

Golden Hill's resident architects present a bold new vision for 25th Street

Posted by [admin](#) on 1/21/11 • Categorized as [Golden Hill](#), [News](#)

By Lauren Ventura/SDUN Editor

The community of Golden Hill has come a long way during the past decade and it appears community members and residents have no inclination of stopping this forward momentum in 2011.

The area in and around 25th Street has been on the top of the Golden Hill revival agenda and has included several projects under the umbrella of the "25th Street Renaissance" plan. The plan, which aims to revitalize 25th Street, has moved rather slowly, with much of it being solidified last year, the Golden Hill "Renaissance" has made notable progress with an influx of pizzerias, coffee shops and bars that attract a seemingly constant flow of hip 20-somethings who flock to the area for its artsy edginess, proximity to downtown and inexpensive rent.

The main areas of discussion for the "25th Street Renaissance" project include six blocks on 25th Street between B and C streets. One area though that remains blighted hovers between F Street and the I-94 off-ramp at 811 25th St. Golden Hill architecture firm, FoundationForForm (FFF), and its own ers, Mike Burnett and Craig Abenilla, have a solution: The "You Are Here" plan.

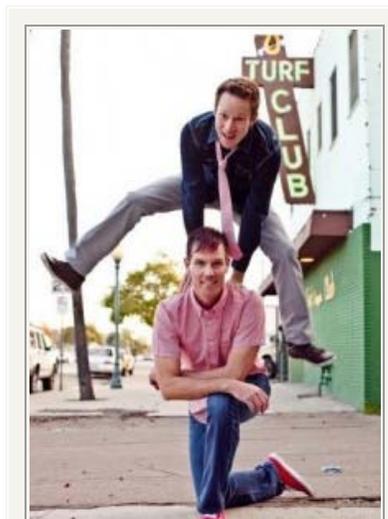
During the Jan. 12 Greater Golden Hill Planning Committee (GGHPC) meeting, Burnett had the opportunity to announce FFF's plans for the property on 25th that he and Abenilla are currently in escrow on.

"We are not your ordinary developers," Burnett told a room of about 30 attendees. "We are truly architects second, and community members first."

Burnett stressed his architectural achievements in the Golden Hill community, pointing to the mxd830 building at 830 25th St. Burnett won an Orchid for the structure in 2009 from the San Diego Architecture Foundation (SDAF), which called the mixed-use building "alive," with SDAF members also lauding the designers ability to connect with the equally mixed neighborhood it borders, which includes structures from the early 1900s to the 1970s. Burnett said during his presentation that he hopes his latest "You Are Here" plan will build upon the goals of the community's 25th Street revitalization.

"We want to keep the existing structure," Burnett said of the dilapidated 1960s era gas station on the property. "We are open to ideas, but we would like to make it into artist spaces with a pedestrian plaza."

In past years, the property in question has run the gamut, from a smog center to a gas station to a car wash.



Mike Burnett (jumping) and Craig Abenilla (kneeling) own the Golden Hill architecture firm, Foun-dationForForm.

The architects/quasi-developers are planning to revitalize a property at 811 25th St. by turning it into a mixed-use structure and gateway for the community from the I-94. (Courtesy of FoundationForForm)

More in 'Golden Hill'

- New Year's Eve: 10 places to paint Uptown Red!
- Golden Hill couple wins a free wedding
- Golden Hill embarks on 25th Street Renaissance project
- Community Plan Update will gild Golden Hill

More in 'News'

- A tree grows in Hillcrest
- California Supreme Court upholds state law allowing qualified undocumented students to pay in-state tuition
- Five Points business owners grapple with pot clubs, proposed bike lane
- Embattled Uptown Partnership severs contract with city

Search for:

Sign up for our  Email Newsletter

Privacy by  SafeSubscribeSM

For Email Marketing you can trust



Burnett and Abenilla want to convert the lot into a "flex" or transitional space, which would include 5,000-square feet of commercial space and 22 units of residential with a portion being allocated as low-income or affordable housing. In addition, Burnett and Abenila also proposed a "pocket park" for an area along F Street that dead ends and is currently overrun with weeds and litter.

Burnett said his main goal is to help push 25th Street to have a "Main Street" feeling and hopefully reduce transient activity and gang violence by restoring this area as a new gateway into Golden Hill. The proposed "You Are Here" buildings would be the main sight point for motorists exiting off the I-94 and one of the largest developments in Golden Hill. "We want the space to lend itself to community events too," Burnett said. "We really want people to experience the building when they first come into Golden Hill."

Burnett said the project is slated to begin construction by fall and escrow will most likely close in February. But he noted that there are several pending permits that could slow the process. Members of the GGHPC provided mixed opinions regarding the "You Are Here" design concept unveiled during Burnett's presentation.

"There's too much disconnect with this 1960s structure and the 1905 era buildings nearby," Maureen Burke said of the architectural renderings which incorporated modernistic elements, sloping flat rooftops and large-scale windows.

Pat Shields, chair of the GGHPC, agreed.

"The '60s were a bad time for Golden Hill," she said. Many historical structures were bulldozed or torn down to make way for modern structures that did little to help the façade of the community, she continued.

Another GGHPC member, David Strickland, suggested that Burnett "soften the design" concept to be more inclusive, while Lisa Vella, the owner of South Bark Dog Wash, said she thought this building would be great for the community and its design fit into the "general feel" of Golden Hill.

"I think the presence that this structure will have when traveling along the I-94 will be awesome," Vella said.

Dok Whitson, a resident of the mxd830 building, said he supported the project and felt it would mimic the credo of FFF's other structures to work, create art and live.

"These guys know how to create such a welcoming and creative space for folks. I know they'll bring the same sensibility into this new effort," he said.

Public comment on the proposed "You Are Here" project is still pending and will be heard further at subcommittee meetings and land-use meetings. The project is not occurring in a historic district so although public comment will be recorded, it will only be used to make advisory notes to the City of San Diego who will ultimately decide on the approval of its permit. GGHPC members agreed to revisit the project proposal at its next meeting on Feb. 9, while the Land-Use Committee will meet Jan. 26. Both committees meet at the Balboa Park Golf Course Clubhouse located at 2600 Golf Course Dr. at 6:30 p.m. For more information or details, visit gghpc.blogspot.com.

Tool Box:



Click below for a digital version of the January 21-February 3, 2011 edition of San Diego Uptown News



Click here for a digital version of our sister publication, Gay San Diego.

