



**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 - NEW CONSTRUCTION OF A TWO-TO-FOUR-STORY, 58-UNIT RESIDENTIAL PROJECT
1870-1890 E. WALNUT STREET; 170 N. PARKWOOD AVENUE & 175 N. GREENWOOD AVENUE

Project Description:

This proposal is for the construction of a new two-to-four-story, 58-unit residential project. The site is on the south side of East Walnut Street located between Parkwood and Greenwood Avenues and is comprised of four lots totaling 1.03 acres in size. The site is currently developed with two non-historic commercial/auto service buildings, which are proposed to be demolished. According to the submitted tree inventory and plan, there are seven non-protected trees and one protected tree on the site and two street (public) trees, all along the property's Parkwood Avenue frontage; all seven non-protected trees are proposed to be removed and the protected tree and street trees are proposed to be retained.

Surrounding properties include one- and two-story commercial and industrial buildings along Walnut Street, one- and one-and-one-half-story single-family residences along Greenwood Avenue, and one- and two-story single- and multi-family residences along Parkwood Avenue. A recently constructed four-story mixed-use building is approximately 500 feet to the east of the eastern boundary at the northwest corner of Walnut Street and Allen Avenue. Nearby designated historic resources include the Woodbury Well directly across Walnut Street from the project site (1930, Aubrey St. Clair), historic signs at 2114 E. Foothill Blvd. (In N Out Burger, 1952) and 1821 E. Walnut St. (Bells & Vaughn Frame & Wheel Aligning, 1946), and two houses at 116 and 119 N. Meridith Avenue (1911 and 1912, respectively). The site is split-zoned with most of the site being within the CG (Commercial General) Zoning District and the property at 170 N. Parkwood Avenue being within the RM-16-PK Zoning District (Multi-Family Residential, Parking Overlay District).

The site plan shows the proposed new building covering most of the site with varying setbacks from its street frontages and property lines. A number of private patios and exterior stairs are also shown along the building's frontages, creating modulation in the building walls along the perimeter. Two separate open-air courtyards are proposed within the center of the building. Other than a community room at the center of the ground floor along Walnut Street, the floor plans consist of a combination of one-story flats and two-story townhouses accessed by single- and double-loaded corridors, some of which are open to the exterior. Vertical circulation is

shown in three locations – an elevator and stair within the community room space and two stairs at the southwest and southeast portions of the building, all of which extend to a proposed subterranean parking structure with spaces for 87 cars. The vehicular ramp to the subterranean garage is shown at the southeast corner of the site.

The building is largely three stories in height with two-story elements at the southern ends and a four-story element at the center, set back slightly from the north façade of the three-story volume below. It is designed in a traditional warehouse style with flat and shed roofs, modulated, generally symmetrical massing generally consisting of three articulated volumes along each street and large, repeating, openings, some of which extend across multiple floors of the building with solid spandrels between. It also features a highly glazed, hipped-roof tower element at the east end of the north elevation, projecting canopies and pergolas and a combination of brick, metal and plaster exterior wall cladding.

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

Previous/Existing Reviews or Entitlements:

- Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR). A PPR comment letter has been provided to the applicant.
- A residential project was proposed for the same site in 2014/2015, but was withdrawn prior to Design Commission review.

Approvals Needed/Project Scheduling:

- Variances or Affordable Housing Concession Permit; Conditional Use Permit for residential use in a Commercial zoning district within a TOD (Hearing Officer)
- 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:

- 4.11: 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.

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

- 6.3 Contexts in transition should receive projects in either a contemporary or traditional style with no limitations, that will help to shape the future character of their surroundings.
- 7.2 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 facade.
- 7.3 The placement and size of windows in side yards and rear yards should respect the privacy and need for light and air of existing buildings.
- 10.3 If blank walls cannot be avoided, then they should be detailed, painted, or landscaped in a manner that renders the walls attractive to pedestrians...

- 16.1 Courtyards and forecourts should be designed to be inviting places that are useful to their occupants. They should provide a central, flat area that is habitable and encourages human activity and interaction. This area may be paved, landscaped with a surface that can be walked on (grass, decomposed granite), or a combination of the two and may be raised above surrounding walkways.
- 16.2 Courtyards and forecourts should provide design elements such as seating areas, fountains, and/or outdoor fireplaces to encourage their use as outdoor rooms or gathering places.
- 16.9 Courtyards may contain areas for the private use of adjacent units. These areas should be designed as an integral, yet separate, part of the courtyard. Walls or hedges used to define the private areas should be dimensioned to maintain both the privacy of the patios and the overall openness and integrity of the courtyard.

Potential Design Issues:

- While the design incorporates height averaging to achieve much of its massing and roofline articulation, this is not authorized by the Zoning Code, which limits use of height averaging to certain areas of the Central District Specific Plan. However, additional height up to 12 feet over no more than 60% of the proposed building footprint may be allowed as a concession for providing required on-site affordable housing pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.43.055.B. If this option is being pursued, and in light of the fact that only approximately 20% of the proposed building footprint is proposed to exceed the 45-foot height limit of the CG Zoning District, consider whether additional areas of increased height at the northern portion of the site would further improve the massing and roofline articulation of the project.
- The building is appropriately sited to frame and be oriented toward the public streets onto which it fronts, including appropriate fenestration and frontage elements for direct pedestrian access. However, pursuant to comments provided by staff of the Current Planning Section, the property at 170 N. Parkwood Avenue, which is within the RM-16 Zoning District, is not sited to comply with the development standards of this district (such as including a required main garden). Staff understands that the applicant may pursue Variances or an Affordable Housing Concession Permit to allow the site design as proposed; however, any changes to the design that may be made in the future may require a second Preliminary Consultation review.
- Consider incorporation of additional articulation or fenestration on the rear/south façade and avoid unbalanced blank wall conditions on this façade to the greatest extent feasible in the areas that would be most visible to the public, while also ensuring adequate privacy of the adjoining existing residential properties.
- Further consider differentiated design/programming elements for the two courtyards to provide alternative open space areas for different purposes. Ensure that courtyards include amenities to promote their active use, such as seating, water features, shade, and outdoor cooking and eating facilities. In addition, consider reducing or eliminating

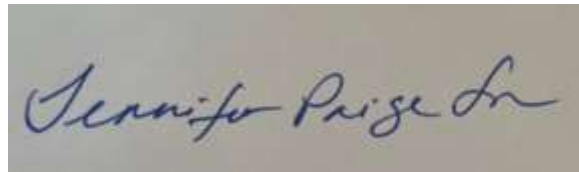
private open space encroachments into the relatively small communal courtyard spaces, while providing direct pedestrian access to units that adjoin them.

- In future submittals, ensure that the location and approximate canopy size of the protected tree proposed to be retained is shown on all floor plans and elevations to ensure adequate protection of the tree during and after construction.

Project Scheduling/Sequencing:

- Zoning Entitlements (Variances or Affordable Housing Concession Permit; Conditional Use Permit)
- Concept and Final Design Review by the Design Commission
- Building Permits

Respectfully Submitted,



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Attachments:

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