

**Action Minutes  
Design Commission  
Tuesday November 12, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.**

**Regular Meeting  
City Hall, Council Chambers – Room S249  
100 N. Garfield Avenue, Pasadena CA 91101**

**For a complete and detailed recap of the meeting, please log to:  
<https://ww5.cityofpasadena.net/commissions/commission-meetings-archived-recordings/>**

1. **ROLL CALL** – Chair Toro called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.  
Present: Commissioners Toro, Loomis, Lim, Chiao, Elfarra, Sepulveda and Rao  
Absent: Commissioners Carpenter and Coppess (both Excused)  
Staff: Leon White, Kevin Johnson, Amanda Landry, and Michi Takeda
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Approval of the minutes October 22, 2019.  
Moved and seconded by Commissioners Loomis and Sepulveda to approve the minutes as amended. No opposition; the minutes were approved.
3. **PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA** – No comments.
4. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA ORDER**  
Moved and seconded by Commissioners Sepulveda and Loomis. No opposition; the Agenda Order was approved.
5. **PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION**
  - A. **444 N. Fair Oaks Ave. – (Council District 5)**  
This proposal is for the construction of a new 206-unit multi-family residential project located at the intersection of Fair Oaks Avenue and Villa Street. The proposed development would include 199 apartment units in a 4-5 story building oriented along Fair Oaks Avenue and 7 townhome units on a portion of the property that connects to Raymond Avenue to the East. 238 parking spaces will be provided at grade and in a subterranean structure.

Public Comments: Andrew Salimian and David Kalbeitler

Letter from Pasadena Heritage

Commission Comments:

- Although broken up by large second-level courtyards along its west and south sides, the massing of the building appears substantially larger and bulkier than immediately adjacent surrounding properties, particularly at the southern end of the Fair Oaks Avenue frontage, along Villa Street, and adjacent to lower-scaled existing development to the east. Review the bulk and mass of other more recently approved or constructed development projects nearby, as well as the scale of the buildings in the surrounding context, and explore ways to

further break down and rearrange the massing of the building in a manner similar to these other projects, and in response to the surrounding lower-scaled context. Consider creating more distinct and narrower building masses along the Fair Oaks Avenue frontage and creating narrower and more frequent breaks, cut-outs and view corridors in the building wall along the street to accommodate pedestrian access into the site at multiple locations. Develop a massing and architectural vocabulary that creates the appearance of multiple buildings. The Fair Oaks Court project at the southeast corner of Fair Oaks Avenue and Peoria Street may be a useful example to explore for massing and frontage inspiration. Recently approved projects at the Parsons site (100 W. Walnut Street) or 690-700 N. Orange Grove Boulevard may also be useful to study. In addition, explore ways to work more closely with the sloping conditions of the site to create massing and roofline variation.

- On Raymond Avenue, the townhouses building is substantially taller and less articulated than most of the existing buildings along that street, with the exception, from a height perspective, of the four-story Villa Raymond building at the southwest corner of Raymond Avenue and Villa Street. The design of the new building volume at this location should respond more clearly to the size, mass and articulation of the majority of the other properties along Raymond Avenue.
- The northwest corner of the building at Fair Oaks Avenue and Villa Street should be carefully studied to respond to the prominence of the street corner and to be more cohesive with the overall building design. Stepping the building down and creating a small arcade at this location may not be the most appropriate response to the prominent corner. Additional building mass and height could be supported at this location. Consider relocating the ground-level program at this location to the southern end of the site, which could help create variation in the design and relate better to Old Pasadena and to the termination of Eureka Street at that location.
- The current design includes a substantial amount of at-grade parking, which is negatively impacting the project's connections and circulation, both to the public realm and internally. The circulation pattern of the site should engage courtyard spaces and provide more direct, clear pathways from the parking area to the residential units, particularly the Raymond Avenue townhouses, which should also incorporate underground parking. Future design review submittals should clearly outline the intended pedestrian circulation to, from, and within the site. The project's proximity to Old Pasadena and other new developments in the vicinity, such as the Parsons project, should be celebrated in the site design and parking should be entirely subterranean to allow for improved access and reduced bulk and mass overall. If courtyards remain proposed at the podium level, consider creation of portals, stairs, and views from Fair Oaks Avenue.
- Consider providing a more centralized courtyard or repositioning the opening to the northerly courtyard to face north along Villa Street or to the east to relate better to adjacent lower-scaled residences, rather than along Fair Oaks Avenue. The building facade along Fair Oaks Avenue should maintain a strong street wall and have smaller interruptions for pedestrian access rather than a large courtyard opening.
- The proposed accessibility ramp transition and art wall along Fair Oaks Avenue should be reconsidered. The ground level of the building should align with, or be slightly above, street grade, working with the existing natural grade, and should better engage the pedestrian environment. Necessary transitions in elevation should occur within the interior of the site and building. Ground-level units should have direct access to streets and courtyards onto which they front.
- The compatibility of the proposed architectural presentation of the building with the surrounding neighborhood should be clearly articulated during the design review process. As currently designed, the project appears to have little architectural relationship to its surroundings, to the City as a whole, to its solar orientation or to the use of the building as residential dwelling units. While surrounding buildings along Fair Oaks Avenue are not architecturally significant, the design should strive to relate to other similarly sized buildings found traditionally in Pasadena and to create a compatible streetscape. The Main Street Commercial style described in the appendix to the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts may be an appropriate design reference

to consider. A contemporary design may also be appropriate in this location, provided its architectural logic and compatibility with its surroundings are clearly described and evident in the design. In general, the residential use of the building should be more clearly expressed in the design, as it currently has an institutional appearance.

- The proposed Raymond Avenue townhouses are particularly incompatible with adjacent properties and the Raymond-Summit Historic District on the opposite side of the street. Consider incorporating a lower-scale, two-story element at the eastern end of the Raymond Avenue townhouses, as well as architectural treatments that better relate to the existing character of the street. The fenestration should be further studied to provide larger openings facing the street, as well as a prominent street-facing entrance within a frontage element. In general, this portion of the project should strive to elevate the existing charm of the neighborhood and celebrate its existing character.
- Ground-level units at the street edge should engage the street and provide for entry patios and should be architecturally differentiated from common/leasing spaces. Consider placing residential units along Villa Street at the ground level in conjunction with the potential relocation of the leasing office and amenity spaces at the southern end of Fair Oaks Avenue, as suggested in comment #3 above.
- The project courtyards should be placed in locations that will ensure their usability by the project residents. The courtyards should be designed to include useful amenities and features such as shading devices appropriate to their solar exposure, seating and cooking facilities, water features, etc. The landscape and hardscape design should reflect the local climate and landscape traditions and should also relate to the design of the building.
- The materiality of the building will be an important consideration in the design review process and will be crucial to its compatibility with its surroundings. The applicable design guidelines encourage use of high-quality, durable materials that are consistent with the design of the project. Any proposed masonry or stone should be detailed as bearing walls. Windows should be recessed to create a feeling of depth and solidity and should be arranged in a clear pattern on the facade.
- Consider in the design the response of the building to the termination of Eureka Street at Fair Oaks Avenue at the southern end of the project's Fair Oaks Avenue frontage.
- Use caution in taking the inspiration images provided in the design drawings too far. Rather than using large glazing elements, more inspiration should be taken from the Villa Raymond, Herkimer Arms, the building at the southwest corner of Raymond Avenue and Villa Street and other buildings in the surrounding neighborhood without mimicking their designs.
- Consider placement of landscape along the Fair Oaks Avenue frontage to alleviate the mass and bulk of the building.
- Further consider the solar orientation of the building in the design. A north-south orientation would be the most appropriate for residential units and at least 60% of the units should face this direction. West-facing units would be the most difficult. Consider a three-bar configuration at the northern and southern ends and the middle of the site with lower-scaled connecting volumes and courtyards between them and along Fair Oaks Avenue.
- The architecture on the street does not currently support pedestrian activity, which is high in this location. As this project will be considered a gateway to North Pasadena, the design expectations for it are very high.

## 6. CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW

### A. 135 S. Catalina Ave. – (Council District 7)

This proposal is for the demolition of an existing surface parking lot, and development of a 76-unit residential project to be built over a shared subterranean parking structure that provides 345 parking spaces for both the housing and existing medical service use.

Public Comments: Andrew Salimian, Matt Dillhoefer, Angeline Chen, Norma Dixon, Marci Johnson, and Juana (no last name provided)

#### Commission Comments:

- Continue to study design elements to create greater compatibility with the adjacent Thatcher Medical Building. This could include such measures as differentiating the top floor from the lower two floors of the three-story building, expressing projecting bay windows, demonstrating compatible fenestration proportions, incorporating roofed balconies and reconsidering railing designs, creating compatible open spaces, and/or other measures demonstrated to the Commission in the drawings submitted for Final Design Review. The project shall also be redesigned to incorporate additional architectural variation of the various building volumes along the streetscape.
- Explore greater variety in materials
- Reduce the finish floor height at the southern end of the site to the greatest extent feasible and reduce the extent and height of solid planter walls within the front yard of the entire site frontage to ensure a more compatible front yard design in comparison to the surrounding context. In addition, redesign the solid front porch walls to incorporate additional transparency. Provide for Final Design Review additional building sections to demonstrate the relationship of the building's finish floor height and planter walls within the front yard to the sidewalk grade at multiple locations along the project frontage.
- The parking garage access ramp shall be softened and visually minimized with open fencing rather than solid walls above grade, landscaping, materials and lighting. Provide sections and details for Final Design Review to further demonstrate and define the design of the parking garage access ramp.
- Provide amenities to ensure usability of the project's open spaces. Carefully study the design of the open spaces to include such features as outdoor cooking/eating space, water and/or fire features, site furniture, focal elements, etc. Specialty paving shall be used to soften the walkways and gathering spaces.
- All residential units aligning the common courtyards shall have direct pedestrian access from the units to the courtyards.
- If allowed by the Building Code, incorporate natural lighting into the stairwell from the parking structure to the ground level at the northern end of the building.
- Further study the location and design of materials transitions to ensure that the building walls articulate in plane in conjunction with changes in wall materials, creating a greater sense of depth on the building facades. Alternatively, simplify the materiality of the building in response to the simple materials of the adjacent Thatcher Medical Building, and explore brick coursing patterns that respond to the patterns of the historic building.
- Study the landscaping depicted in historical photographs of the Thatcher Medical Building and restore the original landscape design to the greatest extent feasible.
- The project shall comply with all applicable Zoning Code requirements, including required parking. Comments in Attachment A from staff of the Current Planning Section and the Departments of Public Works and Transportation shall be addressed to staff's satisfaction prior to submitting an application for Final Design Review. Changes in massing, site design or general architectural character that are required to comply with Zoning Code requirements may also require submittal and review of an application for Changes to an Approved Project

- In addition to the above comments, the Commission provided the following recommendations:
  - a. Explore alternate end treatment for projecting fins.
  - b. Explore the design of the north elevation to reduce the “dingbat” appearance. In addition, explore creation of a two-story brick base aligned with the eave line of the Thatcher Medical Building.
  - c. Explore alternative locations for the bicycle storage to reduce potential conflicts with the adjacent motor court.

Motion:

Moved and seconded by Commissioners Loomis and Elfarra to approve the application for Concept Design subject to conditions and recommendation to be further reviewed during Final Design Review.

AYES: Commissioners Toro, Loomis, Lim, Elfarra, Chiao, Rao and Sepulveda  
 NOES: None  
 ABSENT: Commissioners Coppess and Carpenter  
 ABSTAIN: None  
 APPROVED: 7-0-2

**7. CONSOLIDATED DESIGN REVIEW**

**A. 1813 E. Colorado Blvd. – (Council District 7)**

The proposal is for the demolition of an existing service station (Mobil Gas) and the new construction of a new automobile service station (Mobile Gas). The subject property is a corner parcel located at the northeast corner of East Colorado Boulevard and South Allen Avenue.

Public Comments: None

Commission Comments:

- The project shall comply with all applicable requirements of the Zoning Code, except as allowed under CUP #6649. Any design changes that may occur to comply with CUP #6649 may require submittal and review of an application for Changes to an Approved Project.
- The color of the coping shall be revised to a more neutral color, such as dark grey or black, rather than the proposed red.
- Prior to issuance of a building permit, submit to staff written confirmation from utility providers (Pasadena Water & Power and The Gas Company) that the utility equipment shown on the plans are sufficient to meet the demands of the project and that the locations shown in the plans are approved.
- The plans submitted for building permit plan check shall show locations of the gas meters, which shall be screened from public view to the extent allowed by The Gas Company.
- The plans submitted for building permit plan check shall clearly specify the location and screening type of all mechanical equipment, vents and utilities. Provide a detail of the mechanical vent covers to ensure a high-quality, integrated installation (i.e., no exposed flashing).
- A copy of this decision letter shall be included in the plans submitted for building permit plan check.
- The project shall comply with the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance and any changes to the proposed landscape design that may be required in order to comply shall be reviewed and approved by staff prior to issuance of a building permit.
- The applicant shall apply for a new master sign plan to ensure the use of high quality materials and visual harmony and consistency among signage at the site and to expedite review and approval of new signage for new and future tenants.

- This project will be subject final site inspection and sign-off by staff of the Design & Historic Preservation section to ensure that the project is constructed as indicated and specified in the decision letter and that all work is performed consistent with the approved plans.
- In addition to the above comments, the Commission provided the following recommendations:
  - a. Consider repeating the blade fin/canopy support detail found on the west elevation of the food mart on the car wash volume.
  - b. Explore reducing or eliminating the banding of the CMU on the car wash volume.
  - c. Explore a typology or font that more strongly evokes the Route 66 era when preparing the submittal for the Master Sign Plan.

Motion:

Moved and seconded by Commissioners Loomis and Sepulveda to approve.

AYES: Commissioners Toro, Loomis, Lim, Elfarra, Chiao, Rao and Sepulveda  
 NOES: None  
 ABSENT: Commissioners Coppess and Carpenter  
 ABSTAIN: None  
 APPROVED: 7-0-2

**8. COMMENTS AND REPORTS FROM STAFF**

- A. Formation of a Design Awards Subcommittee. – Leon White reported that at the request from Councilman Wilson, he would like to bring forward the idea of a Design Awards submittal. The purpose of the awards is to look at the best and innovative ideas related to contemporary architecture. The awards would be presented in the fall since we already do the Preservation Awards in the spring. As part of that effort we need to establish a subcommittee for the Design Awards. The committee should be made up of at least three commissioners to work with staff to put it together. Commissioners Loomis and Lim volunteered.
- B. It was recognized that even though we do not have a full commission, it was requested that we at least populate two of the subcommittees due to the fact there are some inspections that will take place soon. The two subcommittees that needs to be populated are Kaiser and EF Academy. Commissioner Chiao volunteered for the EF Academy and Commissioners Loomis and Lim volunteered for the Kaiser subcommittee.
- C. A rough draft schedule for the Design Commission field trip was presented. Leon asked that commissioners get back to him by Wednesday for any changes or ideas.

**9. COMMENTS AND REPORTS FROM COMMISSION**

**10. COMMENTS AND REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**

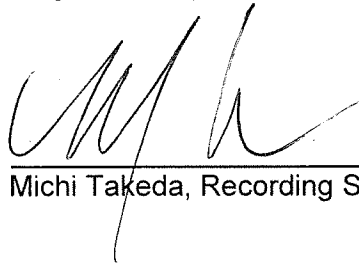
1. **Urban Forestry Advisory Committee - (TBD)**
2. **Historic Preservation Commission - (Elfarra)**
3. **Planning Commission - (Coppess)**
4. **Transportation Advisory Commission - (Lim)**
5. **Arts & Culture Commission - (Sepulveda)**
6. **Concept Design Review Application Subcommittee - (Loomis, Toro)**
7. **Las Encinas Psychiatric Hospital & Barn Subcommittee - (TBD, TBD)**
8. **Specific Plan Implementation Process Subcommittee - (Loomis, TBD, TBD)**
9. **100 West Walnut St. Subcommittee (PARSONS) - (Loomis, TBD, Toro)**
10. **Design Commission Annual Field Trip Subcommittee - (Sepulveda, TBD, Loomis)**
11. **Alexandria Subcommittee - (TBD, Chiao)**
12. **Olivewood (North and South) Subcommittee - (TBD, Loomis, TBD)**
13. **130-140 N. Fair Oaks Avenue Subcommittee - (TBD, Loomis, TBD)**
14. **270 Bellevue Drive Subcommittee - (TBD, TBD, Toro)**
15. **3200 East Foothill Boulevard (SpaceBank) - (Chiao, Loomis)**
16. **94 S. Los Robles Avenue (Kaiser) - (TBD, Chiao)**
17. **1539 East Howard St. (EF Academy) – (Toro, TBD, Loomis)**

**11. ADJOURNMENT** – Chair Toro adjourned the meeting at 11:46 p.m.



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Jose Noel Toro, Chair (Acting)



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Michi Takeda, Recording Secretary