



Agenda Item

Design Review Committee

Item #: 4.1.

12/17/2025

File #: 25-0592

TO: Chair and Members of the Design Review Committee

THRU: Hayden Beckman, Planning Manager

FROM: Arlen Beck, Associate Planner

1. SUBJECT

A request to convert a historic warehouse building into a church at 527 W. Almond Avenue and 180 S. Cypress Street. (Design Review No. 5159).

2. SUMMARY

An adaptive re-use of a historic steel frame warehouse (West Building) to a church/religious assembly use and the remodel of an existing office building (East Building) with site improvements to the connecting plaza for Friends Church Orange located at 527 W. Almond Avenue (West Building) and 180 S. Cypress Street (East Building).

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Approve Design Review No. 5159 with staff recommended conditions.
2. Refer to Planning Commission for consideration.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Applicant: Kyle Zimmerman, Friends Church Orange

Property Owner: Lisa Perrine, Cibola Systems

Property Location: 527 W. Almond Avenue & 180 S. Cypress Street

General Plan Designation: Old Towne Mixed Use 15 (OTMIX15)

Zoning Classification: Old Towne Mixed Use-15 (OTMU-15)

Specific Plan: Orange Santa Fe Depot Specific Plan

Existing Development: Warehouse/Packing House building & Office Building

Associated Application: Conditional Use Permit No. 3236, Minor Site Plan Review No. 1191

Previous DRC Project Review: None.

5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project involves an adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of the historic 1925 Hangar Building, referred to as the West Building, located at 527 West Almond Avenue. The Friends Church Orange seeks to convert this large industrial structure into a functional assembly space while preserving the historic character that defines the building's architectural significance. The primary

intent is to construct new interior program spaces within the existing exterior envelope, allowing the church to utilize the expansive interior volume created by the building's 17-foot interior height, exposed bowstring steel trusses, and square footprint. This transition to an assembly use requires a Conditional Use Permit and is designed to maintain the building's essential historic features while accommodating contemporary operational needs.

A major component of the project is the rehabilitation of the Hangar's street-facing south and west façades, which are considered the building's primary historic elevations. The project calls for the retention and repair of the corrugated metal siding wherever feasible. Where deterioration has compromised material integrity, in-kind replacement panels will be installed to match the original profile and appearance. The historic steel windows on these façades are also proposed to be repaired and restored. Later-era metal louver panels, which replaced some of the original window units, will be removed when appropriate, allowing for the re-establishment of original window patterns and materials. Non-historic wooden-framed mesh screens that currently obscure window integrity are not proposed for rehabilitation and may be replaced with interior storm-window systems to achieve energy efficiency without altering the historic exterior appearance.

The project also incorporates a later addition to the building on its north side. This area includes a recessed loading dock and ramp, which will be filled to meet the interior finish floor level in order to support new program uses. The interior mezzanine located in the northeast corner, a non-original addition, will be integrated into the adaptive reuse program and will influence modifications to fenestration on the surrounding façades. This includes adjustments to clerestory windows and the introduction of new openings where necessary to allow for functional circulation and access.

The east façade faces the interior courtyard and is not visible from the public street, and in turn, it is treated as a secondary façade which allows for greater flexibility for modification. The project proposes a new primary entrance on this elevation, strategically placed in the same location as historic sliding doors. The new entrance will feature paired glazed doors with a transom above, designed to be compatible with but distinct from the original industrial steel window systems. The creation of this primary entry necessitates the removal of two clerestory windows, though their frames may be retained or reused elsewhere to maintain the historic fenestration of the east elevation. Additionally, the northern portion of the east façade will be modified to include a new aluminum storefront system serving a proposed coffee shop. These alterations are considered appropriate under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards because they occur on a secondary elevation, support new programmatic needs, and remain distinguishable from yet compatible with the historic materials.

The adjacent East Building at 180 South Cypress Street is not historically designated and therefore is subject to fewer constraints. Minimal changes are proposed to its exterior, while interior remodel work will allow it to function as supporting program space for the church. Together with the Hangar Building, the East Building forms a unified campus connected by a shared courtyard. This courtyard will receive significant landscape, hardscape, lighting, and circulation improvements and will serve as the central gathering and access point for the new church facility. The new primary entrance to the Hangar Building will open onto this courtyard, enhancing flow between the two structures and activating the exterior space.

Landscape improvements include replacing two mature trees (L. confertus) along Almond Avenue with Desert Museum Palo Verdes (C. X 'Desert Museum') to provide a more welcoming entry into the courtyard. These will be anchored by Dwarf Olives and Mat Rushes to complement the landscaping that continues throughout the courtyard. In addition, three Marina Strawberry trees (A. 'Marina') will shade the flexible common area and mitigate heat island. The planting specified has water

requirements that range from very low to low, and are adapted to the local climate to resist drought. All irrigation on-site will be on a drip system in an effort to maximize water conservation.

The rehabilitation approach emphasizes repair over replacement, adherence to historically appropriate materials, differentiation of new components, and use of original openings where possible. The result is a sensitive and thoughtful adaptive reuse that enables modern church operations while respecting and preserving the significant architectural features of the Hangar Building.

6. EXISTING SITE

The project site is located at the northwest corner of West Almond Avenue and South Cypress Street, immediately east of the active railroad tracks. The property is developed with two primary structures: the historic packing house building, commonly known as the “Hangar” building and referred to as the West Building for this project, located at 527 West Almond Avenue, and the adjacent East Building, originally constructed as a commercial structure, and subsequently converted into an office building. A central open plaza and hardscape area separates the two buildings and provides shared pedestrian access between them.

The Hangar building is an approximately 11,452-square-foot industrial warehouse constructed in 1925 with a distinctive corrugated metal siding façade and bowstring truss roof characteristic of early 20th-century agricultural and transportation-related industrial architecture. The building is a designated Contributor to the National Register of Historic Places Old Towne Historic District and retains significant historic integrity, as documented in the submitted Historic Resources Assessment (Attachment 4). The adjacent East Building, constructed in 1948 and measuring approximately 6,447 square feet, exhibits a more contemporary commercial architectural style and is not considered a historic resource.

Historically associated with Orange’s packing and rail distribution industries, the site today retains much of its historic industrial character and continues to be defined visually and structurally by the prominent Hangar building and its relationship to the railroad corridor.

7. EXISTING AREA CONTEXT

The property is located at the corner of W. Almond Avenue and S. Cypress Street and on the east side of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad tracks in the Old Towne Historic District. It is surrounded by a mix of uses, including commercial properties to the west (across BNSF Railway), industrial/commercial properties to the north and south, and residential properties to the east.

8. ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT

East Elevation Changes:

The proposed design changes to the east elevation, which, while not street-facing, may have historically functioned as a primary entrance due to the presence of original sliding doors. The church's new main entrance will also be located on this elevation; the Design Review Committee (DRC) is encouraged to consider its significance. The applicant notes that the east façade’s location, facing the courtyard rather than the street, allows greater flexibility for adaptive reuse. The proposed design retains the historic dual sliding doors in their open position, thereby preserving the original entry location while allowing a contemporary church entrance in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, which encourages differentiation between new and historic materials to avoid creating a false sense of history.

Window Fenestration:

Regarding fenestration, the east elevation maintains the rhythm of the existing clerestory windows. The only exception occurs at the new entrance, where two clerestory windows will be retained as “blind” windows, visible on the exterior but no longer functioning due to interior program needs. This approach preserves the original fenestration pattern to the greatest extent feasible while accommodating the new entrance design.

Exterior Materials:

The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards prioritize repair of historic materials and in-kind replacement when deterioration is too severe. The project proposes to restore the corrugated metal siding on the primary warehouse portion of the east façade. Research confirmed that the adjacent single-story massing was not part of the original structure, and therefore differentiated materials are appropriate in that location. The bronze vertical siding is limited to cladding the non-historic single-story portion, replacing degraded modern materials. Additionally, the project proposes a smooth concrete finish that is more compatible with the existing concrete block base and the building’s industrial character.

9. ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

The Staff Review Committee (SRC) conducted reviews of the project on August 21, 2024, December 4, 2024, March 5, 2025, and April 30, 2025. On October 2, 2025, SRC recommended that the project proceed to the Design Review Committee.

10. PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice was provided to owners and tenants within 300 feet of the project and posted at the project site on or before December 4, 2025.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per State CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Class 1 - Existing Facilities), and Section 15331 (Class 31 - Historic Resource Rehabilitation/Restoration) because the project consists of an adaptive re-use which will result in the restoration or rehabilitation and minor alteration of existing deteriorated private structures involving negligible or no expansion of the former use and does not involve an addition of more than 10,000 square feet where the project can be served by all public services and is not located in an environmentally sensitive area. Alterations to the exterior and interior of the historic building are compatible with the character of the historic packing house and will not negatively impact historic materials or features, in conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

12. STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND REQUIRED FINDINGS

Based on the following Findings and statements in support of such Findings, staff recommends the DRC make a final determination on the proposed project with recommended conditions (Orange Municipal Code 17.10.070.G).

1. In the Old Towne Historic District, the proposed work conforms to the prescriptive standards and design criteria referenced and/or recommended by the DRC or other reviewing body for the project (OMC 17.10.070.G.1).

The proposed project is in conformance with the Historic Preservation Design Standards for Old Towne, which are the prescriptive design criteria for projects within the Old Towne Historic District. The project is also in conformance with the goals and policies of the Santa Fe Depot Specific Plan in that it preserves and rehabilitates a historic industrial property for continued use. Other site improvements, including parking lot striping, landscaping, and façade

improvements are reversible and consistent with the character of the property. The design incorporates features and materials that are compatible with the architectural style and character of the historic property to create an internally consistent site.

2. In any National Register Historic District, the proposed work complies with the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) standards and guidelines (OMC 17.10.07.G.2).

Projects found to be in conformance with the Historic Preservation Design Standards for Old Towne are generally considered to be in conformance with the *SOI Standards*. In conformance with Standards 2 and 5 of the *SOI Standards*, the project will not remove distinctive features that characterize the historic property. The historic building "hangar" building will be rehabilitated and preserved as part of this project. In conformance with Standards 9 and 10, new features of the design will not destroy historic materials or features that characterize the historic buildings and will be distinct from historic elements. The proposed project is in conformance with the *SOI Standards*.

3. The project design upholds community aesthetics through the use of an internally consistent, integrated design theme and is consistent with all adopted specific plans, applicable design standards, and their required findings (OMC 17.10.07.G.3).

Projects located within the Old Towne Historic District must comply with the Historic Preservation Design Standards for Old Towne and *SOI Standards* (as applicable). As described above, the proposed work complies with these design standards. The project is also in conformance with the standards and policies of the Santa Fe Depot Specific Plan.

13. CONDITIONS

The approval of this project is subject to the following conditions:

General:

1. These conditions shall be reprinted on a dedicated sheet (or sheets) of the construction documents when submitted to the Building Division for plan check review.
2. The project is approved as a precise plan. All work shall conform in substance and be maintained in general conformance with the entitlement plans including modifications required by conditions of approval, and as recommended for approval by the Design Review Committee. After the application has been approved, if changes are proposed regarding the location or alteration of any use or structure, a changed plan may be submitted to the Community Development Director for approval. If the Community Development Director determines that the proposed change complies with the provisions and the spirit and intent of the approval action, and that the action would have been the same for the changed plan as for the approved plan, the Community Development Director may approve the changed plan without requiring a new public meeting. If the Community Development Director determines that any proposed change is substantial, they may refer the plans to the Design Review Committee for subsequent review and determination.
3. The applicant agrees, as a condition of City's approval of CUP-3236, SP-1191, and DRC-5159 to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless, at the applicant's expense, the City, its officers, agents, and employees ("City") from and against any claim, action, or proceeding brought

against the City, including, but not limited to, any claim, action, or proceeding commenced within the time period provided in Government Code Section 66499.37 to attack, review, set aside, void, or annul the City's approval, to challenge the determination made by the City under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), or to challenge the reasonableness, legality, or validity of any condition attached hereto. City shall promptly notify applicant of any such claim, action, or proceeding to which the City receives notice and to cooperate fully with the applicant in the defense thereof. Applicant shall reimburse the City for any and all costs and expenses, including, but not limited to, court costs and attorney's fees that the City may be required to pay, including any expenses ordered by a court or expenses incurred through the Office of the City Attorney in connection with said claim, action, or proceeding. City may, in its sole discretion, participate in the defense of any claim, action, or proceeding but such participation shall not relieve the applicant of the obligations of this condition. In the event that the applicant is required to defend City in connection with such claim, action, or proceeding, City shall have the right to approve counsel to so defend the City, approve all significant decisions concerning the matter in which the defense is conducted, and approve all significant decisions concerning the manner in which the defense is conducted and approve any and all settlements, which approval(s) shall not be unreasonably withheld. The obligations set forth herein remain in full force and effect throughout all stages of litigation including any and all appeals of any lower court judgement rendered in the proceeding. Further, applicant agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the City for all costs and expenses incurred in enforcing this provision.

4. The applicant shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, including all City regulations. Violation of any of those laws in connection with the use will be cause for revocation of this permit.
5. Building permits shall be obtained for all future construction work, as required by the City of Orange, Community Development Department's Building Division. Failure to obtain the required building permits will be cause for revocation of this permit.
6. If use or construction is not commenced, the project approval expires twenty-four months from the approval date of the final authorizing body. Extensions of time may be granted, if requested in writing in accordance with OMC Section 17.08.060.
7. In conjunction with construction, all activity will be limited to the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. No construction activity will be permitted on Sundays and Federal holidays.
8. Any graffiti shall be removed within 72 hours from the applicant/property owner's receipt of the City's notification. Notification shall be deemed received in sent by certified mail to the mailing address of the applicant/property owner.
9. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicant shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director that all mechanical and air conditioning equipment shall be shielded and screened from view from adjacent streets and properties. The screening shall be integrated architecturally with the building and painted to match the walls of the building.
10. Plans submitted for Building Plan Check shall comply with the California Fire Code as

amended by the City and as frequently amended in effect at the time of application for Building Permit.

Signage

11. All signage shall comply with OMC Chapter 17.36 Sign Regulations. Project signage shall be subject to review and approval by the Community Development Director or designee. Sign permits are required. Should a sign program be required in the future, a new application shall be submitted to the City for review and approval.

Landscaping:

12. Prior to building permit issuance, final landscape plans for the project shall be designed to comply with the City's Water Efficient Landscape Guidelines as described in Section IX et al of the City of Orange Landscape Standards and Specifications. The project landscape architect shall submit documentation verifying compliance with this requirement for review and approval by the Community Development Director or designee in coordination with the Public Works Director or designee.
13. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicant shall prepare a final landscaping and irrigation plan consistent with the architectural site plan, grading plan, and conceptual landscape plan as proposed for the project for the review and approval of the Community Development Director or designee in coordination with the Public Works Director or designee. Landscape and irrigation plans shall be prepared by a landscape architect. The City may require peer review of submitted landscape and irrigation plans by a separate registered landscape architect at the applicant's cost. Subsequently, upon final inspection, the City may require a separate landscape architect to verify, at the applicant's cost, that planting materials and irrigation are installed according to approved landscape plans.
14. Landscape maintenance shall be performed in such a manner as to allow all trees to retain their full canopy height for screening and full canopy breadth for shade at point of maturity, except as required for public safety purposes.
15. Prior to building permit issuance, City required irrigation and landscape inspection notes, in accordance with the City of Orange Landscape Standards and Specifications, shall be placed on the final landscape plan, to the satisfaction of the Public Works Director or designee, in coordination with the Public Works Director, or designee.
16. Prior to Certificate of Occupancy, all landscaping improvements shall be completed according to the approved plans, the City of Orange Water Efficient Landscape Guidelines, and the City of Orange Landscape Standards and Specifications. The project landscape architect shall submit documentation certifying compliance with this requirement (Appendices B and E of the City of Orange Landscape Standards and Specifications) for review and approval by the Community Development Director or designee, in coordination with the Public Works Director or designee.
17. The final landscape plan shall include a note that a fully automated irrigation system will be provided.

18. Prior to building permit issuance, landscape plans shall include landscape area calculations needed for State landscape water use reporting.
19. Prior to building permit issuance, a Tree Removal Permit shall be approved by the Public Works Department in accordance with the City's Tree Preservation Ordinance. A Tree Removal Permit application must include a plan depicting all of the existing trees on-site, the specifics of each tree, and the number of trees proposed for removal and replacement.

Lighting

20. Any new lighting on the premises shall be installed in such a way to direct, control, and screen the lighting to prevent off-site light spillage onto adjoining properties and shall not be a nuisance to any point beyond the exterior boundaries of the property.
21. Prior to issuance of Certificate of Occupancy, the applicant shall schedule a light reading inspection with the Orange Police Department Crime Prevention Bureau. The lighting shall be tested and confirmed to determine if the lighting meets or exceeds the exterior boundary standards. The applicant shall use shielding so as to ensure that the light standards meet the requirements of OMC Section 17.12.030 for areas beyond the property's exterior boundaries. Light spillage or pollution to surrounding residential areas shall not exceed a maintained minimum of 0.5 foot-candle.

14. ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 Vicinity Map
- Attachment 2 Applicant Justification Letter
- Attachment 3 Project Plans
- Attachment 4 Historic Resource Assessment
- Attachment 5 Arborist Report
- Attachment 6 Lighting Details