



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

DATE: JANUARY 26, 2021
TO: DESIGN COMMISSION
FROM: DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: ADVISORY REVIEW – PROPOSED PLANNED DEVELOPMENT
59 RESIDENTIAL UNITS WITH AT-GRADE ENCLOSED GARAGES
1307 LINCOLN AVENUE

Background:

The purpose of this review, pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.61.030.1.5.b, is to provide “recommendations to the Commission and Council on aesthetic and urban design issues related to architecture, landscaping, site plan, and related aesthetic issues, as well as historic preservation” related to a proposed Planned Development.

This proposal is for the new construction of 59 townhomes at 1307 Lincoln Avenue. The site is on the southwest corner of West Washington Boulevard and Lincoln Avenue and extends to Pepper Street to the south. The project site is currently comprised of four separate parcels totaling 2.43 acres and is split-zoned. The northwestern most parcel is zoned RS-6 (Single-Family Residential) and the remainder of the site is zoned LASP-CL (Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan, Commercial Limited). The applicant is proposing to entitle the project through the Planned Development process, which is available for projects where the lot size is at least two acres in area, and where an applicant proposes, and the City desires to achieve a particular mix of uses, appearance, land use compatibility, or there is special sensitivity to the neighborhood character.

The site is currently developed with one-story commercial/industrial buildings and a few one-story residential units built between 1950 and 1953. There are no known historic resources on the subject site and none of the existing structures are eligible for historic designation. There are no protected trees on the site, although one tree, tree #23, a *Quercus agrifolia* with a 70-foot canopy, straddles the southwest corner of the Washington Boulevard property line, and is proposed to be retained and protected in conjunction with the proposed project. In addition, 20 street trees surround the property. Surrounding land uses include single-family dwellings to the south across Pepper Street and directly adjacent to the west, industrial uses across Lincoln Avenue to the east, and commercial buildings across West Washington Boulevard to the north. Nearby designated historic resources include, the Pasadena Arroyo Parks & Recreation Historic District, the Wotkyns-Richland Landmark District, and the Banbury Oaks Landmark District.

A Preliminary Consultation was conducted for the project on December 11, 2018, and the comments that the Commission provided at that time are in Attachment B. The applicant also

returned to the Design Commission for an informal status update regarding the design evolution of the project in February of 2020. The general design of the project has not significantly changed since then and consists of a collection of attached units spread over multiple buildings with at-grade enclosed garages and several large areas of open space.

The buildings are designed in a restrained contemporary style that references the mid-century garden apartment development found in Pasadena, with flat roofs, stucco cladding, minimal detailing, recessed balconies with glass railings, covered walkways, and extensively landscaped open space areas.

Applicable Design Guidelines:

- Design-Related Goals and Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan
- Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan (LASP) Land Use Standards, Development Standards, and Architectural Guidelines
- Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Districts

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.
- 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.

Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan

LASP 5.6.1.B: Building massing should be established through use of simple orthogonal and block-like forms that are aggregated together to form a larger overall composition. As buildings

get larger, massing should be broken down or modulated to create intersecting orthogonal volumes, offsets of building planes, and vertical and horizontal accents that create massing variety.

LASP 5.6.1.C.1: New buildings and additions should utilize modulation of mass and bulk to reference adjacent building heights and existing legacy massing patterns seen along Lincoln Avenue to create transitions and relationships between new and old and to relate the scale and massing of new structures to the scale and massing of the surrounding neighborhood.

LASP 5.6.1.C.2: Façades should be modulated with elements including but not limited to vertical and horizontal breaks in the building façade plane, step-backs at upper levels, changes in material or color, use of ornament, changes in height, and incorporation of other design elements that create differentiation in the architecture to create visual and architectural interest.

LASP 5.6.1.C.3: The design of windows within building facades should emphasize Individual windows that are setback into walls to create distinct patterns of shade and shadow.

LASP 5.6.1.C.4: Use of high-quality materials like smooth finish stucco, brick, wood, and stone are encouraged.

LASP 5.6.1.D: The design of varied roof and skyline forms such as, but not limited to pitched roofs, variation in roof heights on a single building, high-quality roof materials such as tile and metal, corner towers, and mixing of pitched and flat roofs is encouraged.

LASP 5.5.1.B.4: The wall plane of street-facing façades shall be modulated a minimum of 18 inches perpendicular to the plane at least once every 60 feet, as measured along the property line.

LASP 5.5.1.C.b: The first habitable floor of a residential-only building shall be located no more than four feet above existing grade and no more than two feet below existing grade along a street property line. At least 50 percent of all dwelling units at the first floor shall be located a minimum of 24 inches above this existing grade.

LASP 5.6.1.A Buildings within the Specific Plan area should utilize one of four architectural styles that have traditionally marked the Pasadena design environment: Craftsman, Mediterranean, Monterey, or Main Street Commercial. Additionally, buildings that utilize a contemporary design and style logic are encouraged, but should be designed to be compatible with the scale, proportions, rhythms, and feel of older buildings and streetscapes seen along Lincoln Avenue and within Pasadena, particularly with regard to use of similar street-facing setbacks and orientation of entrances, use of human-scale massing, and provision of details that create visual interest, variety, and modulation. The use of a contemporary architectural style shall not be used to rationalize deviation from the development and design standards and guidelines of this Specific Plan such as but not limited to setbacks, heights, location of parking, orientation of entries, building massing, modulation, and use of arcades and trellises.

LASP 5.6.1.E.2 To enhance the sense of connection between ground floor residential units and adjacent right-of-ways, entries to these units should incorporate stoops, front yards separated from sidewalks by low walls and gates, entry alcoves, awnings, canopies, architectural accents, surrounds, and details.

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

- 1.1: Buildings should be oriented to positively define and frame adjacent public streets, and/or public or common spaces, while promoting the collective form of neighborhoods by:
 - Matching or complementing adjacent building setbacks;
 - Matching or complementing adjacent building heights and massing;
 - Completing the streetscape pattern of the street they front
- 1.2: Parking should be located behind buildings, underground, or at the interior of the block.
- 2.2: New multi-family and mixed-use buildings should be designed with frontages that activate the street by providing direct access to their ground floor dwellings and commercial spaces.
- 2.3: Buildings on corner lots should be designed to acknowledge their particular location. Different frontage types can be used on each of the two street facing facades, the same frontage type can be used on each facade, or a frontage type can wrap around the corner from one facade to the other.
- 6.3: Contexts in transition should receive projects in either a contemporary or traditional style with no limitations, which will help to shape the future character of their surroundings.
- 7.1: Buildings should be scaled to respond to their context by sensitively and positively addressing the scale and massing of their adjacent neighbors. This can be accomplished by:
 - Matching existing building heights or exceeding them by only one story. Additional stories should be modulated by setbacks.
 - Modulating side yard and rear yard volumes to provide as much distance as possible between the facades of a proposed building and existing buildings in order to preserve the privacy of the outdoor spaces of both.
 - Orienting the side yards of proposed buildings to face the side yards of adjacent buildings.
 - Including elements such as porches, galleries, arcades, etc. to relate the scale of facades to those of existing buildings.
- 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.

Recommended Advisory Comments on Proposed PD:

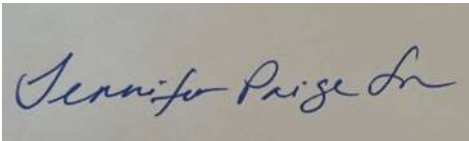
- The site design and architectural style continues to be driven by and heavily emphasizes vehicular access and circulation, which is contrary to all applicable design guidelines.
- The Commission's Preliminary Consultation comments have not yet been fully addressed. Future design review submittals shall clearly respond to, through imagery and narrative responses to all prior design comments, in particular the suggestions to de-couple the parking from the residential units and other site design related comments.

- The architectural design has been refined and is starting to respond to the City's Mid-Century garden apartment legacy; however, the street facing frontages do not successfully engage with the street and should be further studied to create an engaging streetscape that contributes to the pedestrian environment.
- Continue to work to ensure adequate protection of existing street trees at both the root and canopy levels.
- High-quality materials should be utilized in the design, including a high-quality and durable base material that creates texture at the pedestrian level.

Project Scheduling/Sequencing:

- Zoning Entitlements (Planned Development)
- Concept and Final Design Review by the Design Commission
- Building Permits

Respectfully Submitted,



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Attachments:

- A. Applicant submittal package
- B. Preliminary Consultation comments, December 11, 2018