

**CORTE MADERA PLANNING COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT**

**ITEM NO. 5A**                      **REPORT DATE:**                      **April 22, 2010**  
**MEETING DATE:**                      **April 27, 2010**

**SUBJECT:**                      **DESIGN REVIEW APPLICATION NO. 10-005** - To approve an exterior remodel of a commercial space at Corte Madera Town Center with a new storefront, new exterior materials, new sign program, enclosure of the mall-side pedestrian breezeway and parking lot/ landscape modifications.

**LOCATION:**                      332 Corte Madera Town Center (Urban Outfitters)

**APPLICANT:**                      Urban Outfitters

**ARCHITECT:**                      Mulvanny G2 Architects

**APPROVAL DEADLINE:**                      This application was accepted as complete on **April 5, 2010**. Final action must be taken by the **June 8, 2010** Planning Commission meeting, or the application may be deemed approved.

**CEQA STATUS:**                      The Planning Department recommends that this project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under Categorical Exemption Class 1 (CEQA. Article 19. Section 15301)

**PROCEDURE:**                      The Planning Commission's decision is final unless appealed to or called up by the Town Council within ten calendar days.

**SITE INFORMATION:**                      Zoning:                      C-2 (Regional Shopping District)

Existing Development:                      Commercial space (9,154 sq. ft.)

Lot Size:                      Corte Madera Town Center – 31+ acres

<u>Surrounding Properties:</u>	<u>Zoning</u>	<u>Land Use</u>
North:	C-3	Commercial
South:	C-3	Commercial
East:	C-2	Commercial
West:	R-1	Residential

**SUMMARY:** The applicant (Urban Outfitters) is proposing to occupy a 9,154 sq.ft. lease space that was previously occupied by Pier 1 Imports. The lease space extends from the eastern parking lot through to the mall side. On the mall side, the existing pedestrian breezeway (approximately 876 sq.ft.) is proposed to be enclosed for new commercial floor area. With the addition of the gross floor area, the center is still under .34 FAR which is the maximum allowed for commercial centers, as confirmed by County Assessor's records (see Attachment 1). The archways of the breezeway are proposed to be encased on the exterior by rectangular shaped metal flange window framing. On the parking lot side, there will be a new storefront entry, new brick cladding and a sign mounted on metal mesh framing that extends above the building parapet. In response to the proposed additional gross floor area within the breezeway, four new parking spaces will be developed in the parking lot by removing two large landscape islands presently in the parking lot. Replacement trees will be planted elsewhere in the parking lot. Below are renderings of the proposed mall side and parking lot side renovations.



## **BACKGROUND:**

Below is a chronological listing of events pertaining to this application:

### **March 23, 2010**

Design Review for façade change, new signage, breezeway enclosure and parking lot reconfiguration was filed by the applicant.

### **April 5, 2010**

The applicant filed additional project data to determine FAR compliance. The Planning Department determined that the application was complete and recommends that the Planning Commission determine that the project qualifies for categorical exemption under Section 15301 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

### **April 15, 2010**

Public hearing notices were mailed to property owners and renters within 300 feet of the subject property and nearby commercial tenants.

### **April 27, 2010**

Planning Commission holds a public hearing.

## **ANALYSIS: *DESIGN REVIEW FOR THE BUILDING***

The design of all storefronts, facades, signage and landscaping at the Corte Madera Town Center shopping center is regulated by the Corte Madera Town Center Design Guidelines, a document developed by the center and approved by the Town. The Guidelines provide parameters for acceptable and unacceptable design. The Guidelines do not impose a strict prescriptive architectural style. They allow design flexibility, but prohibit low quality, generic storefronts which lack building articulation and visual interest. The Guidelines include a fairly prescriptive sign allowance schedule, which is similar to the town-wide Sign Ordinance regulations.

In recent years, a number of new storefronts have been approved along the easterly (highway) side of the Corte Madera Town Center. These storefronts have improved the appearance and commercial activity of the center by replacing a blank rear wall of a prior businesses or replacing a dated storefront. The proposed Urban Outfitters easterly storefront will replace the Pier 1 Imports storefront. New brick cladding and wall vine features on the east elevation will replace the existing dominate architectural style of the center which includes stucco siding and a stucco cornices; a somewhat Tuscan style.

Staff feels it would be best to maintain the stucco/Tuscan architectural style on the eastern storefront, but the brick cladding should not be summarily

discounted. Other businesses have used alternative exterior finishes (tile, stone, painted brick) that are present on east-facing buildings at Town Center that do not pose a design distraction. The Planning Commission should discuss the merits of maintaining the stucco/Tuscan style versus allowing periodic storefronts with varied architectural styles and varied wall finishes.

The proposal for the westerly storefront (mall-side) includes encasing the archways along the pedestrian breezeway by attaching rectangular shaped metal flange window framing to the outside of the archways. The project architect has provided a rationale for his design solution. He feels the juxtaposed design elements are preferred (see Attachment 2 for the full explanation).

Staff feels the exterior application of the rectangular metal window framing is not preferred. Staff recommends that the breezeway is enclosed utilizing new exterior windows that maintain the archway design. This is a common design characteristic that is successful and found in numerous other storefronts throughout Town Center (see examples below).



Enclosing the breezeways will result in a bit of a pinch-point for shoppers during the very popular Wednesday Farmers Market. The Town Center management has stated that vendors' tents and other courtyard furniture will be adjusted to ensure that there is adequate passageway for shoppers.

#### *DESIGN REVIEW FOR THE SIGNS*

The Corte Madera Town Center Design Guidelines regulate signs. Individual illuminated letters are encouraged. Roof signs and signage extending above the building parapet are prohibited. The size of a sign is calculated by measuring the simplest geometric shape around the sign text. Although, if the sign is attached to background structure which is not integral to the building design and building materials, the background structure is also considered sign area. Staff believes

the entire metal mesh framing used for the parking lot sign must be counted toward sign area since the rectangular mesh structure is clearly dissimilar to the building materials.

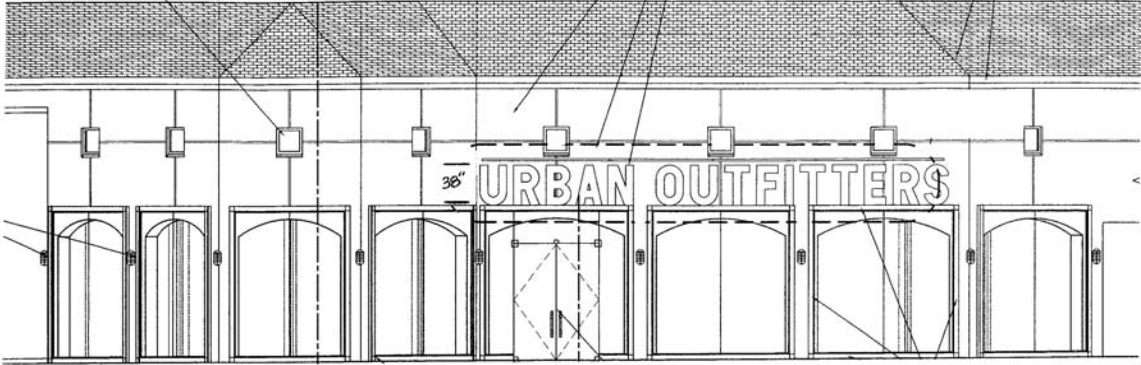
The sign area allowance for commercial tenants is one square foot of signage for each lineal foot of storefront with a maximum total of 100 sq.ft. The Design Guidelines do allow for more flexibility for Major Tenants with greater than 9,200 sq.ft. of floor area. In such cases, the sign area allowance is based on proportionality with the height and width of the storefront. Below is a comparison of Urban Outfitters' sign proposal with other recently approved sign programs for Major Tenants.

<u>Tenant</u>	<u>Sign Area</u>	<u>Lineal Storefront</u>	<u>Lease Area</u>
Crate & Barrell	95 sq.ft. (2 signs)	120' (east side)	25,000 sq.ft.
Crate & Barrell	76 sq.f t. (3 signs)	120' (west side)	
Barnes & Noble	76 sq.ft. (1 sign)	124' (east side)	27,000 sq.ft.
Barnes & Noble	15 sq.ft. (1 sign)	80' (west side)	
P.F. Changs	41 sq.ft. (1 sign)	140' (east side)	7,100 sq.ft.
Urban Outfitters	118 sq.ft. (1 sign)	75' (east side)	10,010 sq.ft.
Urban Outfitters	116 sq.ft. (1 sign)	94' (west side)	

The proposed Urban Outfitters signs on both the parking lot side and the mall side are larger than all other signs in the survey. Staff believes the Urban Outfitters sign program is oversized and out of proportion with the storefronts. Staff recommends that the parking lot sign be limited to the easterly raised parapet (where URBAN is located). Pier 1 Import's current sign is located here and is adequately visible. The metal mesh framing (where OUTFITTERS is located) also protrudes above the storefront parapet which is not allowed by the Design Guidelines or the town's Sign Ordinance. In addition, the OUTFITTERS sign would be partially blocked by a mature tree, which makes this sign less necessary.



Staff recommends that the mall side sign be proportionally reduced by approximately 30% to be more proportional to the storefront. The proposed letters are 38" in height and span 36'-7". Such a large sign is completely unnecessary for this interior courtyard location. It would seem more appropriate for a storefront facing a wide, busy thoroughfare. An accurate drawing of the proposed sign is shown below. The curved storefront is shown as straight façade. The signage on the color rendering of the mall side storefront shown on page 2 of this report is not drawn to scale. The signs were drawn too small.

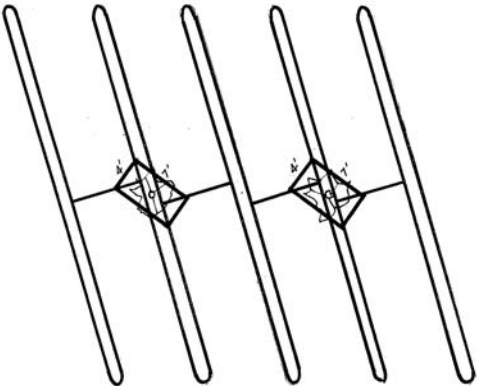


WALL MOUNTED LETTERS (MALL SIDE)

The sign recommendations by staff are generally consistent with the recommendations by SZFM Architects to reduce the sign area. You will recall that SZFM Architects have for many years evaluated the design of storefront renovations at the Corte Madera Town Center in response to the Design Guidelines for the Center. SZFM recommends that the individual letters of the OURBAN OUTFITTERS sign on the mall side be reduced from 38" in height to 26" in height (approximately 30%). SZFM recommends that the individual letters of the sign on the parking lot side be reduced from 30" to 26", while staff feels the sign should be limited to the easterly raised parapet only.

*DESIGN REVIEW FOR THE PARKING LOT*

In order to gain four parking spaces in the parking lot due to the 876 sq.ft. breezeway enclosure, two large landscape islands within the parking lot (each with two trees) will be removed and converted to four parking spaces. Four small landscape islands (each with one tree) will be added to the parking lot to replace the four trees removed. These small islands do not affect parking spaces because they are oriented between head-on angled parking spaces. (see an example below of small landscape islands with one tree).



Alternatively, replacement landscape islands with a total of four trees can be developed at the end of drive isles within the parking lot if adequate drive isle widths remain.

**CONCLUSION:**

Staff believes the proposed brick cladding on the east side is not preferred over the continued use of a Tuscan-style stucco that is more prevalent in Town Center, but staff acknowledges that some varied architectural styles and varied exterior building materials are also appropriate at Town Center. Staff has a much stronger opinion about the proposed breezeway encasing. The archways should be enclosed by utilizing new exterior windows that maintain the archway design; staff rejects the proposed rectangular shaped metal flange window framing. Staff recommends that the sign area for the parking lot side and the mall side be reduced in area and that no signage be allowed to protrude above the building parapet.

**RECOMMENDED  
COMMISSION ACTION:**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission **conditionally approve** Design Review Application No. 10-005 for the Urban Outfitters remodel by adopting the attached Resolution with Findings and Conditions. The Conditions of Approval in the Draft Resolution reflect staff's recommendations regarding changes to signage and changes to the breezeway windows.

- ATTACHMENTS:
1. FAR Survey Data
  2. Applicant's Project Description
  3. Resolution
  4. Site Plans, Elevations, Floor Plans, Sign Program, Parking Lot Plans
  5. Town Center Design Guidelines (abridged)

cc: Applicant  
Architect  
Property Owner