

January 19, 2014

Dear DRC Members:

The Historic Resources Advisory Board (HRAB) would like to weigh in on the Wizer's block redevelopment. HRAB has explored with the architects the possibility of retaining some of the iconic elements of the wonderfully historic Lake Oswego shopping center. The Wizer family has been prominent in the Lake Oswego area for many years and their grocery store had a well known array of quality food and Italian wine available in the heart of downtown. Since 1960, it has been a favorite stop for many long time Lake Oswego residents for family meals and picnics on the lake. The City recently performed a historic survey of the property and documented the Lake Oswego Shopping Center as having the potential to be a locally significant landmark as Lake Oswego's first community mall. The building's modern design by Richard Sundeleaf, an architect who has designed other public buildings and single-family homes in the city, increases its historic significance. Nearby Sundeleaf Plaza is named for Lake Oswego's own Richard Sundeleaf.

In light of plans to redevelop the property, HRAB understands that, while it is not possible to preserve the building, incorporating some of the more significant architectural elements into the site's future development is worthy of consideration. We have discussed with the project architects our desire to preserve these elements. We have been told that the two interior tile mosaics located in the atrium at the front entrance of the grocery store depicting activities on, and around Oswego Lake will be preserved in some fashion. These mosaics will be incorporated into the new development's design, at our request, to remind the community of the Lake Oswego Shopping Center's place in Lake Oswego's recreational past. Other elements that we would like to see incorporated are the 10 exterior parking lot shepherd's hook light fixtures. These would provide authentic stylistic variety from the reproduction, early-century style street lights more recently installed in the area by the city. We would love to see the original neon sign that originally stood at the corner of First and A Streets, if it still exists, incorporated into the design of the new building, to retain the Wizer's identity for this property in our community. The interior stair railings around and leading to the basement level could be utilized in the redesign, as they are unique mid-century style elements, but we understand from the architect that they are not up to modern code for use as stair railings. We would also urge the retention of the interior Wizer's Oswego Foods signs above the interior doors, if not to be used in the redesign, to be donated to the city. The large, old, Japanese maple on the corner of First and A Streets should be saved and it is our understanding that it will be.

We had urged that any new buildings on the site be designed with a mid-century aesthetic. Lake Oswego has a plethora of new commercial and residential buildings that have recently been designed and constructed in an attempt to replicate an Arts and Crafts style popular in Lake Oswego from the 1920's through the 1940's. We do not need a whole city of reproduction village style buildings all destined to age stylistically at the same time. Our community evolved over time, and the designs of our buildings should reflect that. Using a mid-century style to replace a mid century iconic building would retain the architectural diversity of our city. The existing design elements could also be easily incorporated. However, under our understanding of the code, this mid-century option is not currently available for downtown, despite a wonderful mid-century Safeway up the street from the site. The current design as proposed by ZGF is a stylistically modern interpretation of the styles mentioned in the city code. While some elements of the proposed buildings reflect those historic styles with a modern twist, the buildings are definitely not stylistically true to those historic styles.

We would also urge deconstruction over demolition of the existing building. There are many elements, including brick, wood paneling and unique tile that could be reused in a sustainably responsible way.

In addition, HRAB has concerns that the height of this proposed redevelopment and its high density housing units, will fundamentally change the character of our small downtown, beloved by residents. Across the street, the historic buildings on north A Avenue are small and historic in scale. Changing the height of this block to be even taller than its neighbors on both sides of the south side of A Avenue will make the south side of the street out of scale for downtown; clustering too much height and density in one small area. In sum, the proposed height and too many residences downtown, bringing a huge traffic increase, will change the small town ambiance our residents have historically enjoyed.

Sincerely,

The Historic Resources Advisory Board (HRAB)
Kasey Holwerda, Chair

G-1
LU 13-0046