

Venice Neighborhood Council, Neighborhood Outreach Meeting

December 3, 2013, 6:30 PM

3223 Washington Blvd.

Case: ZA-2013-3173-CUB and ENV-2013-3174-EAF

Staff: James.Murez@VeniceNC.org

Attendance: 75 persons +/- 10 (Approx. 50% from Oxford neighborhood)

After introductions and the announcement about this being the first of three Venice Neighborhood Council (VNC) meetings, one of the owners, Mr. Firestone, spoke about the background of the Firestone-Walker brewery business. He went on to explain that the site will not be expanded outwards or upwards; the existing footprint will remain as it is. Improvements to the exterior will include landscaping and the removal of all the chain link fences. He wants an industrial look similar to his other two sites in central California. Poster boards showed the proposed project for the community to review.

The prior LA City use permit was for offices and restaurant for this site. The prior tenant of the property was World Gym, and they never converted the use from restaurant to gym. Therefore, there is no change of use being requested at this time on the restaurant. The office building is requesting a change of use from strictly office to office/retail. This is a remodel and Conditional Use Beverage (CUB) permit that is under consideration.

The proposed hours of operation are from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM seven days a week. Although only lunch and dinner will be served, the early hours are required for the office and business portions of the overall operation. All deliveries will take place during non-peak traffic times. One thing to note: the hours of operation are considerably shorter than other restaurants and bars in this section of Venice along Washington Blvd.

The project will offer more parking than required by current code. The code would require 61 stalls (includes for office to retail use change) and 70 are being provided after restriping the lot to better utilize the existing area. In addition to meeting all the ADA handicap parking requirements and offering an on-site loading area, the applicant is adding 32 bike racks to try and promote alternate means of transportation to the site. None of these bike racks are being used to offset any automobile parking requirements as presently allowed by code; they are extra and above what is required.

Stakeholder presence for this meeting was very good, which resulted in many excellent questions about the remodeling of the site, the operation of the business and what, if any, impacts the community might be concerned about. Below is a list of issues which the community talked about with the applicant:

- Incentives for employees who bike, walk or take the bus to work
- What can be done about cars that park on the side streets?
- When the lot fills up, an attendant will stack cars
- Employees are required to wear uniforms
- No valet parking service
- No live music
- No public right-of-way is proposed for use by applicant
- No outdoor dining area is proposed (early plan error)
- Applicant will participate in any sensible solution for parking and/or traffic mitigation
- Restaurant capacity was stated to be 207 seats

- All parking will be provided free to customers and employees
- Restaurant would be dog and child friendly as allowed by code (Health Dept. in particular)
- Brewery does not create any adverse odors
- No Happy Hour, the restaurant will serve lunch and dinner. Service will stop at 11 PM.
- A trash enclosure will be provided on site in the rear of the property along the alley
- The on-site requirement for security will be determined by LAPD, minimum one guard and will most likely be required to stay 45 minutes past the end of service hours
- Operating noise was compared to turning on all the burners of a stove
- Brewery pumps are state-of-the-art synchronous motors that are virtually silent and vibration free
- Parking lot fences will be maintained to minimize negative impacts to neighboring properties
- On-site training to employees and customers about the operation of brewing beer
- Offices will be for brewery business related uses
- Landscaping with environmentally correct plants

A question about the sale of beer to walk-in customers was asked which was in conjunction to a comment about the high density of homeless people in the immediate area. The applicant responded that his beer products are not targeted at a low cost market nor is the restaurant.

After the meeting concluded, a few of the stakeholders who live in the Oxford Triangle area approached me and wanted to speak about the retail or off-site selling of alcohol related items. Their primary concerns were not so much with this project but rather what precedence might be set by allowing such a conditional use beverage permit to be issued within this region of Venice which is controlled by the Oxford Triangle Specific Plan (OTSP). After researching the OTSP, I discovered a condition in Section 5.B.1.o.1.a referencing the off-site sales of alcohol beverages. I discovered this section pertains to "freestanding" buildings, which this is not since the applicant is proposing retail sales which are tied to the office building. Additionally, this condition only exists in the C4-(OX)-2-D zoned parcels, which only exist on Lincoln Blvd. and not on any of the lots on Washington Blvd, which are all zoned as C2-1. Furthermore, the applicant is requesting an ABC Type 1 license, which limits their retail off-site sales to only the products the brewery produces. This is a very limited ABC license that was specifically designed for breweries and is the first of its category to exist in Venice.

Conclusion: It was clear from the warm presentation that the applicant is very passionate about sharing his successes with the community.

To be considered at LUPC Hearing:

ABC license to be issued to the Firestone-Walker company – not a third party shell company (LLC) that can later be sold without triggering a new Conditional Use Permit.

Signage – Restricted to logo or business name, no advertising information shall be permitted that is visible from the exterior of the project.

VNC standard alcohol related conditions.

VNC standard BMP conditions for restaurants. (Now included as Green Permit)

Time limits on customer parking was not addressed.

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