



**PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT**

DATE: MAY 11, 2021
TO: DESIGN COMMISSION
FROM: DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION - NEW CONSTRUCTION OF A FOUR-STORY 60,000 SQUARE FOOT MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING AND FOUR STORY ABOVE GROUND PARKING STRUCTURE
50 ALESSANDRO PLACE (PD-5)

Project Description:

This proposal is for the construction of a new four-story, approximately 60,000 square foot medical office building and a four-story above ground parking structure at 50 Alessandro Place within PD-5 (Alessandro Place/Fair Oaks). The site is a through lot with frontage on both Alessandro Place and Hurlbut Street between S. Fair Oaks Avenue and S. Pasadena Avenue and is comprised of a single T-shaped, two-acre lot. It is currently developed with a four-story medical office building constructed in 1983 at the northeast corner of the site, which is proposed to be retained and unaltered, as well as landscaped open space west of the existing building and surface and subterranean parking at the northwest and southern portions of the site. A tree inventory identifies five non-protected trees on the site, all of which are proposed to be removed. However, based on a visual survey of the site, there appear to be more than five trees on and adjoining the site.

Surrounding properties include additional medical office buildings between two and four stories in height to the north and east, as well as a two-story multi-family residential building immediately adjacent to the east, one- to two-story commercial, office and industrial buildings along Fair Oaks Avenue to the east; and multi-family residential buildings between two and four stories in height to the west and south. Nearby designated historic resources include the Markham Place Historic District to the northwest, roughly bounded by S. St. John Avenue, Bellefontaine Street, S. Orange Grove Boulevard and W. California Boulevard; the Storrier-Stearns Japanese Garden at 270 Arlington Drive (1937-1940, Kinzuchi Fujii) to the southwest and the Glenarm Power Plant at 72 E. Glenarm Street (1928, Bennett & Haskell) to the southeast. The Bellefontaine Nursery at 836 N. Fair Oaks Avenue is identified in the City's Ethnic History Research Project as being associated with Pasadena's Japanese-American heritage. The site is within the PD-5 (Alessandro Place/Fair Oaks Planned Development) Zoning District along with two other properties immediately to the north of the site. The General Plan designation of the property is Medium Mixed Use (0-2.25 FAR); the property is not within the boundaries of a specific plan but is in close proximity to the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan. As noted in the Zoning Compliance Matrix in Attachment A, the project will require an amendment to the PD to allow its construction.

The new medical office building is proposed to be placed on the southerly leg of the T-shaped site, set back 75 feet from Hurlbut Street. Setbacks between 5 feet and 11 feet are proposed from the east and west side property lines. The building is proposed to be set back 125 feet from Alessandro Place to allow for creation of a vehicular drop-off zone and entry court to the existing and proposed buildings. The new parking structure is proposed to be placed at the northwest corner of the site, set back 5 feet from Alessandro Place, with 10 foot setbacks from the west and south property lines. The south façade of the parking structure is proposed to engage the westerly portion of the new medical office building's north façade.

The primary entrance to the new medical office building is proposed to be on the north façade facing the motor court; however, a secondary employee entrance is described in the narrative along the south façade facing Hurlbut Street. A small area of surface parking is proposed to be retained at the southwest corner of the site, which would also provide vehicular access to existing underground parking. A new plaza and terrace are proposed at the southeast corner of the site. Vehicular access to the proposed above-ground parking structure is provided at the east end of the north elevation along Alessandro Place and an existing access to the underground parking at the western end of the Alessandro Place frontage is proposed to remain.

The proposed medical office building is designed in a generally contemporary style with a flat roof, cubic massing, a randomized grid pattern of fiber-reinforced cladding panels and thin brick overlaid onto ribbon windows with angled sill panels, and expressed vertical circulation. In the submitted drawings, the parking structure is rendered with exposed horizontal floor plates with vertical circulation towers at the corners.

Applicable Design Guidelines:

- Design-Related Goals and Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan

Previous/Existing Entitlements:

- Planned Development (PD-5)
- Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR). A PPR comment letter was provided to the applicant on July 10, 2020. The project was presented to the City Council on August 17, 2020.

Approvals Needed/Project Scheduling:

- PD Amendment (City Council)
- Concept and Final Design Review (Design Commission)
- Building Permits (Building Staff)

CEQA Clearance:

This is preliminary consultation regarding design review and is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Staff Observations:

Applicable Design Guidelines:

The following design guidelines are applicable to the project and should guide further development and study of the project as it moves forward in the design review process:

Design-Related Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan:

- 4.10: Locate and design buildings to relate to and frame major public streets, open spaces, and cityscape. New development at intersections should consider any number of corner treatments, and should balance safety and accessibility concerns with the vision of the area and the need for buildings to engage the street and create a distinct urban edge.
- 4.11: Require that development demonstrates a contextual relationship with neighboring structures and sites addressing such elements as building scale, massing, orientation, setbacks, buffering, the arrangement of shared and private open spaces, visibility, privacy, automobile and truck access, impacts of noise and lighting, landscape quality, infrastructure, and aesthetics.
- 7.1: Design each building as a high-quality, long term addition to the City's urban fabric; exterior design and buildings material shall exhibit permanence and quality, minimize maintenance concerns, and extend the life of the building.
- 7.2: Allow for the development of a diversity of buildings styles. Support innovative and creative design solutions to issues related to context and environmental sustainability.
- 7.3: Require that new and adaptively re-used buildings are designed to respect and complement the defining built form, massing, scale, modulation, and architectural detailing of their contextual setting.
- 10.7: Encourage sustainable practices for landscape materials, landscape design, and land development.
- 23.3: Provide appropriate setbacks, consistent with the surrounding neighborhood, along the street frontage and, where there are setbacks, ensure adequate landscaping is provided.
- 25.4: Require that new development protect community character by providing architecture, landscaping, and urban design of equal or greater quality than existing and by respecting the architectural character and scale of adjacent buildings.

Potential Design Issues:

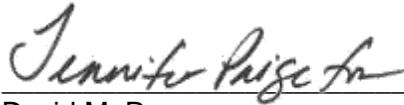
- The overall massing of the proposed office building should be re-studied to better relate to the surrounding context, particularly along Hurlbut Street. As designed, the project is out of scale with its context. If retained in its proposed location (see comments below), consider placing a smaller, lower-scaled volume that better relates to the surrounding context at the southern end of the building, with the northern end being one story higher. A figure-ground study should be conducted to determine an appropriate building footprint that would better relate to the context. A taller building could be considered if located further from adjacent residential uses.

- The location of the proposed office building extending to a largely residential street should be re-considered, as well as the location of the above-ground parking structure. Strong consideration should be given to expanding existing underground parking in lieu of building an above-ground parking structure and to placing the office building along Alessandro Place where it would create a more comfortable campus setting with the existing surrounding medical office buildings. If this is infeasible, the buildings should be redesigned to provide physical separation between them in a manner that is more consistent with the surrounding context. As noted above, a figure-ground study would also assist in determining appropriate siting that would more appropriately relate to the surrounding context.
- Given the need for an amendment to the PD to achieve the proposed building height, consider a height averaging approach that would reduce the height of the portion of the building adjacent to lower-scaled adjacent multi-family residences while increasing the height at another portion of the building, such as the northeast corner entry component. This would serve two purposes – improving compatibility with adjacent development while also creating additional roofline articulation.
- As the surrounding context is not historically sensitive, designing the building to incorporate features of the existing adjacent building is not essential. Study the architectural expression and fenestration of the building to respond to the interior programming while retaining a consistent design logic on all sides of the building. For example, glazing on the east and north elevations could be expanded in response to circulation proposed along those facades. In addition, the southeastern elevator tower should be better integrated into the building massing.
- Further study the design and programming of the adjoining terrace and plaza at the southeast corner of the site to create an integrated, usable space that allows for pedestrian connectivity to the public realm. Consider design elements that would highlight this unique space, consistent with its intended use, while also better engaging with the public realm.
- Study ways to better integrate the design of the parking structure with the campus and deemphasize its appearance as a parking structure, such as incorporating vertical elements, panels, screens, and/or landscape into the exterior facades. Consider incorporating active space into the ground floor of the building that would better activate the main entry court.
- In future submittals, ensure provision of an accurate and complete tree inventory for the entire site, including street trees and trees on adjacent properties that are in close proximity to the property line and including both scientific and common names for all trees and a map identifying the tree locations, numbered to correspond to the inventory. If any protected trees are identified to be removed or are in close proximity to project construction, a Private Tree Removal application and/or Tree Protection Plan will be required.

Project Scheduling/Sequencing:

- Zoning Entitlements (PD Amendment)
- Concept and Final Design Review by the Design Commission
- Building Permits

Respectfully Submitted,



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Prepared by:



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Attachments:

- A. Current Planning (Zoning) compliance matrix
- B. Applicant submittal package