



**PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT**

**DATE:** DECEMBER 22, 2020  
**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION  
**FROM:** DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
**SUBJECT:** PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION - NEW CONSTRUCTION OF A THREE-TO-FOUR-STORY 84-UNIT MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL PROJECT  
350 CORDOVA STREET

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**Project Description:**

This proposal is for the construction of a new three-to-four-story, approximately 83,027-square-foot 84-unit multi-family residential project in three buildings over one level of subterranean parking at 350 Cordova Street. The site is at the southwest corner of Cordova Street and S. Euclid Avenue and is comprised of a single 1.23-acre lot. It is designated High Density Residential (0-48 units per acre) in the General Plan and is within the Central District Specific Plan area and in the RM-48-HL-40(45) Zoning District (Multi-Family Residential, 48 units per acre, Height Limit Overlay). The site is currently developed with a non-historic complex of one-story medical office buildings built in 1977, interspersed with mature trees, landscaping, including a number of large boulders and a water feature, and surface parking. The submitted tree inventory indicates that there are 52 trees on the site, five street trees along the site frontage and 17 off-site trees in close proximity to the site. Of the 52 on-site trees, 14 are protected and of these protected trees, 9 are proposed to be removed and 3 may be removed. A total of 25 non-protected trees are proposed to be removed.

Surrounding properties include several multi-story office and multi-family residential buildings and a hotel between 6 and 13 stories in height as well as lower-scaled commercial and residential buildings and surface parking lots. Directly across Euclid Avenue from the site, a multi-family residential development is under construction along the outer edges and at the top of an existing parking structure. There are a number of designated and eligible historic resources in close proximity to the project site, including:

- Pasadena Masonic Temple (1926, Bennett & Haskell), 200 S. Euclid Avenue (immediately north of proposed parking structure additions)
- Miss Orton's School for Girls (1898, Frederick C. Roehrig), 154 S. Euclid Avenue
- Las Flores Apartments (1937), 130 S. Euclid Avenue
- Pasadena Civic Auditorium (1933, Bergstrom, Bennet & Haskell), 300 E. Green Street,
- Foss Design & Building Company office (1926, Robert Foss), 175 S. Los Robles Avenue
- Apartment Building at 157 S. Los Robles Avenue (1916, Peoples & Cheney)
- Stanley Apartments and Livingstone Hotel Buildings (Myron Hunt, 1925 & 1927, respectively), 149 and 139 S. Los Robles Avenue, respectively

- Ernest Smith House (1911, Greene & Greene), 272 S. Los Robles Avenue
- Throop Memorial Universalist Church (1922, Frederick Kennedy, Jr.), 300 S. Los Robles Avenue
- House at 324 S. Euclid Avenue (1886).

The project is designed in three buildings arranged in two linear blocks on the east and west sides of the site with a linear garden between them. A break between the two easterly buildings provides a secondary pedestrian access point and views into the central courtyard from Euclid Avenue. Vehicular access to the subterranean parking garage is proposed at the southeast corner of the site from Euclid Avenue. With the exception of the central portion of Euclid Avenue flanking the opening described above, the portions of the buildings lining the two streets are proposed to be four stories and the remaining portions are proposed to be three stories.

The northeast corner portion of the building is proposed to house amenity spaces in the first three floors and three residential units on the fourth. With the exception of a multi-purpose space in approximately the middle of the west building, the remainder of the buildings consist of residential units (all stacked flats) with exterior walkways surrounding much of the interior courtyard and bridges crossing the courtyard in three locations and a fourth crossing the break in the buildings along Euclid Avenue. Elevators and stairs engage the bridges within the courtyard in two locations. All ground-level units have direct access to the street (many with elevated stoops) and the courtyard. The buildings are a contemporary design with flat roofs, articulated building volumes, stacked punched openings (except for the southeast corner volume, which has continuous floor-to-ceiling glazing and extended floor plates), and projecting and recessed balconies, mostly with glass railings and some with solid walls.

**Applicable Design Guidelines:**

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

**Previous/Existing Entitlements:**

- The Commission conducted a Preliminary Consultation for a new two-to-three-story, 62-unit multi-family residential project on June 25, 2019. Due to this new design being substantially different, and including more residential units than the previous proposal, a new application for Preliminary Consultation was required.

**Approvals Needed/Project Scheduling:**

- 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:***

- 4.10: Locate and design buildings to relate to and frame major public streets, open spaces, and cityscape. New development at intersections should consider any number of corner treatments, and should balance safety and accessibility concerns with the vision of the area and the need for buildings to engage the street and create a distinct urban edge.
- 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.

***Central District Specific Plan:***

- SP1.1 Provide for the functional and visual integration of building, services, vehicular access and parking, and "outdoor rooms" such as plazas, fore-courts, interior courtyards, and passages.

- SP1.4 Establish clear pedestrian connections on-site that are well- marked and gracious; direct pedestrians from surface or structured parking to buildings, streets, and public spaces.
- SP3.6 Dimension outdoor spaces to human occupation; they should be proportioned to their surroundings and envisioned use.
- BD2.1 Design building volumes to maintain a compatible scale with their surroundings; in general, break down the scale and massing of larger buildings.
- BD2.4 Employ simple, yet varied masses, and emphasize deep openings that create shadow lines and provide visual relief; discourage monolithic vertical extrusions of a maximum building footprint.
- BD2.6 Vary three dimensional character as a building rises skyward; in general, differentiate between the base, middle and top levels of a building.
- BD3.1 Establish a building's overall appearance on a clear and pleasing set of proportions; a building should exhibit a sense of order.
- BD3.2 Utilize a hierarchy of vertical and horizontal expression; facade articulation should reflect changes in building form.
- BD3.5 Provide a clear pattern of building openings; fenestration should unify a building's street wall and add considerably to a facade's three-dimensional quality.
- BD6.2 Use materials, colors, and details to unify a building's appearance; buildings and structures should be built of compatible materials on all sides.
- BD7.1 Distinguish the ground level of a building from the upper levels of a building, especially where a building orients to the street and/or defines public space.
- BD8.1 Express roofs in a visually interesting manner that complements the composition of the building and the surrounding area; sculpted roof forms are encouraged.
- BD8.3 Use a strong, attractively detailed cornice or parapet in conjunction with a flat roof.
- UR1.3 Employ simple and strong, yet varied massing, that places strong visual emphasis on the street; articulated sub-volumes and horizontal regulating lines should provide a visual transition to adjacent structures that are smaller in scale.
- UR2.1 Vary residential building plans and facades to avoid monotony and create identity from building to building, as well as add interest to the street.
- UR5.2 Create a simple, pleasing composition that uses a common vocabulary of forms, architectural elements, and materials; continue design elements, detailing, and materials around the entire structure.

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

- 7.4 Unique natural characteristics, such as mature trees and topography, on both the project site and adjacent sites should be respected and taken into account in new building design.
- 7.5 The massing of projects on combined lots should be broken down into increments that relate to surrounding buildings. On very large lots, the division of projects into two or more separate buildings of different type, density, height, and massing is encouraged.
- 12.2 For buildings large enough to be composed of more than one volume, an architectural logic, such as a clear hierarchy of massing, should be evident.
- 12.3 New multi-family courtyard buildings should be designed as simple assemblies of house-scale forms in a variety of unit combinations and massing compositions.
- 12.4 Building masses and building facades should be designed with simple, harmonious proportions. Arbitrary proportions should be avoided.
- 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.
- 16.7 All sides of a courtyard should be defined in a manner that establishes its internal spatial integrity.

**Potential Design Issues:**

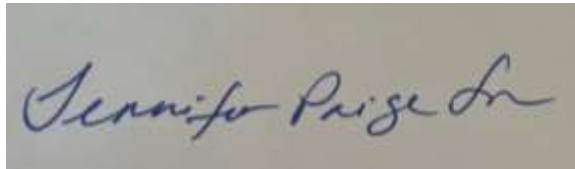
- Further study the parking layout and site design and consider pursuing reductions in required parking to allow for preservation of more of the site's significant protected tree canopy within the site interior. In future submittals, ensure that the DBH of multi-trunk trees is calculated as required in the Tree Protection Ordinance (based on the combined areas of the trunks) to ensure accurate accounting of protected trees.
- Further study the massing of the buildings to create a clear hierarchy, harmonious proportions and a differentiated base, middle and top. Along the long Euclid Avenue and courtyard elevations, explore further articulation of the massing, and possible further separation of buildings, to create distinct building forms to form a streetscape.
- Further study the fenestration to create more balanced solid-to-void proportions, a clear pattern of openings and avoid short, rectangular windows along the street façade.

- Explore ways to create a stronger, more expressive roofline to the buildings.
- Further study the stoops along Euclid Avenue to ensure they are usable spaces and integrated into the design of the building. Consider providing a cover at the entrances to further differentiate the base of the building, create a transitional element from the exterior to the interior and provide shelter from the elements.
- Reconsider the extensive walkways and bridges within and along the main garden to avoid creation of physical and visual barriers to the main garden from the street and adjoining residential units.
- The pedestrian path of travel from the parking structure to the residential units should engage the courtyard rather than bypassing it. The elevators that extend from the parking structure to the main garden area should terminate at the ground level.
- The stairs and elevators within the main garden should be designed as terminating and transitional elements that are architecturally compatible to and of similar quality as the buildings. If these features are removed or relocated, consider additional means of providing terminating and transitional elements within the main garden.
- The long central courtyard should be designed to include discreet areas and appropriately proportioned outdoor rooms that provide a variety of uses and amenities to ensure usability of the project's open spaces. Carefully study the design of the open spaces to include such features as outdoor cooking/eating space, water and/or fire features, site furniture, focal elements, etc. Specialty paving should be used to soften the walkways and gathering spaces.

**Project Scheduling/Sequencing:**

- Concept and Final Design Review by the Design Commission
- Building Permits

Respectfully Submitted,



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David M. Reyes  
Director of Planning & Community Development Department

Prepared by:



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Kevin Johnson  
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



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Leon E. White  
Principal Planner

**Attachments:**

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