



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** JUNE 8, 2021

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

**FROM:** DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**SUBJECT:** APPLICATION FOR MAJOR CHANGES TO AN APPROVED CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW  
CHANGE FROM A 232-UNIT RESIDENTIAL PROJECT AND EXTERIOR REMODELING OF AN EXISTING RESTAURANT AND OFFICE BUILDING TO A MIXED-USE PROJECT WITH 5,350 SQUARE FEET OF COMMERCIAL SPACE AND 234 RESIDENTIAL UNITS  
3452-3488 E. FOOTHILL BOULEVARD

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#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

#### **Environmental Determination**

1. Find that the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan designation, with the General Plan goals and policies for the site, and with the applicable zoning designation and regulations; and that the project site has no value as habitat for endangered or threatened species, and can be served by utilities and public services.
2. Find that approval of the project will not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, water quality or cultural resources.
3. Conclude, therefore, that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under §15332, (Class 32) "in-fill development projects" and that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances.

#### **Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance**

Acknowledge that the Design Commission approved the removal of one protected tree in conjunction with the approval of Concept Design Review on August 28, 2018 and that the

proposed changes are consistent with the previous approval.

**Findings for Approval of Major Changes to an Approved Concept Design Review**

1. Find that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the modification of the original Concept Design Review approval, specifically a request from the applicant to modify the scope and program of the proposed project;
2. Find that the proposed major changes are consistent with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the design guidelines in the East Pasadena Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts; and
3. Based on these findings, approve the application for Major Changes to an Approved Project subject to the following conditions to be reviewed by the Design Commission during Final Design Review:

**Conditions:**

1. Provide a high-quality and durable base material other than stucco to the residential buildings.
2. Specialty paving treatment shall be utilized for the pedestrian pathways proposed along the retail driveway frontage and shall continue alongside the restaurant drop-off zone to the street, as well as across the driveway and west to Halstead Street.
3. Study the use of consistent treatment for vertical circulation elements at the corners of the parking structure.
4. The ground-level residential courtyard shall be carefully studied and programmed to provide usable communal outdoor space for the residents of the project, including seating areas, shade where needed, and amenities.
5. The project design shall continue to incorporate the design features outlined in the Health Risk Assessment prepared by ESA (Attachment E), including MERV 16 filtration, a solid and vegetated barrier along the 210 Freeway frontage, and inoperable windows on the south elevation and the east elevation of building B. If any of these measures are determined infeasible or proposed to change at a later date, additional Health Risk Assessment may be necessary to ensure that cancer risks remain below SCAQMD evaluation criteria.
6. The project shall comply with all applicable Zoning Code requirements, as summarized in Attachment F, prior to issuance of a building permit, unless deviation is authorized by a Zoning entitlement. If a Zoning entitlement is requested for the project, it shall be submitted, and the review process completed, prior to the Design Commission's review of an application for Final Design Review. The project shall also comply with the conditions in Attachment F from the Departments of Public Works and Transportation, to the satisfaction of said departments.

7. If building permits are issued separately for the northern parking structure building and the southern residential buildings, a final Certificate of Occupancy shall not be issued for the northern parking structure building until the applicant demonstrates to the Zoning Administrator that the TOD parking requirements are met and excess parking is not created on the site.

## **BACKGROUND:**

On April 27, 2021, the Design Commission, acting under the provisions of §17.61.030 and 17.64.050 of the Pasadena Municipal Code, reviewed an application for Major Changes to an Approved Project (Concept Design Review) to change a previously 232-unit residential project including remodeling of the existing commercial and office buildings and removal of one protected tree to a mixed-use project with 5,350 square feet of commercial space and 234 residential units with remodeling of the existing commercial building and removal of one protected tree at 3452-3488 E. Foothill Blvd. The staff report from that review is included in Attachment A. The Commission provided comments on the design and continued the public hearing to a date uncertain to allow the applicant to revise the design to address the comments provided. In responding to the Commission's comments, the applicant has not changed the previously proposed scope of the project.

## **Project Overview**

- General Plan Designation: High Mixed Use (0 – 3.00 FAR)
- Zoning: EPSP-d2-CG & EPSP-d2-CG-B (East Pasadena Specific Plan, Subarea d2, General Commercial)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the East Pasadena Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts.
- Site: The site is comprised of three adjoining lots totaling 4.3 acres on the south side of E. Foothill Boulevard between N. Halstead Street and N. Rosemead Boulevard. It is irregular in shape and is currently developed with an 11-story office building, a one-story Panda Inn restaurant with surface parking lots between and behind these two buildings. The southern edge of the site adjoins the 210 Freeway. A tree inventory provided with the application identifies 68 trees on site, one of which is a protected mature tree, as well as two street trees.
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties include one- to-three-story commercial, office, and institutional buildings and surface parking lots along East Foothill Boulevard, as well as newer five-story residential buildings and a parking structure adjacent to the Sierra Madre Villa light rail station. The Design Commission previously approved a new six-story, 19-unit residential project adjacent to the site at 170 N. Halstead St., which would share an access driveway with this project from Halstead Street. Nearby historic resources include Fire

Station #10 (now #37; 1952, Cecil Rhodes Curtis) at 3430 E. Foothill Boulevard and the Stuart Pharmaceuticals Building (1958, Edward Durrell Stone) at 3360 E. Foothill Boulevard.

- **Project Description:** The project involves construction of a five-story above-ground parking structure with 5,350 square feet of ground-floor commercial space and three six-story buildings with 234 residential units on the existing surface parking lot behind the Panda Inn restaurant building, as well as major exterior remodeling of the existing Panda Inn building. One protected mature tree, as well as 67 non-protected trees, are proposed to be removed to accommodate the project. In addition to the proposed parking structure, which includes five levels, with rooftop parking above ground and one and one quarter levels below ground, parking for the existing office building would be provided off-site.
- **Site Design:** The two existing buildings are proposed to remain in their current locations and the parking lot between them is proposed to be reconfigured to become an open space area. The existing driveways flanking the Gateway Metro Center building are proposed to be retained and the existing driveway accessing the existing surface parking area west of the Panda Inn building is proposed to be eliminated. An existing driveway extending from Halstead Street would also remain. The smaller northerly building, which would be used for commercial space and parking, is sited approximately 11' from the south façade of the Panda Inn building and the northernmost residential building is set back 26' from the rear of the northerly building. The northerly building is proposed to have a 2'2" setback from the east property line while the southerly buildings are proposed to have a 10' setback from this line. A 30' setback is proposed at the southern end of the site, adjacent to the 210 freeway.
- **Architectural Style:** Contemporary (Panda Inn); Contemporary with references to New Formalism and lower-scaled components in Traditional Industrial/Warehouse style (new parking and residential buildings)
- **Developer:** CFT NV Developments, LLC
- **Architects:** CallistonRTKL (residential)  
Architects Orange (restaurant)
- **Landscape Architect:** Yael Lir Landscape Architects intended to be engaged

## **ANALYSIS:**

### **Design Commission Comments from April 27, 2021 Changes to an Approved Project Hearing**

On April 27, 2021, the Design Commission reviewed an application for Major Changes to an Approved Project (Concept Design Review) for this project. The Commission continued the public hearing to give the applicant an opportunity to respond to the following comments (the architect's and staff's responses are detailed in the chart below; the architect's full responses, including graphic exhibits are in Attachment A and the full revised plans and elevations are in Attachment B):

Commission Comment, April 27, 2021	Excerpts from Architect's Response	Staff Comments
<p>1. Study the fire lane and wall, elevation and planting details along the 210 freeway at the rear of the site. Provide a section through that area demonstrating the relationships between the height of the freeway, existing and proposed planting zones on both the project site and the freeway, barrier wall, fire lane and building interface.</p>	<p>See Attachment A, pages 3-5).</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The first exhibit provided (page 3) depicts the existing condition of the views to the site from the freeway, which are substantially screened by dense tree plantings within the freeway right-of-way, which will remain upon construction of the project.</p> <p>The second exhibit provided (page 4) depicts the configuration of the fire lane, including stepping of the building mass to address the required apparatus turning radius, as well as a site section from Foothill Blvd. to the freeway. The section depicts the site sloping downward from Foothill Blvd. and a steep upward slope within the freeway right-of-way returning to the same height as Foothill Blvd. The section also illustrates the location of the new plantings on the property and a new 12'-high wall at the rear of the site (2' above freeway grade). The building is shown set back 31'3" from the rear property line.</p> <p>The third exhibit provided on page 5 depicts a model of the proposed building as viewed from the freeway, including existing and proposed landscaping which, as shown, will substantially screen the building from freeway views.</p>
<p>2. Clarify the achievability of the proposed glazing systems for sound attenuation and energy compliance. Provide more explanation of the window materiality and color.</p>	<p><b>“Energy compliance:</b>          The windows will have insulated, argon-filled, Low-E 366 glass, which, in addition to 2x6 exterior walls with R-19 insulation, will be part of our Title 24 (California Energy Code) Performance Compliance Approach.</p> <p><b>Sound Attenuation:</b>          The double-pane, insulated glass of the windows will</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The applicant has provided exhibits on page 7 of Attachment A that provide additional information regarding the windows and demonstrate that they will achieve appropriate sound attenuation and energy compliance. The windows shown are proposed to be charcoal grey color in either vinyl- or aluminum-clad frames.</p>

Commission Comment, April 27, 2021	Excerpts from Architect's Response	Staff Comments
	<p>help to buffer exterior noise, keeping the interior noise levels under 45 dB, per Section 1206.4 of the California Building Code. The most sensitive areas (facing the 210) do not have any operable portions, which help to preserve the integrity of the acoustical barrier."</p>	
<p>3. Provide additional information on the proposed finishes of the building.</p>	<p>See Attachment A, page 9</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed; condition of approval recommended.</i></p> <p>The exhibit provided provides additional information about the proposed building finishes, which include sand-finish stucco in four colors (light grey at the base, white with beige accents at the middle, and light and dark grey at the top floor), brick, a warm tone soffit material at the roofline, and charcoal grey windows and metalwork. These materials are generally appropriate and high-quality; however, a more durable base material other than stucco should be considered to ensure ground-level quality and durability. Staff has recommended a condition of approval to this effect.</p>
<p>4. Provide details of the wall system including windows from the ground up to the parapet.</p>	<p>See Attachment A, page 11</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>Wall sections at three typical conditions are provided and demonstrate how the building walls will be articulated with layered recesses and projecting cornice elements at the base, above the fifth floor and at the roof. Additional details will be required for review during Final Design Review as a matter of course.</p>
<p>5. Provide details of the residential forecourt gates and fencing as well as further explanation of security measures needed for this area of the project.</p>	<p>See Attachment A, pages 13-16</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The exhibits provided depict simple metal fencing and gates enclosing the residential entry court during nighttime hours. A 6'-high wall is proposed along the outer perimeter of the residential portion of the project, except for the proposed 12'</p>

Commission Comment, April 27, 2021	Excerpts from Architect's Response	Staff Comments
		<p>wall along the rear property line adjacent to the freeway. A different paving material appears to be indicated within the residential portion; however, this is not fully clear in the renderings. Further detail of paving materials will be required for review during Final Design Review as a matter of course. With the provision of these details, a previously recommended staff condition related to this issue has been removed from the current staff recommendation in this report.</p>
<p>6. Demonstrate how the design of the residential buildings will be influenced by 1920's warehouse architecture without mimicking it. Consider more limited and selective application of design features of the chosen style.</p>	<p>"It is not a question of "style" but a vocabulary developed as a response to the surroundings. While this is a residential project, it is an island wedged between a large storage facility, a service vehicle depot, and a busy freeway with commuter rail. The project has to hold its own and sit comfortably between such large-scale and non-residential elements. The commercial and industrial nature of the surroundings very much informs the architectural vocabulary and approach. While the collection of buildings is woven together with a narrative, all the elements are purposefully designed to have functions. These elements, or kit-of-parts, form the commercial/industrial architectural vocabulary with a human-scale suitable as residential environments..."            See Attachment A, pages 18-21 for exhibits.</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The applicant has demonstrated the logic and intention of the proposed design in the provided exhibits and narrative. While the idea of 1920's warehouse buildings was used as a guide, the arrangement of the buildings, as well as the texture and materiality proposed are designed to provide cues to the intended uses of the buildings, direct pedestrians to entries and other important locations on the site, and provide human-scaled building elements.</p>
<p>7. Study the height of the building base throughout the project to ensure it contributes to the pedestrian</p>	<p>"The Panda Inn and Golden Jubilee Court anchors the project. Single-story retail below parking structure leads towards residential complex. Garage elevator</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The applicant has demonstrated how the design has been modified to provide a human-scaled base to the buildings throughout the project,</p>

Commission Comment, April 27, 2021	Excerpts from Architect's Response	Staff Comments
<p>experience. Study the possibility of elevating the ground floor to provide entry stoops for the ground-level units.</p>	<p>tower punctuates the entry plaza. Two brick pavilions define the plaza and mark the entrance to the inner courtyard. Common residential amenities at a taller two-story expression contain the inner courtyard. Single-story base of residential buildings provide a domestic scale..."</p> <p>See Attachment A, pages 23-34.</p>	<p>anchored by common amenity volumes and use of brick to highlight important areas of the project such as entries and circulation elements. As noted above, staff recommends an additional condition of approval requiring the base element to be utilize a high-quality, durable material other than plaster to provide further human-scaled texture to the base and provide greater protection from damage.</p>

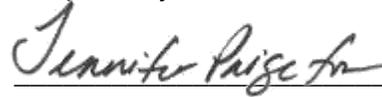
**Changes to Concept Design Review Drawings & Previous Staff Recommendation**

The revised plans submitted depict the applicant team's further refinement of the building colors, textures and materiality in response to staff and Commission comments from the previous hearing. The new darker base, accent colors, pilaster and window recess configurations, entry treatments and more substantial balcony structures shown provide increased articulation to the buildings and satisfy one of staff's previously recommended conditions of approval, which has therefore been removed from the current recommendation. Additional clearer renderings have been provided, as well as courtyard-facing elevations, which are consistent with the other building elevations and provide brick-clad accentuated building entries. Additional detail of the lenticular graphic system on the parking structure has also been provided and the east elevation of the parking structure has been revised to provide an articulated grid pattern similar to other elevations of the building and green-screen base element. These changes address the majority of two previous staff-recommended conditions. However, staff continues to recommend a condition requiring study of consistent treatment of vertical circulation areas of the parking structure to further unify the building. Finally, the revised drawings do not appear to have addressed staff's previously recommended conditions regarding highlighting pedestrian paths of travel and continuing associated specialty paving materials along the vehicle drop-off and terminating at Foothill Blvd. as well as programming of the residential courtyard; therefore, staff continues to recommend these conditions of approval in the current recommendation.

**CONCLUSION:**

The issues identified at the previous hearing have been addressed in the revised plans and graphic responses provided. Staff recommends that the Commission approve the application for Major Changes to an Approved Project with conditions described above.

Respectfully submitted,



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Prepared by:



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Attachments:

- A. Architect's responses to Commission comments from April 27, 2021 public hearing
- B. Current plans and elevations
- C. Staff Report from April 27, 2021 Design Commission meeting
- D. Class 32 categorical exemption documentation
- E. Health Risk Assessment
- F. Comments from other City departments