square-foot office building located at 1048 Redwood Highway in Mill Valley.

The 1,096 square feet of proposed addition, in combination with existing development, would result in a floor area ratio of .46 percent on the 7,673 square foot lot. The proposed addition would reach a maximum height of 29 feet, ten inches above surrounding grade, and the exterior walls of the proposed addition have the following setbacks: 50 feet from the west front property line, zero setback from the north side property line; 24 feet, seven inches from the south side property line; and 45 feet from the east rear property line. Various other improvements would also be entailed in the proposed development, including interior and exterior renovations, improvements to the existing surface parking lot, landscaping, and general site grading to accommodate the proposed addition. Planner: Immanuel Becket.

J. Architect **Christopher (Chris) Raker** introduced and presented the team and the project.

- It is a small expansion at the back of the site with parking spaces added.
- A commercial building backing onto a residential area.
- Designed to respect the residential character and minimize massing.
- No major architectural statement. Keeping the same external finishes, such as the clock tower, similar to the existing building, with same paintwork, etc.
- Interior lighting to the extension from the roof.
- No fenestration on the north side, where the operating rooms are located.
- **Julie Dowell**, co-owner, read aloud the letter to the County setting out the project:
  - It's a small, family-owned animal hospital.
  - No overnight stays; no ER. It's day surgery and "outpatients" only.
  - The place will close every evening with no disturbance to neighbors.
  - Current staff of 3 vets & 11 support staff, who are well paid, encouraged to cycle to work or take public transport, and some staff carpool together. Hoping to add 1 mor vet, and 3 more support staff.
  - Expected caseload is 10-18 appointments per day, and 2-3 surgical procedures each week.
- **Jillon Augustine**, the interior designer, explained the internal layout and the overall design of the building.
  - Back extension of 25-26 feet, is on the upper floor only, leaving space below for 3 parking spaces at grade level.
  - Back extension extends the existing building line on the north side along the property line, with zero setback.
  - Boundary wall is 6 feet high, and the soffit of the building is about 9 feet (ground has a slight gradient).
  - A balcony on the south side is to give it residential character and a little space for the staff.

- Will extend parking by removing weeds at the back of the site, to provide a total of 14 parking spaces, as required by regulations, including one for disabled parking.

**K. Architect Chris Raker** said the maximum height calculations for the whole building are under the 30-foot above grade envelope requirement.

**L. INITIAL STRAWBERRY DESIGN REVIEW BOARD COMMENTS:**

- The expansion is right up to the property line and is a vertical wall that is 24' feet high. This is a cause for concern when being adjacent to the residential neighbors.
- Did the architects consider shifting the expansion southwards (5'7") to match the existing building's south façade?
- The north elevation is not embellished. Some articulation would have been welcome.
- Car parking by staff and clients is likely to overspill into neighborhood streets, but sufficient spaces have been provided in line with the regulations.
- There was a concern about the trucks in the area leaving trash. And about parking, in general.
- The lot ends up with 99% impervious surfaces, by taking away the weeds area and replacing it with car parking spaces. However, there is no regulation against it.

**M. Penna Omega** inquired from a neighbor how he knew about the meeting. He explained it was by a chance meeting and word-of-mouth. This was a matter of concern that perhaps some neighbors missed out on receiving information by mail. A few other attendees at the Zoom meeting held up the post cards they received in the mail from the county.

**N. Discussion:**

- **Chris Raker** pointed out that it was up to the County to put out notices. However, they would reach out to the neighbors. One option is to plant trees on the neighbor's side of the land to create a visual barrier. Or plant trees on the path along the parking garage.
- **Elon Augustine** had considered a green wall during the design development.
- Members of the SDRB thought that the interior was really well thought out, but setback issues were ignored and this needs to be addressed.
- It is only one of two commercial buildings in this residential area, and as such, a 24' foot wall right up to the property line is overbearing in a residential area.

**O. COMMENTS FROM NEIGHBORS:**

- **Alec Canter, next door neighbor:** Said that rainwater runoff from the apartment building opposite from them floods their garage. However, runoff from this development does not affect them. Also, this would be the *third* property that would be built right up to their property line – two commercial properties and then the parking lot of an apartment building on the other side of them.
- **Elizabeth Rynecki, at 1038 Redwood Highway:** Happy about increased activity in the neighborhood but concerned about the parking implications. Increased staff and clients would end up parking on the neighborhood streets.

**P. BOARD DISCUSSION FOR MOTION:**

- **Matt Williams** considered not supporting the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) because of the 24' wall on the north side, the 99% impervious surface, and lack of structural support on the property line (with the one column).
- **Julie Brown** considered that conceptually she could not support the submission. It seems that this beautiful and efficient interior design has completely ignored the setback requirement. The building design should mediate between competing priorities of commercial and residential demands.
- **Joe Sherer** thought he could support the design if the extension could be pulled southwards by, say, at least 5'7" – about six feet.
- **Penna Omega** really liked the interior design, but considered parking is an issue with more staff parking on residential streets and the Frontage Road.
- **Julie Brown** responded that, as Julie Dowell mentioned before, all the staff are not there full-time and the clients are coming throughout the day, not all at one time. Therefore, parking may not be as much of an issue.

**Q. Motion to continue the design review passed unanimously 4 to 0.**

The reason for the continuance is to address the issue that this is a commercial building abutting against a residential property. The concept of the design is not an issue; it is the lack of a setback between a commercial and residential property, and the 24' foot wall right on the property line, which all needs to be considered and addressed.

**AGENDA ITEM 3:**



**Strawberry Village Retail LLC (One Medical) Use Permit Request and Design Review (P3193):** The applicant for the project is Chris Joram, and the property is located at 750 Redwood Highway Frontage Rd., Mill Valley, further identified as Assessor's Parcel 043-151-30. The applicant requests Use Permit approval to utilize 5,070 square feet for non-urgent, outpatient medical offices. The proposed hours of operation are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Use Permit approval is required because the project is in a planned district and there is no acting Use Permit or Master Plan which otherwise permits the use. Decision maker: Agency director.

- A. **The team was introduced** – Heather, Rachel, et.al. with One Medical, etc.
- B. **Matt** questioned if the SDRB could hear the submittal since the plans and other materials were not uploaded on the County website.
- C. **One Medical** requested clarification of what was happening, and why they couldn't be heard during this meeting.
  - **Joe Sherer explained:**
    - Applications are submitted to the County.
    - The County uploads the application materials, including the architectural plans, on their website by address and area.
    - Also, neighbors are notified by U.S. Mail.
    - This procedure is so that the public has time to review the designs (ten days minimum) before the matter comes up for hearing by the Design Review Board.
  - **Chris Joram**
    - Said that he notified the County that the plans had still not been posted on September 29, 2021 and was told that they were up on the website.
    - He was asked to share his email between Katherine Lehmann and himself with the group, via Zoom.
    - It turns out that Chris was asking about the status of the **agenda**, which was posted in time.
    - The County IT Dept. had posted the **agenda** on the website but, unfortunately, not the **plans**.
    - Several people apologized for this oversight on the part of the County.
    - (Note: The plans were later sent by senior planner, Immanuel Bereket, to the IT Dept. and posted on the website on October 7, 2021.)

**D. A motion for a continuance to review the One Medical application was made and the SDRB voted unanimously 4-0 to continue the review at their next meeting on October 18, when One Medical will be first on the agenda.**

**AGENDA ITEM 4:**

The federal housing group logged off around 9:00 p.m. and requested to return to make their presentation at the next SDRB meeting on October 18, 2021.

**The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:20 p.m.**