

November 14, 2025

The Win~Dow and a Bar (Restaurant) – Orange

Location: 237 W Chapman Ave, Orange, CA

Re: Project Narrative

American Gonzo Restaurants (AGR) is proposing to locate their newest restaurant in Old Towne Orange. The emerging restaurant concept was established in 2019 in Venice Beach and has successfully opened four locations across the southland with a desire to bring their fifth location to Orange.

The fast-casual concept is a destination for classic smash burgers and fried chicken sandwiches with an iconic walk-up ordering and pick-up window akin to food service in beach-like settings. It is known as an all-age welcoming establishment in a ‘pull-up-a-stool’ casual environment setting. The location selected is the former site of the now Historically registered Hoffman Radiator in Old Towne Orange and is of particular interest to AGR. The uniqueness of the site provides the brand with an opportunity for a much larger park-like setting with alfresco casual dining and light recreation.

This space has been vacant for many years and is a key location serving as a welcoming gateway to Old Towne Orange. The two existing buildings will house the main kitchen and food production operations (Building A), while the smaller service building will operate as a full bar (Building B) with the approval of liquor sales, as part of this project’s submittal scope. There are no interior guest dining spaces, apart from the covered open-air canopies that will remain in-place. The adaptive re-use or change of use does require a proposed third structure to be added to the site to house guest restrooms.

The project consists of an adaptive re-use of the two existing 1925 buildings. Building A is a masonry/wood service bay type building and Building B is a steel panel frame ‘service station’. Both are equipped with large overhead metal canopies that formerly served as exterior automotive service bays. As a contributing property to the City of Orange Historic districts, it is important to the client and design team that the historic nature and art deco architectural style be preserved, and re-use of the site be handled with care while celebrating the essence of the long-standing operation as an automotive repair shop for most of its 100 years of existence.

A full historical assessment has been conducted highlighting key architectural features that are to remain or be carefully modified to allow for this change of use without disrupting the significant character of the site or structures therein. The Secretary of Interiors Guidelines are adhered by rigorous review and design influence from Historic Resources Group (HRG), a respected consultant by the City of Orange Planning Department. The remainder of the site transformation from a service lot to pedestrian centric dining ‘park’ is key to the site improvement scope.

The proposed design consists of a fully gated space with lush inground landscaping, dining amenities such as umbrellas, lighting, play area for children as well as a small bocce ball court. In addition, the

project proposes; minor grading, code required improvements, utilities upgrades, New Trash enclosure and a re-use of the existing vehicular entry drive for delivery and trash pick-up. Parking is not a part of this scope as the project falls within the Old Towne District under the current zoning ordinance thus, onsite parking is not required.

This property is located within the Santa Fe Depot Specific Plan and adheres to those objectives, policies and guidelines through thoughtful adaptive reuse, placemaking and community services and programs beyond a typical fast-casual restaurant establishment. Incorporating historic rehabilitation to protect the historic environment of the site and implementing modern sustainable environmental practices will make this project a true place maker that will boost community synergy at the gateway to our beloved Old Towne Orange.

Architectural Basis of Design

The Site is considered a Contributing Site of historical significance as it is located within the City of Oranges' three Historical District Overlays:

- Plaza Historic District
- Local Old Towne Historic District
- Old Towne Orange Historic District

All efforts will be made to conform to the City of Orange Historic Review and Historic Preservation Design Standards (HPDS) where applicable. HRG has been engaged to review and guide the project through the proper approach to historic renovations/rehabilitation for adaptive re-use. Historically significant elements that contribute to the former use and historic past will be carefully considered and the design solutions proposed will align to minimize impact to the historical property and historical features.

Windows and Doors

Existing fenestration structure will remain intact or modified within the approved governing guidelines. The key elevations will remain in close-to-existing conditions with modifications specifically due to energy code and adaptive re-use needs for food service use. These modifications include insulated glass within existing steel trim windows/doors with new operable windows that complement the existing building elements.

Roll-up doors will be proposed in the southwest Building B Easterly canopy (former repair bay) to replace the security gates that were added more recently than the original buildings construction. The proposed doors will be specified to be reminiscent of automotive roll-up glass and metal doors appropriate in automotive use. A similar application was successfully utilized at Philz Coffee in Old Towne orange.

Exterior Finishes:

Exterior finishes will remain intact and be properly rehabilitated to seal the building from weather and energy efficiency to meet the strict State of California Cal Green requirements. The Art-deco style will remain intact and hold as significant to the existing architectural design of the structures. Rehabilitation will repair damaged areas and structures painted within a similar color palette maintaining the existing look and feel of the site.

Site:

Intentional transformation for the grounds includes a minimalist design approach utilizing decomposed granite surfacing, preservation of some, but not all, existing concrete pads where accessibility is achievable. The empty lift pit will remain under the southwest canopy of Building B to preserve the narrative of the historic use of the site.

Mechanical Equipment:

New condenser units for Building A will be ground mounted and screened to maintain roof parapet heights thus do not require roof screening. Building B will have a new roof equipment platform on the lower east side of the roof and screened to meet planning view requirements. The screen will be constructed in similar materials, color and architectural style to complement the existing art-deco language.

Please refer to the design drawings and details as well as the Historical Assessment report for further information surrounding Basis of Design.

The Win~Dow and a Bar – Orange; Use Narrative

From its inception in 2019, The Win~Dow has existed as a casual smash-burger concept that originated as a side product of the higher-end steakhouse American Beauty in Venice, CA. Its primary value revolves around providing high-quality, affordable food within a community-focused, unpretentious environment. The inclusion of a full-service bar is unique to this location and provides a synergetic 'oasis' to the large quarter acre outdoor venue. The space embraces an all-ages destination with play areas and light recreation, creating an almost park-like setting for everyday use and serving as a potential private special event venue.

The proposed space would operate seven days a week with closures limited to certain holidays or public closures during special events such as corporate events buy-outs.

Dining is primarily alfresco (outdoor) with some seating under existing canopies with provisions of movable umbrellas and heaters throughout.

Seating Counts:

Table seating: 225

Bar Seating: 16

Fire Pit Seating: 24

Activities:

Activities include fire pits, a play area for children/parents, and a ping-pong table further defining the space as an interactive park-like setting.

There is the desire to have low level music that meets the sound ordinance in the Downtown district restrictions. Potential low volume acoustic live music may be a consideration as well.

Operations:

The gated perimeter will have three main access points one at the existing location on Chapman and two added to the Lemon St side. These access gates are intended to remain fully open during operating hours.

The Restaurant will provide the traditional Win~Dow menu offerings and operate as a walk-up order and pick-up point on the south end of Building A. The bar building will have operable windows that allow for walk up service as well as bar seating with direct service.

Hours of Operation:

Restaurant:

Sunday-Thursday: 10 am – 11 pm

Fridays/Saturdays: 10 am – 12 am

Hours of Alcohol Service:

Same as above.

Employee Count:

Expected number of employees per shift: 20 employees

Expected number of employees total: 70 - 75 employees

Alcohol management:

How alcohol will be displayed on premise: Back Bar Display

How alcohol will be stored on premise: In beer cooler + liquor storage

AGR and AO Architects appreciate the time the city has provided this project and the team of professionals to ensure the design is developed and aligned with the input from the City of Orange's planning department. This collective effort is leading toward a dynamic destination-centric project that would be a great addition to the Old Towne Orange Plaza and historical community fabric.

Respectfully:



Jeff Rabbitt, Architect
AO Architects