



**PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT**

**DATE:** OCTOBER 13, 2020  
**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION  
**FROM:** DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
**SUBJECT:** PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION – FAÇADE REMODEL OF EXISTING COMMERCIAL SHOPPING CENTER  
825-849 N. LAKE AVENUE

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**Project Overview:**

This proposal is for the façade remodel of an existing commercial shopping center located at 825-849 North Lake Avenue. The existing development consists of two detached, one-story, multi-tenant commercial buildings. Building A was constructed in 1990, sits at the southerly end of the project site, and has an existing gross square-footage of 4,680 square feet. Building B was constructed in 1963, sits at the northerly end of the project site, and has an existing gross square-footage of 6,224 square feet. No new square-footage is proposed for the project.

The project site consists of three adjoining parcels with a gross total square-footage of 25,993 square feet. The site is located at the southwest corner of North Lake Avenue and Merrett Drive. Both Building A and Building B are “L-shaped”, with surface parking areas interspersed on the site. The site is located in the North Lake Specific Plan area and is surrounded by a mix of different land uses and building types including residential buildings, traditional commercial buildings, strip commercial centers, fast-food restaurants and a big-box commercial building, most of which are one story in height.

The existing buildings are relatively simple in form with flat facades and minimal architectural detailing. The buildings feature a partial mansard shingle roof along the front facades, which also serve as the canopy for the buildings’ respective front walkways. Additionally, both buildings are clad in a rough stucco finish. Building A contains two existing small storefronts, with rough stucco bulkheads at opposite ends of the building’s north elevation and another at the east elevation. The remainder of the facades are comprised of blank, windowless stucco walls. Building B contains a more rhythmic and continuous layout of storefronts along its east elevation, including a partial wall of brick cladding. On Building B’s north façade, fronting Merrett Drive, part of the facade is composed of square CMU block, topped with a crenelated parapet.

The applicant is proposing to remove the mansard roof and canopy, the rough stucco finish, and the existing storefronts on both buildings. Additionally, on Building B, the applicant is proposing to remove the brick cladding, and reface the CMU portion of the façade, and remove the crenelated parapet. In an effort to modernize the shopping center, the applicant is proposing to

update the facades with contemporary architectural motifs. These efforts include the modulation of the façade plane through a mixture of finishes, volumetric protrusions, and new and additional aluminum storefronts. The applicant is proposing modulate the façade to provide a rhythmic pattern of depth and protrusions in the façade plane. Additionally, the parapet is proposed to be raised at the areas receiving a furred out façade plane, to provide extended height and a balanced proportion of architectural hierarchy at these areas. A cornice trim cap is also proposed at all articulated facade edges.

The façade is predominately proposed to be clad in a combination of smooth and sand finish stucco. Additional materials proposed include vertical corrugated metal, and porcelain tile. The applicant is also proposing a new paint palette of neutral grays and browns to coincide with some of the proposed façade materials. New flat metal awnings are also proposed to be installed above the storefronts, with the exception of the center storefronts on each building, on which arched metal awnings are proposed. Dependent on the system, some awnings are proposed to utilize steel tie rods for support. The rear and sides of the buildings are not proposed to receive detailing of articulation, however they are proposed to receive new sand finish stucco and paint.

The proposed façade update and materials palette are consistent with contemporary trends in shopping center design; however, although the context is highly mixed, staff finds that some of the proposed materials are incompatible within the context of the transitional neighborhood of mixed land uses and architectural styles. See staff's observations below for comments that encourage improvements that would ensure greater compatibility of the proposed design with the surrounding context.

**Applicable Design Guidelines:**

- Design-Related Goals and Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan
- Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Districts
- Design Guidelines of the North Lake Specific Plan

**Previous Reviews:**

- Not Applicable

**Approvals Needed/Project Scheduling:**

- Concept and Final Design Review (Design Commission)
- Building Permits
- Master Sign Plan (Staff level)

**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:***

- 7.1: Architectural Quality. Design each building as a high-quality, long term addition to the City's urban fabric; exterior design and building materials shall exhibit permanence and quality, minimize maintenance concerns, and extend the life of the building.
- 7.3: Compatibility: 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.
- 25.6: Buffering Adjoining Residential Areas. Ensure commercial uses adjoining residential neighborhoods or mixed residential and commercial uses are design to be compatible with each other.

***Design Guidelines for the North Lake Specific Plan:***

- D-68: Open the street front. People are attracted to businesses that they can see into. Open up your storefront to the sidewalk with storefronts, windows, and doors and make it interesting. Windows draw people inside first with their eyes and then with their pocketbooks.
- D-72: Refresh with water and landscape. Soften blank walls with vertical planting.

***Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Districts:***

- 7.2: Side and rear elevations. The rear and/or side elevations of new buildings that are visible from the public realm should be designed with equal care and quality as the front or principal façade.
- 9.3: Screening of surface lots. Surface parking lots that are visible from the street should be screened by landscaping. Landscaping and large canopy trees should be used to minimize the urban heat island effect caused by surface parking.
- 10.3: Blank walls. If blank walls cannot be avoided, then they should be detailed, painted, or landscaped in a manner that renders the walls attractive to pedestrians.
- 13.1: Durability of materials. Materials should be used that have a long life and age well. Materials at the ground floor should be composed and detailed in a manner that enriches the pedestrian experience.

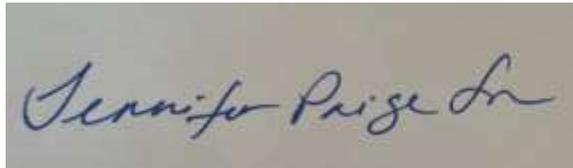
- 13.5: Multiple materials. Two or more wall materials may be combined on one façade, but should be located one above the other with lighter materials above more substantial materials.
- 13.9: Masonry and stone veneer walls should be detailed as masonry bearing walls, especially at corners and window and door openings.
- 13.10: Trim and molding. Building walls should be trimmed in wood, stone, cast stone, precast concrete or concrete. Foam moldings are discouraged.
- 13.14: Attached elements such as porches, trellises, awnings, hand rails, and balconies should be designed in a manner that is consistent with the architectural language of the rest of the building and well as with each other and should be detailed to last.

**Potential Design Issues:**

- Further explore the relationship of the buildings to their immediate adjacent residential context. Consider the visual impacts of increasing the parapet height to the adjacent single-family residential neighborhood. Also, consider the visual impacts of non-articulated walls facing the residential neighborhood and the use of vegetative screening at the parking lot behind Building B.
- Consider upgrading the landscaping to coincide with the façade update of the shopping center while providing a vegetative element that satisfactorily screens the parking lots from immediate adjacencies and provides adequate shade tree canopy.
- Design all side and rear walls with the same attention to detail as the primary facades. In particular, explore additional facade modulations and public-oriented fenestrations at the elevations fronting the two street edges and further extend cornice treatment and façade materials onto portions of side and rear facades that are visible to the public.
- Evaluate the application of the materials and their relationship to each other and the modulations of the façade plane. Consider establishing a horizontal hierarchy in the logic of material application along the façade planes.
- Reconsider the proposed use of corrugated metal as a façade material. Proposed materials should be reflective of the surrounding development context. The use of flat metal paneling or other composite materials may be considered as more appropriate to the surrounding urban context.
- Consider a stone or brick cladding, detailed as a bearing wall, along the base of the façade to establish a baseline hierarchy and order of materials.
- The selected materials should have a proven durability against deterioration. Materials should be authentic, and not applied as thin appliques; therefore, in-plane materials transitions should be avoided and should occur at inside corners. The use of tile may be acceptable provided it is detailed appropriately as a base material that can appear to visually support the weight of the upper façade.

- Further study the design logic of the proposed awnings and their relationship with each other in size, mounting height, and detailing.
- Determine the design of the cornice trim and avoid the potential use of foam trim elements.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Prepared by:



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Reviewed by:



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Leon E. White  
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**Attachments:**

- A. Current Planning (Zoning) comments
- B. Design Narrative
- C. Design Evolution – Building A
- D. Design Evolution – Building B
- E. Architectural Drawings and Photographs