



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: February 16, 2021

Agenda Item: 7.1

To: Architectural Review Board

From: Scott Albright, Senior Planner

CC: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design and Historic Preservation Planner

Subject: 20ARB-0251 to approve the building design, colors, materials, landscape plans, sign adjustment, and sign plans for a new two-story, 13,413 square foot building that would house a new dog rescue operation known as the “Happy Dog Project”. In addition, the request is to also approve the building design, colors, and materials for upgrades to an existing one-story building that would be repurposed into artist studios.

Address: 1639, 1643, and 1649 9th Street

Applicant: 1639 9th Street LLC

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board approve application 20ARB-0251 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

Executive Summary

Proposed is a new two-story, 13,413 square foot building that would house a new dog rescue operation known as “Happy Dog Project”. The program of the proposed building includes traditional kennel spaces and ancillary pet adoption facilities along with cage-free socialization lounges. The building would also contain a café space that would enable unique visitor interaction and socialization with the dogs. Also proposed would be exterior cosmetic changes to an existing building on-site that will remain and be converted to artist studio space. Building and landscape design and material, as described in this report, are of high quality and comply with the design review findings. Staff recommends approval of the building design and landscape plans, and further recommends approval of a sign adjustment as described.

Background

Planning Commission review and approval of “Happy Dog Project” Conditional Use Permit

On November 6, 2019, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing to consider the operation of the Happy Dog project through a Conditional Use Permit, as rendered below. The Conditional Use Permit was approved without discussion on the consent calendar, and there were not any design suggestions offered for the Board to consider in its review.



Preliminary rendering of “Happy Dog Project” as reviewed by Planning Commission on November 9, 2019

Project / Site Information

The project site is located along 9th Street, which is a public street that dead-ends in front of the project site. Automobile and pedestrian access to this segment of 9th Street is only available via Olympic Boulevard, which in this general location functions as a one-way street heading in a westward direction. 9th Street is further cut-off from extending south of Olympic by the Santa Monica Freeway and the Lincoln Boulevard freeway off-ramp. The proposed project site is comprised of three individual parcels that will be tied together to enable the proposed Happy Dog Project and the repurposed building into artist studios to be located on a singular building site.

The site is situated within an industrial area of the City and is isolated and buffered from residential uses by other industrial uses, the Santa Monica Freeway to the south, and the Colorado Avenue commercial corridor to the north. Given the lack of connectivity to the greater City street and pedestrian network, the site sits in relative isolation that would be an appropriate condition for a kennel use.

All existing improvements on the 1639 and 1649 portions would be demolished as part of the project scope. Demolition Permit applications were received and reviewed by the Landmarks Commission on March 11, 2019 and determined there is not credible evidence in the record to proceed with a further public hearing to determine whether the buildings in question meet criteria as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit. The building at 1643 would remain and would be repurposed for use as artists’ studios.

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	Industrial Conservation (IC)
Parcel Area (SF):	29,034 square feet,
Parcel Dimensions:	Irregular shaped lot

Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	1639 9 th Street – one-story, 6,055 square foot industrial building (1950) (to be demolished) 1643 9 th Street - one-story, 5,500 square foot industrial building (artist studio) (1970) (to remain) 1649 9 th Street – three, one-story industrial buildings totaling 2,225 square feet (1924, 1927, 1950) (to be demolished)
Historic Resource Inventory Status	None of the improvements are listed on the HRI
CEQA	The project is an urban infill project that qualifies for CEQA exemption pursuant to the provisions set forth in Section 15183.3 of the CEQA Guidelines.
Adjacent Zoning & Use:	North: IC –auto repair facility East: IC – industrial uses South: IC – industrial uses West: IC – City of Santa Monica animal shelter



Rendering of project in its entirety – east side of 9th Street

Analysis

New building for “Happy Dog Project”

Building Design/Architectural Concept

The proposal is for a new building proposed for a dog rescue facility adjacent and connected to an existing building renovated for use as artist studios with open space or “yard” between.



Rendering of the proposed new building to accommodate the "Happy Dog Project"

The design of the new building proposed for the Happy Dog Project has its roots in the industrial neighborhood in which it is situated. The kennel portion of the project will be housed in a space that has a flat, high volume appearance. This part of the building is topped by a gable roof, whose pitch reinforces its industrial context. This building is relatively unadorned other than a large subtle graphic image on the 9th Street elevation, but has a strong verticality that is reinforced by the wood slats that cover the façade. Its use of brick reinforces its industrial context and affirms its strong association with the kennel portion of the building. The adjacent building to be refurbished as artist studios will be physically connected to the new building and clad in similar/complementary materials for a wholistic project design.



Rendering of proposed repurposing of the existing building at 1643 9th Street into artist studios

Site Plan

All required parking will be provided in a landscaped surface lot located on an adjacent parcel south of the proposed artist studios. A one-way traffic flow for the lot is proposed with traffic entering from 9th Street and exiting onto 9th Court service alley. The parking lot will be protected by a five-foot, semi-transparent fence along 9th Street and an eight-foot high solid fence along the service alley.

The conceptual diagrams (Sheet A03.3) identify the introduction of a court as a major consideration in the overall design concept. The space between the new Happy Dog Project building and the repurposed artist studio building would appear to identify this type of space. The proposed fence barrier and movable planters between the outdoor kennel areas and the courtyard appear to maximize social interaction for the dogs, the functionality of the courtyard is not entirely clear. A condition has been added to address this concern.

Landscape Design

Landscaping has been fully integrated into the project design and acts to unify the project as a singular entity. The plans provide for plantings to add color and texture to the site. This is achieved with a variety of trees, shrubs, and low-growth plantings, with the larger tree species being Australian Willow (*Geijera parviflora*), Shoestring Acacia (*Acacia stenophylla*), Camphor (*Cinnamomum camphora*), and Tipu tree (*Tipuana tipu*). In particular, the planting at the front of the site and in the parkway will serve to connect the three parcels and enhance the overall site and street. Proposed trees will provide appropriate shade at the front, in the court, parking and rear service area

Building Mass and Scale

From the street, the building would appear to have a large open floor plan, typical of industrial design, however this masks the actual interior program of smaller spaces to accommodate its functionality as a dog rescue. Off to its side is a one-story appendage that will house the café space. The appearance of this building component juxtaposes the kennel portion of the building expressing a strong horizontality, also through materiality and overall composition. The existing 5,500 square-foot, non-descript, concrete masonry (CMU) building at 1643 9th Street will be repurposed into an artist studio facility containing seven individual artist studios. The building itself will not be expanded in size or floor area and will only undergo cosmetic changes on the exterior to accommodate the new use.

The overall building massing consists of volumes that are rectilinear in form but of varying sizes and heights. An angular gable roofline interrupts the orthogonality but maintains an industrial appearance with an appropriate roof pitch and associated wall heights. The building utilizes stepping to respond to the reduce mass, protect natural air flow and light, and minimize unnecessary bulk.

Although its location on a dead-end street excludes the building from the City's pedestrian network, the ground floor still presents a strong pedestrian orientation and scale. The kennel portion of the building introduces a fully transparent glass street wall at its entry. The transparency diminishes as the vertical wood slats project to the ground. The café portion of the building includes an outdoor seating area abutting the sidewalk.

Design and Detailing

DESIGN ELEMENTS	PROPOSED EXTERIOR MATERIAL, FINISH AND COLOR
Façade	Thin Brick, masonry finish, gray Concrete Masonry, match existing, white opaque Thermally treated wood siding, opaque Aluminum trim, black
Windows	Clear transparent glazing; aluminum trim and storefront, black
Doors	Aluminum storefront, black Clear transparent storefront glazing Hollow metal door, black
Balcony railings	Thermally treated wood, aluminum trim, black
Roof	Sheeted thermoplastic, white Aluminum trim, black
Lighting	Lighting plans provided

The project successfully expresses itself relative to its industrial context and presents a unified appearance along the street. Through its choice of warm natural materials, clean lines, and limited adornment, staff appreciates that the building has a clear industrial intent, but rejects the bland material palette and “function over form” that typically is applied for this type of use. The building softens the experience of pet adoption and warmly embraces the street.

The 9th Street elevation will be refreshed with a new aluminum storefront system at the entry. A steel and wood canopy will protect this entry and provide a setting for the building’s signage. Aluminum panels will top the storefront with decorative wood paneling flanking the entry. The wood paneling will have a horizontality that matches that which is located on the new Happy Dog Project café. The exposed CMU that composed most of the building will be refreshed with new paint. On the south side elevation, four large metal-grid windows will be punched through to allow natural light and air into the interior portions of the building. On the north side elevation, the extent of openings is limited to a single glass storefront door and an overhead glass bi-fold door. This is due to this façade facing toward the outdoor portions of the kennel operation. Any rooftop mechanical equipment will be screened with metal screening. The artist studio building is designed to appear connected to the new Happy Dog Project building through its use of similar materials and geometric expression.

The new building and proposed façade improvements to the existing building will enhance the property and the neighborhood. This building’s street presence will also be heightened with the proposed improvements, making this street more pleasant and inviting.

Sign Plans

SIGN AREA CALCULATIONS	
Multi-tenant Building	No
Permitted Sign Area	138 SF
Existing Sign Area (signs that will remain)	0 SF
Proposed Sign Area (this application)	329 SF
Total Sign Area Upon Completion	329 SF
Total Number of New Signs	4
Compliance	Happy Dog imagery requires a sign adjustment for its size; overall request requires approval of a sign adjustment - exceeds sign area by 191 SF

Painted Image of Happy Dog

Proposed Sign Type: Painted Graphic Wall sign, non-illuminated, limited visibility

Proposed Dimensions (Area): Irregular/300 SF

Proposed Colors: gray/brown paint on one side of wood slats

“The Happy Dog Project”

Existing Sign Type: Canopy mounted sign, non-illuminated
Existing Dimensions (Area): 15' x 10" = 12.5 SF
Existing Colors: Brushed Nickel
Mounted channel letter

“Happy Dog Cafe”

Existing Sign Type: Canopy mounted sign, non-illuminated
Existing Dimensions (Area): 10'-1" x 10" = 8.4 SF
Existing Colors: Brushed Nickel
Mounted channel letter

“Artist Studios”

Existing Sign Type: Canopy mounted sign, non-illuminated
Existing Dimensions (Area): 9'-6" x 10" = 7.9 SF
Existing Colors: Brushed Aluminum
Mounted channel letter

Proposed as part of the identification of the Happy Dog Project is a unique painted sign that utilizes the wood slat façade treatment to create partially visible imagery. This imagery will be located on the blank portions of the exterior west wall, just below the roof gable. The proposed image, which is 300 square feet in size and only depicts the silhouette of a “happy dog”, is created by only painting the image components on a single face of the wood slats. As such, the image would only be visible when looking directly at the painted image. Otherwise, the depth of the wood slats would obscure the image. Although the does not contain any text, staff finds that the depiction of the dog appears to be an identifying image for the non-profit organization and therefore technically considers the proposal as a sign requiring an adjustment for its size.

The unique imagery engages visual interest on an otherwise blank wall. Given the unique limited visibility and the site’s unusual location at the terminus of a dead-end street (9th Street), staff believes that the circumstances of the proposal justify the increased sign area necessary to accommodate the adjustment necessary for the super graphic sign.

Impact on Historic Resources

The subject property is not listed on the City’s Historic Resources Inventory.

Code Compliance

In the processing of the project’s development review permit, staff conducted extensive preliminary review for compliance with the Zoning Code, including the base district’s development standards, urban automobile dealership standards and Tier 2 requirements. There do not appear to be outstanding issues that could potentially affect the plans and result in significant changes to the project’s design. A complete code-compliance review will occur when the application is submitted for plan check. Any significant changes to the design subsequent to any ARB approval will require Board approval.

CEQA Status

The project is an urban infill project that qualifies for CEQA exemption pursuant to the provisions set forth in Section 15183.3 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Summary

The design of the new Happy Dog Project building and the repurposed artist studio building successfully express themselves relative to their industrial context and presents a unified appearance along the street through use of similar materials and geometric expression. The combination of both buildings will make the street more inviting. The proposed design is recommended for approval subject to the findings for approval as stated below. In addition, a sign adjustment is proposed to allow a super graphic imagery that exceeds code requirements, staff is able to support this request given the unique conditions of the site, the unique installation technic, and its overall added value to the building's design.

FINDINGS:

- A. The plan for the proposed building or structure is expressive of good taste, good design, and in general contributes to the image of Santa Monica as a place of beauty, creativity and individuality in that the design of the new Happy Dog Project building successfully expresses itself relative to its industrial context and presents a unified appearance along the street. Through its choice of warm natural materials, clean lines, and limited adornment, the building has a clear industrial intent. In addition, the proposed façade improvements to the repurposed building will be an overall enhancement. The building's CMU construction, which will remain intact, in concert with the new material choices, clean and perpendicular lines, and limited adornment, will successfully reinforce the industrial context. The combination of both buildings will make the street more inviting.
- B. The proposed building or structure is not of inferior quality such as to cause the nature of the local neighborhood or environment to materially depreciate in appearance and value in that the building will use high quality materials, as detailed in the application submittal and as presented to the Architectural Review Board.
- C. The proposed design of the building or structure is compatible with developments on land in the general area in that it is similar in height and massing to other area developments along 9th Street and within its industrial context. The building is consistent with the design and use objectives articulated in the Land Use & Circulation Element (LUCE) for the Industrial Conservation district in which it is located.
- D. The proposed development conforms to the effective guidelines and standards adopted pursuant to Chapter 9.55 – *Architectural Review Board*, and all other applicable ordinances insofar as the location and appearance of the buildings and structures are involved. Specifically, the location and appearance of the buildings and structures comply with required findings set forth in Chapter 9.55, as

documented by the Architectural Review Board, and as conditioned, the plans will fully comply with all applicable regulations prior to the issuance of a building permit.

FINDINGS for Sign Adjustment:

- A. The strict application of the provisions of this Chapter would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships for the business or property owner in that the subject sign is primarily intended to enhance the building façade and is not intended solely as signage to attract attention to the Happy Dog Project. The strict application of the definition of a sign to the proposed mural results in the entire area of the building wall being considered sign area and exceeds the signage area permitted by Code for the subject site. This results in an unnecessary hardship for the Happy Dog Project in that the proposed sign is not fully visible from every angle due to its unique installation and somewhat abstract imagery of a happy dog and it has been sized to uniquely cover a blank area of the building façade.
- B. The granting of the requested variance would not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with limitations imposed on similarly zoned properties or inconsistent with the purposes of the zoning regulations in that the proposed design of the sign is sufficiently abstract and limited in its visibility and will enhance the building facade. Additionally, the Happy Dog Project is uniquely located at the terminus (dead-end) of Ninth Street.
- C. The granting of the requested variance would not be incompatible with other nearby signs, other elements of street and site furniture and with adjacent structures in that the proposed sign would have limited visibility due to its unique installation, and in that the building is uniquely located at the terminus (dead-end) of 9th Street. Due to the atypical site location, proposed sign placement, and abstract application of the sign, the proposed sign would not be incompatible with other nearby signs or adjacent structures.
- D. The granting of the variance would not be inconsistent with the purposes of this Chapter in that the proposed sign includes the application paint in a unique and abstract that limits the visibility of the sign in a manner that will enhance the building façade and will not detract from the building architecture or adjacent structures in the immediate vicinity.

CONDITIONS:

- 1. Provide more detailed plans for the court or yard to clarify useability for review and approval by staff.
- 2. This approval shall expire when the administrative or discretionary entitlements, not including any Subdivision Map approvals, previously granted for the project have lapsed. If no such entitlements have been granted, this approval shall expire 24 months from its effective date.

3. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall demonstrate landscape and irrigation plan compliance with the City's Green Building Ordinance standards (SMMC 8.108) subject to staff approval. Modifications to the landscape plan that effect less than 750 square feet of area may be reviewed and approved by the Staff Liaison to the Board.
4. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall demonstrate that the plans comply with all applicable provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. Significant changes to a project's design shall require review and approval of the Architectural Review Board. Minor changes may be approved administratively pursuant to all applicable guidelines.

The Architectural Review Board's approval, conditions of approval, or denial of this application may be appealed to the Planning Commission if the appeal is filed with the Zoning Administrator within ten consecutive days following the date of the Architectural Review Board's determination in the manner provided in SMMC 9.61.100.

Attachments

- A. Applicant's Submittal Material

[https://smgov365.sharepoint.com/teams/pcdsp/CityPlanning/ARB/STFRPT/SR20/20ARB-0251 \(1639-1649 9th Street\) BDCMLS.docx](https://smgov365.sharepoint.com/teams/pcdsp/CityPlanning/ARB/STFRPT/SR20/20ARB-0251 (1639-1649 9th Street) BDCMLS.docx)