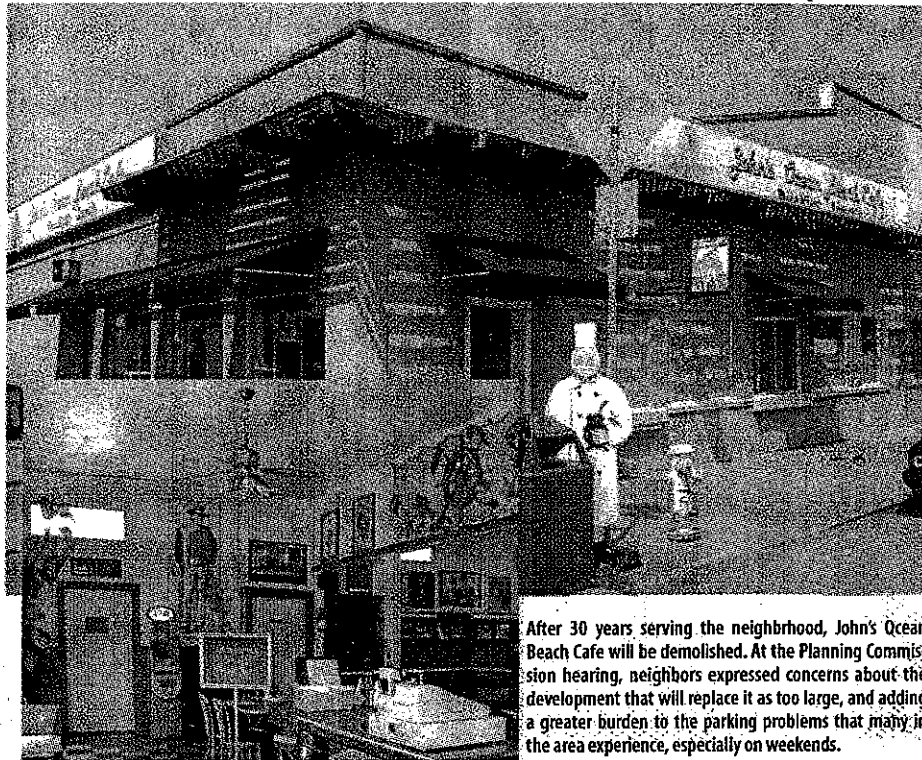


Outer Sunset to Lose John's Ocean Beach Cafe



After 30 years serving the neighborhood, John's Ocean Beach Cafe will be demolished. At the Planning Commission hearing, neighbors expressed concerns about the development that will replace it as too large, and adding a greater burden to the parking problems that many in the area experience, especially on weekends.

Outer Sunset's John's Ocean Beach Cafe, a neighborhood landmark across from the Zoo will soon be a thing of the past. The question at the Planning Commission hearing on May 22nd was not about the fate of the business, so much as what would be taking its place. The proposed five story project found little encouragement from the neighbors who live around it.

Neighbors of the long-time business addressed the Appeal of the Negative Declaration for the proposed project at 2800 Sloat Blvd. filed by SPEAK, the Sunset-Parkside Education and Action Committee.

Planning Staff described the project as a mixed use building, consisting of 56 residential units above ground floor commercial with parking underground, and demolition of 3 commercial buildings and a service parking lot.

SPEAK's appeal is based on the assertion that the development is out of character with existing neighborhood, parking, traffic, open space concerns.

Appellant: Mark Duffett, President of SPEAK said the appeal was meant to give immediate neighbors a chance to voice their concerns regarding the environmental impacts. Shortcomings of the project are, he said, the overwhelming massing of the Wawona facade, lack of attention to traffic flow around the site, and the demand for more parking. After several meetings with the project sponsors and planning staff, a 15 foot setback on Wawona, and better definition and separation of the three buildings were agreed upon as improvements. Meetings with MTA are also needed to make necessary improvements to traffic patterns and parking.

Margaret Lee, a second generation Outer Sunset resident for over 30 years, called the proposal an "excessive overdevelopment." It should comply with the City's zoning and planning codes, she said, presenting the Commission with a community petition with over 200 signatures requesting the developers to scale back the size of the project. She asked that the project meet code

requirements before it can continue. It will adversely affect our community," she said.

The variances in parking and rear yard requirements are unprecedented in the neighborhood, which is in an NC2 Small Scale Commercial zone. NC2 would allow for 43 units, not the 56 units developers seek, which is appropriate for a NC3 Moderate Scale Commercial zone.

Under the code, the rear yard requirements in NC2 is 8500 sq ft. for a development of this size, this project has none. The NC2 code would allow 3999 sq ft of non-residential use, project developers seek 23,000 sq ft of commercial space. "Introducing density of this size in a small residential community undermines the character of the neighborhood," she said.

Developers fails to meet the minimum parking requirements for the project by 19 spaces. 19 spaces equates to the entire block of 46th Ave. between Vicente and Wawona St. Parking is already at a premium due to the visitors at the Zoo and Irish Cultural Center several residents testified.

The new project will demand 274 parking spaces, by staff estimates. The plan provides for 93. a deficit of 181 parking spaces. Other neighbors spoke about the problems that already exist in the residential area, especially on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Other neighbors objected to the 5 stories, unlike any other building in the area, as inappropriate for the neighborhood.

Joel Schecter of Wawona St. request a full Environmental Impact Review, stating that the Negative Declaration is inadequate and insufficient. He said the erosion of the parking lot at Sloat and Great Highway, could greatly affect the parking crisis as the erosion continues, another major parking lot could be lost.

Marianne Miller of SPEAK, said that the Neg Dec needs more information, especially in the areas of visual quality, shadowing and massiveness which is out of scale. She complained that there was no comparison of the two-story height, compared to the five-story height and added that shadowing analysis should be simple to do.

Michael Jason, another neighbor said there is "nothing else this high is out there." He also complained that the MUNI does not serve the community in the area very well, so people depend on automobiles.

Several Commissioners were interested in alternatives as far as lower density and different configurations thought that a full EIR process would be helpful.

Newest Commissioner Miguel cited the unusual area, the presence of a major public entity, and that it is a large project by itself, in a small density area as well as the presence of the beach could call for an Expanded EIR.

Commissioner Antonini expressed concerns about the height, density and design. His motion to continue the item indefinitely to consider parking and traffic, as well as other alternatives and other concerns was unanimously accepted by the Planning Commission.

The EIR process, something that would take many months to complete, means that John's Ocean Beach Cafe may be around for a while longer.