



October 12, 2020

City of Pasadena Design Commission
Attn: Michi Takeda
Hale Building
175 N. Garfield Ave., 2nd Floor
Pasadena, CA 91101

Re: 254 E. Union St.

Dear Members of the Design Commission:

Pasadena Heritage raised strong objections to this project last year when it returned with revisions, but we have seen the project change significantly for the better. We thank the project's architect, Adele Chang, for meeting with us and for being receptive to our suggestions.

The site is challenging in terms of historic resources, being basically surrounded by landmark structures. We think the gesture to step back from Union and the YWCA, Post Office and Civic Center was a good choice and respects the scale of those buildings, especially given the comparative height of structures at Colorado Blvd. and Marengo Ave. The proposed building does seem like a significant step up from the smaller one-and-two story commercial buildings within the Civic Center Financial Historic District, but the separation that Stratton Way provides does offer some breathing room. It is also important to note that the historic Citizen Savings Building, at 225 E Colorado Blvd., is taller than this proposal.

Although this design has improved significantly, one element of the building that still appears a bit jarring: the northwestern stair tower and adjoining terrace loggia. This largely opaque volume rises six stories on the front of the façade, and seems to dominate the view of the building and of the Civic Center Financial Historic District from Marengo Avenue looking eastward. The first two suggested Staff Conditions appear to provide further definition for the mass, and therefore we support them. We support all the proposed conditions, and were pleased to see Conditions 5 and 6 that speak to the quality of materials and the change to cast stone or concrete. We look forward to hearing input and suggestions from the Design Commission, especially your ideas to better integrate the stair tower.

We thank you for considering our comments as usual, and for continuing to meet even in these trying times.

Sincerely,

Susan N. Mossman
Executive Director

Andrew Salimian
Preservation Director