



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: DECEMBER 8, 2020

TO: DESIGN COMMISSION

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

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR MAJOR CHANGES TO AN APPROVED CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW
CHANGE FROM A TWO-STORY 14,008-SQUARE-FOOT COMMERCIAL/OFFICE BUILDING TO A FOUR-STORY, 20,530-SQUARE-FOOT MIXED-USE BUILDING WITH 3,702 SQUARE FEET OF COMMERCIAL SPACE AND 18 RESIDENTIAL UNITS
85 WEST GREEN STREET

RECOMMENDATION:

The staff recommends that the Commission:

Environmental Determination

1. Find that the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan designation, with the General Plan goals and policies for the site, and with the applicable zoning designation and regulations; and that the project site has no value as habitat for endangered or threatened species, and can be served by utilities and public services.
2. Find that approval of the project will not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, water quality or cultural resources.
3. Conclude, therefore, that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under §15332, (Class 32) "in-fill development projects" and that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances.

Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance

Acknowledge that the Design Commission approved with conditions the after-the-fact removal of two protected trees in conjunction with the approval of Concept Design Review on March 28, 2017 and that the proposed changes are consistent with the previous approval.

Findings for the Approval of Height Limit Exception through Height Averaging

1. Find that the height limits documented in the height averaging exhibit apply to the finished rooflines of the building and that they comply with the regulatory provisions in the zoning code (§17.30.050). These provisions limit an increase in height (to 90 feet in this case) over a maximum of 30% of the building footprint if the additional height is counterbalanced by lower heights elsewhere on a development site such that the average height does not exceed the otherwise required maximum building height (75 feet in this case).
2. Find that the request for additional height complies with the following findings for height averaging:
 - a. Upon implementation of the condition of approval, the additional height will provide for a more interesting skyline;
 - b. The additional height will not be injurious to adjacent properties or uses, or detrimental to environmental quality, quality of life, or the health, safety, and welfare of the public;
 - c. The additional height will promote a superior design solution that enhances the property and its surroundings, without detrimental impacts on views and sight lines; and
 - d. The additional height is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Central District Specific Plan and the General Plan; and
3. Based on these findings, approve the request for height averaging.

Findings for Approval of Major Changes to an Approved Concept Design Review

1. Find that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the modification of the original Final Design Review approval, specifically the applicant's request to modify the scope and program of the proposed project; and
2. Find that the proposed major changes are consistent with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the design guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation; and
3. Based on these findings, approve the application for Major Changes to an Approved Project subject to the following conditions, to be reviewed by the Design Commission during Final Design Review:

Conditions:

1. Provide doors with glazing or panelized doors consistent with the design of original service doors within the historic district at the laundry and electrical room openings along the north elevation.

2. Further study the provision of an articulated corner element at the southeast corner of the building that meets the requirements of height averaging, which may be achieved by slightly reducing the floor area of the proposed fourth floor residential units.
3. The project shall comply with all applicable Code requirements prior to issuance of a building permit, unless deviation is authorized by a Zoning entitlement. If a Zoning entitlement is required for the project, it shall be submitted, and the review process completed, prior to the Design Commission's review of an application for Final Design Review.

BACKGROUND:

On March 28, 2017, the Design Commission approved an application for Concept Design Review for the new construction of a three-story, 15,525-square-foot commercial/office building and after-the-fact removal of two protected trees. Subsequently, on December 11, 2018, the Design Commission approved an application for Major Changes to an Approved Project to change the scope of the project to a two-story 14,008-square-foot commercial/office building. The Commission then approved an application for Final Design Review for the modified project on May 28, 2019. The project applicant has subsequently submitted this request to again change the scope of the project, now to a four-story, 20,530-square-foot mixed-use building with 3,702 square feet of ground-floor commercial space and 18 residential units.

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: Medium Mixed Use (0.0 – 2.25 FAR)
- Zoning: CD-1 AD-1 (Central District Specific Plan, Alcohol Overlay District)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines include the Citywide Design Principles in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- Site: The 8,534 sq. ft. site is located at the northwest corner of West Green Street and South De Lacey Avenue, and is located within the Old Pasadena Historic District (non-contributing property) and the Central District Specific Plan area. The north side of the site fronts on Martin Alley. The site is a rectangular-shaped corner parcel of land, with street frontage of approximately 80 feet along West Green Street and 100 feet along South De Lacey Avenue. The site was formerly occupied by a gas station and was redeveloped in 1994 with the Twin Palms Restaurant, which consisted of two semi-enclosed structures and a large canopy, designed to accommodate a large outdoor dining area. These structures have since been removed. The site continues to be surrounded by a stucco wall with openings.
- Surroundings: The site is surrounded by commercial and mixed-use buildings ranging between one and three stories in height. There is also a church at 80 West Dayton Street to the south. The project site is non-contributing to the Old Pasadena Historic District; however it is immediately adjacent to two contributing structures (101 and 111 West Green Street) and the surrounding context is historically and architecturally sensitive.

- Project Description: The project consists of the new construction of a four-story, mixed-use project with a total of 3,702 square feet of ground-floor commercial space and 18 residential units.
- Site Design: The proposed site design consists of a single four-story building with no setbacks from the north and west property lines. Portions at the extreme ends of the south and east elevations also have no setback; however, the remaining walls in the center of these frontages are set back approximately 13' from the property lines with ground-floor arcades extending to the property lines and the upper floors adjoining them being set back approximately 14'10" from the property lines with stacked balconies extending a maximum of 5'10.5" into the setback area. No on-site parking or loading areas are proposed.
- Architectural Style: Main Street Commercial
- Developer: Sunshine Management Group, LLC
- Architect/Landscape Architect: Alen Malekian, AIA

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

The following changes are proposed to be made to the previously approved Concept design to accommodate the proposed changes to the project scope:

- First floor:
 - The program layout is proposed to change to two commercial tenant spaces (labeled as a restaurant and a coffee shop) along the street frontages, a residential lobby at the north end of the east elevation and a gym and other residential support spaces along the remainder of the north elevation and at the northwest corner.
 - The enclosed space at the southeast corner is proposed to extend to the street corner (this was a condition of the previous Changes to an Approved Project review and had been addressed during Final Design Review of that design).
- Upper floors:
 - The previous project was a two-story commercial and office building with high floor plates. The revised project is four stories total with residential units on the upper three floors and the fourth floor set back toward the west side of the building with a common deck area on the adjoining roof space.
- Roof plan
 - The roof plan is revised to respond to the changes in floor plan, particularly the placement of the fourth floor as described above. In addition, the previously proposed pyramidal roof forms at the southeast and northeast corners of the building have been eliminated in the proposed design. As proposed, the building

would have a three-story primary volume at the street edges and the southeast corner would have be slightly higher than the rest of the roof to respond to the street corner. It should also be noted that the project proposes to utilize height averaging in a manner that is different from the height averaging that was previously approved – see further discussion of this request below.

- South (Green Street) Elevation
 - The overall height of the main building volume is proposed to be increased from 35' to 39.96, with no tower element at the southeast corner. Within this additional height, an additional floor is added, with a similar rhythm of fenestration and pilasters. Windows are shown with divided lights.
 - An elevator tower with a projecting metal canopy is added at the west end of the roof and a fourth floor is also added, to a maximum height of 48.46' and set back 22' 8 ½" from the southern edge of the building. The elevator tower appears to be set back approximately 10' from the southern edge of the building. Note that the south elevation drawing shows the fourth floor extending along most of the south elevation; however, approximately half of this volume at the east end is set back more than 126' from the south edge of the building.
 - Balcony railings are added to the central three bays at the second and third floors.
 - At the ground floor, one door is removed from the western bay and the previous large operable doors are changed to storefront windows with tile bulkheads in the remaining bays. Double doors are provided in the central and eastern bays.
 - Previously proposed metalwork above the second floor windows is removed.
- East (De Lacey Avenue) Elevation
 - The changes to this elevation are similar to those proposed on the south elevation, as described above, except that the previously proposed pyramidal tower element at the north end is also removed. On this side of the building, the north end of the fourth floor is set back 24' 4 ½" from the east edge of the building, the remainder is set back approximately 20 additional feet and the elevator tower is set back approximately 25-30 additional feet. In addition, the previous arched opening at the north end of this elevation is proposed to be squared.
- North Elevation
 - Similar changes are proposed to be made to the north elevation. At the ground floor, the easterly bay is proposed to be squared rather than arched as in the previous design. The adjacent bays, which had previously been a loading zone, are now proposed to be used as trash, laundry, electrical rooms and a stairwell. Accordingly, a metal roll-up door and sliding hollow metal doors, each with metal louver vents above, are proposed at those spaces, with the stairwell creating a

solid tower element at the west end of the facade.

ANALYSIS:

The findings required to approve an application for Major Changes to an Approved Project are the same findings required to approve the original application for design review (i.e., consistency with the purposes of design review and the applicable design guidelines) as well as the additional finding that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the change. In this case, the major changes to the project are necessitated by the property owner's request to change the program of the building from a commercial/office building to a mixed-use commercial and residential building.

The design guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan, as well as the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, apply to this project. To fully evaluate the project's consistency with these guidelines, the standard Concept Design Review staff analysis is provided below:

Programming and Circulation

The programming of the upper floors of the building is now proposed to be residential, while retaining commercial uses and residential lobbies along the street edges at the ground floor and support facilities along the north elevation and within the building interior. The building is now proposed to be four stories in total with seven residential units on the second floor, eight on the third floor and three on the fourth floor. Vertical pedestrian circulation remains in roughly the same locations as previously approved, at the southwest and northwest corners of the building; an internal corridor connects the residential lobby at the northeast corner of the building to the two circulation cores and residential support spaces. No parking is proposed on-site and a basement level is no longer proposed. The central portions of the two street frontages remain set back from the street with arcades and trees within the setback areas, as was the case with the previous design. Swinging entry doors are proposed at the ground level, rather than sliding doors as previously proposed. Balcony access doors at the upper floors appear to be designed as sliding fully glazed doors with divided lights, which may be appropriate; door specifications will be reviewed in more detail during Final Design Review. Overall, the proposed programming and circulation is consistent with the applicable design guidelines; however, staff recommends further study of the treatment of the ground-floor openings along the north (Martin Alley) elevation. While the previous project incorporated a loading area along this elevation, active uses supporting the residential units are now proposed and should be designed to better relate to the pedestrian character of the alley. A metal roll-up door is appropriate to screen the trash area and the specifications of this door will be reviewed during Final Design Review. Doors with glazing or articulated panels consistent with other service doors within the historic district should be considered for the laundry and electrical rooms and staff has recommended a condition of approval to this effect.

Orientation

The orientation of the building has not substantially changed from the previous approval and continues to strongly relate to the two streets on which the building will have frontage. As noted above, staff has recommended a condition of approval to improve the orientation of the building to Martin Alley.

Height, Massing and Modulation

The height and massing of the building have been substantially modified from the previous proposal, while retaining the previously proposed modulation. The bulk of the building mass is proposed to be increased in height by approximately five feet, with the previously proposed two tower elements at the northeast and southeast corners reduced in height by approximately seven feet and three feet, respectively. A fourth floor is proposed to be added, set back substantially from the street and, therefore, minimally visible to the public. Overall, the building is similar in character to the previously approved design, while being more simplified than the previous proposal. An earlier submittal incorporated a slight tower element at the southeast corner, which was approximately three feet higher than the bulk of the building mass, to respond to the street corner; however, this was removed when it was found to exceed height averaging allowances. Staff recommends a condition of approval requiring further study of reintroducing this element for review during Final Design Review, which may be achieved by slightly reducing the size of the proposed fourth floor units.

Height Averaging

A height averaging exhibit has been provided on sheet A0.1 of the submitted drawings, which depicts varying-height volumes on the building. The provisions of height averaging in §17.30.050.B of the Zoning Code, along with staff's analysis of the project's compliance, are as follows:

Extent of height averaging allowed:

- a. Additional building height is permitted over no more than 30 percent of the building footprint on a development parcel, provided that the average height over the entire footprint does not exceed the otherwise required maximum building height.

The portion of the building that is proposed to exceed the 40' height limit is 1,914 total square feet of the 6,933-square-foot overall building footprint, which is approximately 27.61% of the footprint area. The height averaging exhibit submitted demonstrates that the average height of the buildings on the development site will be 39.60 feet and staff has verified this calculation to be accurate.

- b. Height averaging shall not be applied to parking and/or accessory structures.

The project is not proposing to use height averaging for separate parking or accessory structures.

- c. The additional height allowed by this Subsection B. through height averaging shall require Design Commission approval.

This review constitutes the required Design Commission review.

Required findings:

- a. The additional height allows for preservation of vistas and view corridors, and/or a more sensitive transition to an adjacent historic structure, and/or provides for a more interesting skyline;

The additional height at the western end of the development site allows for housing in a manner that creates a more sensitive transition to surrounding historic structures by setting the additional height back from Green Street and De Lacey Avenue, which have generally lower-height buildings in the vicinity of the project. As noted earlier, an articulated tower element at the southeast corner of the building was previously proposed and further study should be conducted to reintroduce this feature to the building to provide for a more interesting skyline.

- b. The additional height will not be injurious to adjacent properties or uses, or detrimental to environmental quality, quality of life, or the health, safety, and welfare of the public;

As noted above, the additional height is designed in a manner that ensures it is set back from the street edges and surrounding lower-height buildings, thereby avoiding negative impacts on quality of life or health, safety and welfare of the building.

- c. The additional height will promote a superior design solution that enhances the property and its surroundings, without detrimental impacts on views and sight lines; and

Upon implementation of the recommended condition of approval as included in this report, the additional height will improve the roofline variation of the overall project and will not create detrimental impacts on views and sight lines.

- d. The additional height is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Central District Specific Plan and the General Plan.

The proposed additional height allows for the development of new housing in the Central District and in close proximity to transit, as encouraged in the Central District Specific Plan and General Plan, while ensuring that the design is not detrimental to surrounding buildings and is consistent with the sensitive context of Old Pasadena.

Architecture Style and Detailing

The proposed architectural style is similar to the previously approved design, but simplified to eliminate the prominent pyramidal tower elements and to reduce the arched openings. It retains the previously proposed rhythm of fenestration and the solid-to-void proportions, while incorporating elements that reflect the new proposed residential use at the upper floors. The materiality is largely the same as the previous proposal, except that the standing-seam metal roofs at the tower elements are removed and previously proposed decorative ironwork above the second-floor windows is removed. The proposed changes are largely consistent with the

design guidelines and the building will be an appropriate new structure within the Old Pasadena Historic District. As noted previously, staff recommends that the design be studied to reintroduce an articulated tower element at the southeast corner to respond to the corner condition of the site.

Compatibility

Overall, the building is similar in design to the previously approved design. While the bulk of the building is slightly higher than the previous proposal, the large corner towers are removed, which creates a more simplified building mass that is more appropriate within the surrounding historically sensitive context. The proposed fourth floor is set back substantially from the street and clad in different, darker materials to ensure that it does not overwhelm adjacent historic structures within the Old Pasadena Historic District. The proposed fenestration is of similar proportions to the previously approved project and designed to appear more residential in character, with balconies providing further activation of the building exterior along the adjoining streets.

Conceptual Landscape Design

The proposed landscape design is very similar to the previously approved landscape design, including the planting of four Fruitless Olive Trees within the street-edge arcades, surrounded by specialty paving.

Tree Removal

In conjunction with its approval of Concept Design Review for the originally proposed project, the Design Commission also approved the after-the-fact removal of two protected palm trees. In granting this approval, the Commission required planting of four 36-inch-box trees on-site to replace one of the removed trees and payment of an in-lieu fee for removal of the second tree. The plans submitted for this change are consistent with that previous decision. The applicant had also previously provided an appraisal of tree value from a Certified Arborist and a condition of approval was included in the Final Design Review decision for that project requiring verification of the appraisal and a minimum fee amount. At this time, no additional conditions related to this are warranted; however, staff will likely recommend a similar condition when this project returns for Final Design Review.

Time Limit

PMC §17.64.050.D states, “if a major change is approved within three years of the initial approval, the three-year time limit for the entitlement shall start on the date on which the major change was approved. Extensions to the major change may be requested. Any subsequent requests for a major change shall not reset the time limits.” This language does not specifically address the standard time limits for Concept Design Review, which is one year, nor the need to subsequently apply for and receive approval of an application for Final Design Review in order to move forward with construction of the project. As such, the Zoning Administrator has reviewed the circumstances of this project and the applicable requirements in the Zoning Code and determined that granting approval of this Major Change would re-start the one-year time limit for Concept Design Review, which could be extended for one year if an application for Final Design Review is not submitted prior to the end of the one-year time limit.

COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS:

A Minor Conditional Use Permit (MCUP) was approved for the previously proposed project on September 13, 2018 and comments from other City departments were incorporated into the conditions of approval for that entitlement. An MCUP is not required for the new proposed project; however, because the applicant is not proposing to provide at least one on-site parking space per residential unit as required by the Zoning Code, a zoning entitlement will be required, which, if approved, would not affect the design of the project. Staff recommends a condition of approval requiring submittal of this entitlement and completion of the review process prior to the project returning to the Design Commission for Final Design Review. As part of that entitlement, interdepartmental review will be conducted and conditions of approval will be incorporated into that decision. A recommended condition of approval requires compliance with all Zoning Code requirements unless deviation is authorized by a zoning entitlement.

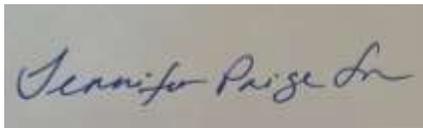
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The project will be constructed on a previously developed site in an urbanized area and is consistent with the General Plan, Central District Specific Plan and Zoning designations that apply to the property. The property is within the Old Pasadena Historic District, but is a non-contributing property and, as such, is not a historic resource. The design review process will ensure that the project is consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The project will not involve excavation for subterranean parking or a basement for the building; therefore, impacts related to construction air quality and noise, which are typically associated with excavation, would not occur. The Department of Transportation reviewed the project and determined that a traffic study is not required because the trips generated by the project would be less than the previous project that the Department analyzed in 2018. Based on this analysis, the project would not have the potential to result in significant impacts related to air quality, traffic, noise, water quality or cultural resources and staff recommends that the Commission determine that the project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA as an infill development project.

CONCLUSION:

The applicant has presented information to support a finding that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the proposed changes. Staff finds that, upon implementation of conditions of approval, the changes will be consistent with the applicable design guidelines and recommends that the Commission approve the changes with the conditions noted in the report.

Respectfully submitted,



David M. Reyes
Director of Planning & Community Development
Department

Prepared by:



Kevin Johnson, Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



Leon White, Principal Planner

Attachments:

- A. Major Changes to an Approved Project decision letter dated December 12, 2018
- B. Previously approved plans & elevations
- C. Current proposed plans & elevations