



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: AUGUST 25, 2020

TO: DESIGN COMMISSION

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

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW
MAJOR EXTERIOR MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING OFFICE BUILDING AT
101 SOUTH MARENGO AVENUE *(ITEM CONTINUED FROM THE AUGUST
11, 2020 DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING)*

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

Environmental Determination

1. Find that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under Section 15301, (Class 1) "Existing Facilities" and that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class; therefore, there are no unusual circumstances.

Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance

Acknowledge that no trees are proposed to be removed in conjunction with this project.

Findings for Concept Design Approval

1. Find that the project, upon implementation of the conditions of approval, will comply with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan and the Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan; and
2. Based on these findings, approve the application for Concept Design Review (as illustrated in Attachment B) subject to the following conditions to be further reviewed during Final Design Review:

Conditions

1. For Final Design Review, provide detailed drawings of all proposed site improvements, including those described to the Design Commission at the July 14, 2020 public hearing at the pedestrian access point at the corner of Arroyo Parkway and Green Street.
2. Continue to refine the patterning of the divisions in the glass curtain wall system to ensure compatibility with the proposed building cladding system.

BACKGROUND:

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: High Mixed Use (0 – 3.00 FAR)
- Zoning: CD-1 (Central District Specific Plan, Old Pasadena Sub-district) on the west side of the site & CD-2 (Central District Specific Plan, Civic Center/Midtown Sub-district) on the east side of the site.
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan and, the Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan.
- Site: The site is comprised of a single two-acre lot on the entire block on the south side of E. Green Street between S. Marengo Avenue and S. Arroyo Boulevard. It is square in shape and is currently developed with a five-story office building surrounded by an open plaza and with semi-subterranean parking.
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties include the two-story Pasadena Conference Center building and the six-story Paseo Colorado building to the east; a three-to-four-story parking structure to the north; a two-story brick building, vacant lot and the one-to-three-story former Pasadena Winter Garden (now Public Storage) buildings to the west; and a four-story office building and surface parking lot to the south. The project site lies between the Old Pasadena Historic District, the Civic Center Financial Historic District and the Pasadena Civic Center Historic District. Nearby historic buildings, which may be contributing to these historic districts, include the Pasadena Winter Garden (1940, Cyril Bennett) at 171 S. Arroyo Parkway to the west, the Security Pacific Building (1924, Curlett and Beelman) at 230-234 E. Colorado Boulevard to the northeast, the Citizens Savings Building (1914, Parkinson & Bergstrom) at 18 N. Marengo Avenue to the northeast; and the Chamber of Commerce Building (1905, Parkinson & Bergstrom) at 117 E. Colorado Blvd. to the northwest.
- Project Description: The project involves major alterations to the existing office building, including the creation of window openings and re-cladding the building with new GFRC material to match the existing travertine as closely as possible.
- Site Design: The building is located at the southwest corner of the site, with an open plaza with brick-framed pebble paving, concrete benches and raised planters, and a large circular water fountain with tile cladding to the north and east of the building. The existing site design is not proposed to change.

- Architectural Style: Contemporary
- Developer: Atlas Capital Group
- Architect: RCH Studios

ANALYSIS:

Design Commission Previous Comments

On January 29, 2019, the Design Commission reviewed an application for Preliminary Consultation for a similar project, presented by a different ownership and design team than the current proposal. Subsequently, on April 23, 2019, the Commission reviewed an Information/Project Update item, also with the previous team, with several design options. The property has since been sold and a new design team has been engaged for the project. The Commission reviewed the new design team's proposal at public hearings on July 14, 2020 and August 11, 2020. At the August 11, 2020 meeting the project was continued to the August 25th meeting and the Commission made the following comments:

1. Consider further options for the proposed window openings including the following:
 - a. Further differentiating the facades from one another based on interior programming and solar exposure/light quality;
 - b. Creating a singular design element that retains the iconic monumentality of the existing windowless box, such as an all-glass façade or a glass façade with an exterior screen,
 - c. Studying additional proportions, numbers and sizes of openings, including horizontal orientations;
 - d. Retaining the windowless exterior and exploring other means of bringing natural light into the building including light shafts and light shelves; and
 - e. Generally reducing the number and sizes of the windows proposed.
2. Explore removal of physical and/or visual barriers to pedestrian movement and views along Green Street.

The design team's responses to these comments are provided in Attachment A. Following these studies, the design team is proposing for the Commission's consideration the same design that was presented for its consideration at the July 14, 2020 and August 11, 2020 meetings. The drawings for this design are in Attachment B along with enlarged imagery from the design team's response memorandum. Staff's analysis of this design is in the staff reports for the previous meetings, which are in Attachment C and D; the staff recommendation at the outset of this report remains the same as that of the August 11, 2020 meeting, during which staff outlined the project's consistency with the applicable design guidelines.

The Commission also requested that staff explore whether the building could become historic in the future. While it is not possible for a definitive determination to be made about what could happen in the future, staff conducted research to determine whether any additional scholarly study has been conducted about the period of the building's construction or the architect, since the historic resource evaluation (HRE) of the building was prepared in 2015. As part of this

research, staff contacted Architectural Resources Group, which prepared the original HRE, and also consulted two historic context reports related to the building's period of construction that were recently published as part of the City of Los Angeles' Survey LA effort: "Postmodernism, 1965-1991" and "Late Modern, 1966-1990." None of these sources provided any additional information that would warrant modification of the 2015 determination that the building does not meet the criteria for designation as a historic resource. No further resources have been published regarding Edward Durrell Stone's work since the preparation of the HRE; therefore, the 2015 HRE utilizes the most current available information about the architect's work in its analysis. The 2015 HRE is in Attachment E for reference.

CONCLUSION:

The project design is consistent with the design-related goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan and the design guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan. Staff recommends approval of the application for Concept Design Review for the project with conditions requiring further study of window patterning within the large openings, and provision of details of proposed improvements to the northwest pedestrian access stair.

Respectfully Submitted,



David M. Reyes
Director of Planning and
Community Development

Prepared by:



Kevin Johnson
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



Leon E. White
Principal Planner

Attachments:

- A. Design team memorandum in response to Design Commission's August 11, 2020 comments
- B. Applicant submittal package
- C. Staff report from July 14, 2020 Design Commission meeting (without attachments)
- D. Staff report from August 11, 2020 Design Commission meeting (without attachments)
- E. Architectural Resources Group Historic Resources Evaluation