



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: FEBRUARY 9, 2021

TO: DESIGN COMMISSION

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

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW
NEW TWO-TO-THREE STORY, 13-UNIT MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
439 NORTH HILL AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Design 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 Section 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

1. Acknowledge that a tree inventory (Attachment B) indicates that no protected trees are proposed to be removed as part of the proposed project.

Findings for Alternative At-Grade Parking Location

1. Acknowledge that the proposed at-grade parking is located in front of the rear 40 percent of the lot.
2. Acknowledge that, pursuant to Section 17.46.020.K.1, parking at-grade shall be located in the rear 40 percent of the site and that through the Design Review process, at-grade parking may be located beyond the rear 40 percent of the site, but shall not be located within the front yard setback.
3. Deny the request for at-grade parking as part of this Design Review process, as the proposed design does not represent a superior design solution nor does it fully respond to the comments from Preliminary Consultation.

Findings for Concept Design Approval

1. Find that the project, upon implementation of the conditions of approval, will comply with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts;
2. Based on these findings, approve the application for Concept Design Review subject to the following conditions to be further reviewed during Final Design Review:

Conditions

1. The plans submitted for final design review shall include revised detailing that better reflects the Craftsman vocabulary, including the use of more traditional Craftsman style windows and doors (such as the use of single, double hung or casement windows with appropriate trim, paired windows, French doors instead of sliders, Craftsman style entries) on all elevations. The details for other building elements, such as the balcony supports, railings, stairs, eaves, and fencing shall also be more significantly revised to better reflect the Craftsman style.
2. The building volume that contains units 101, 102, and 201-203 shall be revised into a simple cross gabled volume, with the main volume consisting of a street facing gable with the ridge of the roofline running east to west, with a cross gabled volume projecting outwards to the south. The exterior detailing of the east elevation shall then be revised to more appropriately respond to this configuration and result in a composition offset of street facing gables.
3. The entry to unit 201 shall be located on the west elevation, and the street facing sliding doors on the east elevation of the ground floor unit 101 shall be replaced with an appropriate Craftsman style entry.
4. Alternative studies of the unit layouts that achieve a greater degree of engagement between the unit entries and the main garden and reduces the overall number of stairwells to the greatest extent possible shall be provided.

5. The entries to non-livable areas at the ground floor, such as the exercise room, private garages, common garage, and trash room, shall be revised to reflect more traditional detailing. The entry to unit 102 shall also be re-located to the south elevation, so that it is directly accessible from the main garden.
6. The exterior cladding for the upper floors shall be consistent and differentiated from the ground level.
7. If the individual garages on the north elevation are to be retained, the garage doors shall be revised to reflect a more traditional Craftsman style design, and the width of the columns between the individual garage doors shall be increased to appear more substantial and to accommodate an appropriate application of the horizontal exterior cladding.
8. The trash and recycling room shall be restudied so that it can be emptied through the common garage and not the main garden.
9. The opening to the stairs leading up to units 202 and 203 shall be detailed to appear as a unit entryway.
10. The primary main garden stairs with the trellis at the southwest corner of the main garden shall be further studied so that it is better integrated with the overall design and reflects the level of craftsmanship commonly found in Craftsman style architecture.
11. The front porch on the east elevation shall be revised to reflect a higher quality design and detailing that is more true to the Craftsman style, by incorporating more substantial column bases and posts.
12. The submittal package for Final Design Review shall include a detailed exhibit that responds, visually and in writing, to all the conditions of approval of Concept Design Review, including feasibility drawings or alternatives that are requested, and detailed descriptions of why they are not carried forward in favor of the proposed design.
13. Review the drawings for consistency between the floor plans and elevations and ensure that the floor plans are consistent with the elevation drawings provided for this review.
14. The plans shall comply with the conditions provided by the Departments of Public Works and Transportation in Attachment B, to the satisfaction of said departments.
15. The new residential units shall incorporate into their design air filtration systems with a minimum MERV 13 rating. Filter replacement shall be conducted as recommended by the manufacturer and the manufacturer's recommendations and records of filter replacement shall be maintained on-site for inspection by the City.
16. The residential building air intakes shall be installed on the façade furthest away from the 210 Freeway.
17. The project features and actions indicated on the plans demonstrating consistency with the City of Pasadena Climate Action Plan shall be clearly incorporated into and shown on the plans submitted for Final Design Review.

BACKGROUND:

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: High Density Residential
- Zoning: RM-48, HL 36 (Multi-family residential, 0-48 Units per acre, Height Limit Overlay of 36 feet)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts.
- Site: The 11,580 square-foot project site is a rectangular shaped lot located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Hill Avenue and Tyler Alley, between East Villa and Maple Streets. The project site is currently developed with one non-historic, single-family residence built in 1912 by architect/developer Henry C. Deming and a garage built in 1938, all of which are proposed to be demolished. There are also six trees on the site, three of which are proposed to be removed. All the trees to be removed are small fruit trees which are not protected under the Tree Protection Ordinance.
- Surroundings: The surrounding context is in transition. The surrounding properties include single- and multi-family residential buildings ranging between one and three stories in height. The property directly adjacent to the west is zoned RM-48, HL-36 and is developed with a three-story multi-family residential building; the properties to the south are zoned the same and are developed with two two-story multi-family residential buildings with a large carport structure at the front; at the north, is Tyler Alley and garages, open parking, trash bins and fenced backyards serving the RS-6 zoned residential properties fronting on Villa Street. The Holliston Avenue Landmark District, consisting largely of Craftsman style single-family houses, is located two blocks to the northwest of the project site. A Vernacular hipped cottage built in 1904 at 401 N. Chester Ave. (two blocks to the west of the site) was determined to be eligible for city designation as an individual landmark.
- Project Description: This proposal is for the construction of a two-to-three-story, 13-unit apartment building with at grade parking. The building itself features cubic massing with gabled roofs that vary in height from two to three stories and graduates from east to west. The front portion of the building consists of a two-story volume with flats on each floor. The rear portion of the building consists of two-stories of flats atop a surface parking garage.
- Site Design: The building is proposed to be sited around a roughly rectangular shaped open space area that consists of the main garden. This garden is attached to the front yard by a short walkway. The footprint of the proposed building is generally rectangular, with a recessed portion at the southeastern portion facing the southern interior property line to accommodate the proposed main garden area. This configuration of open space is intended to protect and provide visual emphasis of two existing mature trees that are proposed to be retained as part of this project: a Guava tree located at the southeast corner of the property and an Ash tree located near the southern property line, both with a diameter-at-breast-height (DBH) of 30.”

- Architectural Style: Contemporary Craftsman
- Architect: Garo Minassian
- Landscape Architect: None listed

ANALYSIS:

Design Commission Comments from Preliminary Consultation

On January 13, 2020, the Design Commission reviewed an application for Preliminary Consultation for this project. The Commission’s comments from that meeting, with excerpts from the design team’s responses, and staff’s comments, are detailed in the chart below. The design team’s full response are incorporated into the set of plans in Attachment A.

Commissioner Comments, January 13, 2020	Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>1. The project is too utilitarian and institutional looking. The stated “Contemporary Craftsman” style shall be refined to more closely resemble (with respect to site design, building form, roof form, fenestration and entry treatments) either the Craftsman style or an alternative compatible Contemporary concept as defined by the architect following the framework presented in Appendix A1.6 of the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multifamily Residential Districts. It is encouraged to use a more traditional style such as the Craftsman style at this location.</p>	<p>The style has been developed to be more traditional craftsman.</p>	<p>Minor revisions have been made to the overall design to better reflect the Craftsman inspiration, primarily through the use of materials such as Hardie panel vertical siding in a board and batten configuration and Hardie plank lap siding as well as revisions to the building volumes to incorporate of gables.</p> <p>However, the revised design does not represent a well-composed array of Craftsman style detailing or building volumes. Elements of the Craftsman vocabulary appear to have been applied to the various building volumes as a tacked-on façade treatment rather than a thoughtful composition of details. This is particularly apparent on the street facing north elevation and at the garden facing elevations, all of which have several awkward in-plane transitions and inappropriate window and door detailing.</p> <p>Staff recommends a condition of approval that the plans submitted for final design review include revised detailing that better reflect the Craftsman vocabulary, including the use of more traditional craftsman style window typology (such as the use of single, double hung or</p>

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		<p>casement windows with appropriate trim, paired windows, French doors instead of sliders, Craftsman style entryways etc.). The details for other building elements, such as the balcony supports, railings, stairs, eaves, and fencing shall also be more significantly revised to better reflect the Craftsman style.</p> <p>As conditioned, the project will satisfactorily address the comment from Preliminary Consultation.</p>
<p>2. Reconfigure the two Hill Avenue adjacent units so that the stairs are eliminated from the front elevation and both units have prominent and clearly defined ground floor entries that incorporate traditional residential design elements such as stoops, canopies or other covered entryway elements. Study traditional Craftsman or Period Revival style duplexes for successful street facing entry design precedents.</p>	<p>The stairs have been eliminated and a front porch has been added to resemble craftsman houses</p>	<p>The stairs have been eliminated from the street facing elevation. However the floor plans show that the uncovered entry to unit 202 on the second floor of the building volume facing the street is on the south elevation. The entry is accessed via an external open stair from the ground floor on the west elevation that leads to the second floor and wraps around the southwest corner of the building to the actual unit entry at the second level of the south elevation. The east elevation does not accurately depict this configuration.</p> <p>Further, the floor plan, roof plan and exterior materials of the street facing elevation have been revised to introduce additional modulation. However, this modulation is overly complex and, combined with the south facing second level entryway, does not appropriately reflect the appearance of a traditional Craftsman style duplex or large single-family home, as recommended in the comment from Preliminary Consultation.</p> <p>Staff recommends that the building volume that contains units 101, 102, and 201-203 be revised into a simple cross gabled volume, with the main volume consisting of a street facing</p>

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		<p>gable with the ridge of the roofline running east to west, with a cross gabled volume projecting outwards to the south. The exterior detailing should then be revised to more appropriately respond to this configuration with a composition offset of street facing gables, which is a common arrangement found in Craftsman style designs.</p> <p>Staff also recommends a condition of approval that the entry to unit 201 be located on the west elevation, and that the inappropriately detailed street facing sliding doors on the east elevation of the ground floor unit 101 be replaced with an appropriate Craftsman style entry.</p> <p>As conditioned, the project will satisfactorily address the comment from Preliminary Consultation.</p>
<p>3. Restudy the circulation and unit orientation so that the majority of the units are organized around the main garden and have their entrances directly from or facing the main garden area and to eliminate redundant or unnecessary sets of stairs. The main garden space seems like a leftover space disconnected from the units.</p>	<p>The front unit has access from the front porch. Nine of the units gain access from the main garden, directly at the ground floor and through stairs at the upper levels. Only three have access that is not visible from the main garden.</p>	<p>The provided plans appear to show that only units #101 and 102 have direct access from the ground floor and are oriented toward the main garden. All other units would be accessed via one of the multiple sets of stairs which lead from the main garden to the second and third levels (three sets of stairs from the garden level to the second level, and an additional three sets of stairs from the second level to the third level).</p> <p>Two entries on the second level are oriented toward the adjacent property to south, including the entry for unit # 201. Two additional entries on the second level are accessed via an open flight of stairs at the northeastern end of the garden that leads to an enclosed landing that is arranged so that unit entries directly face each other, with no orientation toward the main garden. Three additional unit entries on the second floor are accessed from an open</p>

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		<p>flight of stairs at the western end of the garden and directly face the main garden. Three separate stairways lead from the second level to the third level, and none of the unit entries on the third level are oriented toward the main garden.</p> <p>Although the circulation has been revised, it has not significantly improved, aside from the entries for units 207 and 307 no longer facing the rear of the property. Due to the majority of the units being elevated above the main garden, the disconnect between the units and the main garden still persists. There is more direct access from non-livable spaces, such as the two private garages, the common garage, the exercise room, and the trash room, to the main garden than from unit entries.</p> <p>There appear to be opportunities to reconfigure the unit layouts so that more entries could be oriented toward the main garden. Therefore, staff recommends a condition of approval that the applicant provide alternative studies of the unit layouts that achieve a greater degree of engagement between the unit entries and the main garden and reduces the number of stairwells to the greatest extent possible.</p> <p>Staff also recommends that the entries to the non-livable areas at the ground floor, such as the exercise room, private garages, common garage, and trash room, be revised to reflect more traditional detailing. The entry to unit 102 shall also be re-located to the south elevation so that it is directly accessible from the main garden.</p>

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		As conditioned, the project will satisfactorily address the comment from Preliminary Consultation.
<p>4. Consider revising the massing to create two distinct volumes, a two-story volume and a three-story volume. Consider adjusting the location and configuration of unit 203 above the carport to accomplish this. Consider developing a “village” type-site design by breaking up the building into different volumes and featuring varied and articulated facades and individual openings. Consider more significantly separating the two-story volume closest to the street from the three story rear volumes.</p>	<p>The massing and the building transitions from two story to three story around mid-point of the structure to achieve the density intended for this location.</p>	<p>The applicant has declined, without explanation, to separate the building volumes. However, the design has been revised to feature two more visually distinct volumes, a two-story volume closest to the street and a three story volume at the rear of the property. The distinction between the two volumes is more apparent in this design due to the revisions that were made to the rooflines. The prior design consisted of a collection of intersecting, steeply angled shed roofs, and now is a simplified composition of shallow and moderately pitched gables.</p> <p>The comment from Preliminary Consultation has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>5. Further study and refine the proposed massing to provide for more articulated, less monotonous and repetitive forms, especially for the north elevation, which will be prominently visible. The north elevation should be treated as a primary street-facing elevation, which requires equal design treatment as the main façade and should provide more character to Tyler Alley.</p>	<p>The north side has more articulated massing and traditional craftsmen forms, rooflines and details.</p>	<p>As noted in the analysis of the response to Preliminary Consultation Comment #4 above, the massing has been refined into a simpler, less repetitive, composition of gabled building volumes.</p> <p>The detailing of the north elevation has also been revised to incorporate more authentic Craftsman style materials and architectural features, including window treatments and gable vents.</p> <p>However, the cladding for the westernmost portion of the north elevation is inconsistent with the rest of the design and staff recommends a condition of approval requiring that the exterior cladding for the upper</p>

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		<p>floors be consistent and be differentiated from the ground level.</p> <p>Staff also recommends a condition of approval that the individual private garage doors be revised to reflect a more traditional Craftsman style design, and that the width of the column between the garage doors be increased to appear more substantial and accommodate an appropriate application of the horizontal exterior cladding if these garages are to be retained.</p> <p>As conditioned, the project will satisfactorily address the comment from Preliminary Consultation.</p>
<p>6. Study additional means to articulate the interior courtyard-facing elevations to provide for more engagement, depth and articulation. Explore ways to improve connections and views between a majority of the residential units and the courtyard.</p>	<p>The garden side elevations are more articulated and engaged with nine unit entries.</p>	<p>As noted in the response to Preliminary Consultation Comment #2 above, not many entrances are oriented to, or accessible from, the main garden. However, the south and east elevations facing the garage have been revised to incorporate an adequate amount of articulation.</p> <p>However, the open stairwell leading to units 202 and 203 is not detailed and is treated as an afterthought. The stair at the western end of the main garden is also awkwardly detailed and does not appear to be fully integrated into the overall design.</p> <p>Therefore, staff recommends a condition of approval that the opening to the stairs leading up to units 202 and 203 be detailed to appear as a unit entryway. Staff also recommends a condition of approval that the primary main garden stairs with the trellis at the southwest corner of the main garden be further studied so that it is better integrated with the overall design and reflects the level of craftsmanship commonly</p>

Commissioner Comments, January 13, 2020	Design Team Response	Staff Comments
		<p>found in Craftsman style of architecture. This could be achieved by adding another trellis at the first level that projects south, over the pedestrian entrance from the common garage, or relocating it to the main garden as a freestanding element.</p> <p>As conditioned, the project will satisfactorily address the comment from Preliminary Consultation.</p>
<p>7. Further study the scale and architectural detailing of the parking entrance. Blank, unarticulated walls facing public streets, including alleys, are strongly discouraged. Efforts should be made to avoid blank wall conditions visible from the public right-of-way. Incorporating screened openings or frontage elements with a clear rhythm (niches, planters, green screens) and offsetting building volumes on the north side could provide additional dimensionality and add interest to the proposed façade of the surface parking space. The western portion of the north elevation of the first floor, prominently visible from the public right-of-way, currently presents as an unvaried surface with little façade articulation.</p>	<p>Grilled openings are added to the garage wall to continue the series of window openings at the ground floor.</p>	<p>As discussed in the response to Comment #5 above, the north elevation, which contains the entrances to the common and private parking garages, has been revised at the ground floor facing Tyler Alley. This façade is modulated horizontally and vertically, and now includes pairs of grilled openings on either side of the common garage entrance.</p> <p>As noted previously, staff recommended several conditions of approval to further refine the detailing of this elevation so that it more appropriately reinforces the chosen architectural style.</p> <p>As conditioned, the project will satisfactorily address the comment from Preliminary Consultation.</p>

Commissioner Comments, January 13, 2020	Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>8. Ensure that the communal open spaces for the project include amenities that will allow for their active use by the residents of the project, such as benches or a playground area.</p>	<p>Sitting areas with benches at the garden and the fountain areas enhance the garden.</p>	<p>The main garden is minimally programmed with a simple rectilinear fountain, and benches. The preliminary conceptual landscape plans do not include product specifications or details for these amenities as they are not typically reviewed at this stage of the review process. Greater detail will be required as part of the Final Design Review submittal and staff will be assessing the appropriateness of these features at that time. Further, utilitarian and common site features, such as mail boxes, will also be required to be depicted in the plans submitted for Final Design Review.</p> <p>However, staff recommends a condition of approval that the trash and recycling room be restudied so that it can be emptied through the common garage and not the main garden.</p>
<p>9. Explore ways to take advantage of retaining the existing home, which while it may not be individually eligible for designation has value and contributes in a positive way to the context.</p>	<p>The front house occupies a major portion of the site making the development infeasible.</p>	<p>In response to the Commission's comment from Preliminary Consultation, the applicant has stated that retention of the home makes the development infeasible, but has failed to provide any studies to support this statement or to otherwise demonstrate that any effort was made to explore ways of incorporating the existing house through partial retention, relocation, or even replication of certain design elements, into the design.</p> <p>However, as the existing house is not a designated or eligible historic resource, the applicant cannot be compelled to retain it.</p> <p>Therefore, the applicant's response addresses the comment from Preliminary Consultation.</p>

Programming and Circulation

The site design is arranged around a roughly “L” shaped open space area connecting the front yard and the main garden. The footprint of the proposed building is generally rectangular, with a recessed portion at the southern interior property line to accommodate the proposed rectangular shaped main garden area. This open space is intended to provide visual emphasis of two existing mature trees that are proposed to be preserved as part of this project: a Guava tree located at the southeast corner of the property and an Ash tree located near the southern property line, both with a diameter-at-breast-height (DBH) of 30”. Vehicular access to the majority of the at-grade parking is in an enclosed garage accessed from Tyler Alley at the northwest corner of the site. Two additional private enclosed two-car garages are also proposed off of Tyler Alley. Access to the garden would be through an opening from the primary enclosed garage at the northwest corner of the garden, while individual man-doors would provide access to the main garden from the separate private garages. Pedestrian access to the site would be from Hill Avenue, and residents be required to walk through the main garden in order to access the unit entries at the ground floor or one of the multiple stairs that lead to unit entries on the upper floor.

It is apparent that the programming of the building and circulation is intended to maximize the number of units, and maintain a consistent floor plan as well as the proposed at-grade parking. While locating the parking below grade would be significant benefit to the overall site design, building massing, and circulation, and would allow more units to have more direct ground floor access to the main garden, below grade parking it is not required. However, the site programming and circulation may be revised so that the units better integrate with the main garden. There is more direct access from non-livable spaces, such as the two private garages, the common garage, the exercise room, and the trash room, to the main garden than from unit entries. Further, it is unclear how the trash and recycling will be managed, as the door to the room is only accessible from the main garden, with no apparent access through the common garage for pick up.

As detailed in the table above, although minor revisions to the programming and circulation have been made, staff recommends a series of conditions of approval to require further revisions so that the circulation and unit layouts are appropriate and consistent with the applicable design guidelines and RM City of Gardens development standards.

Parking Location

Pursuant to Section 17.46.020.K.1, parking at grade shall be located in the rear 40 percent of the site. Through the Design Review process, at grade parking may be located beyond the rear 40 percent of the site but shall not be located within the front yard setback. Staff of the zoning section reviewed the proposed plans for consistency with the applicable development standards and noted that the proposed at-grade parking is not contained to entirely to the rear 40 percent of the site and that Design Review approval is necessary for this configuration. If the location is not approved through the Design Review process, the parking, and any other associated aspects of the design tied to the provision of the parking, shall be revised to comply with the applicable requirements.

Typically a request to allow parking in the front of the rear 40 percent of the site is granted through the Design Review process upon demonstration of a superior design that appropriately

integrates the parking into the overall design, clearly addresses the comments from Preliminary Consultation, and follows all of the applicable design guidelines. As noted in the table above, the proposed design fails to respond, without significant conditions of approval, to the comments from Preliminary Consultation and cannot be described as a superior design. Therefore, staff recommends that the Commission deny the request to allow parking in front of the rear 40 percent of the site. If the applicant is required to revise the at-grade parking to comply with the development standards, and does not want to provide subterranean parking, the design may need to be revised to reduce the number of units and/or the sizes of units, which may provide for opportunities to more effectively respond to the comments from Preliminary Consultation.

Orientation

The proposed new building has windows arranged in a clear pattern on all sides and some of the proposed balconies and window openings are arranged so that they are oriented toward the Hill Avenue and the main garden. However, as noted above, several of the units have entry ways that face the south and do not directly overlook the main garden, or are accessed by a narrow enclosed stairwell.

Height, Massing and Modulation

The height limit at this location is 36', measured from the lowest point of existing grade. In general, the proposed height is compatible with existing development surrounding the site, which ranges from one to three-stories, including a three-story apartment building at the rear of the property to the west. The elevation drawings depict the building masses and height as being modulated by the creation of articulated sub-volumes that transition from three to two stories from west to east; however, the floor plans and elevation appear to depict finer-grained transition in the roofline, and in some places, overly complex modulation in the roofline and wall planes that is not explained in the building sections or on the floor plans. In addition, there are minor inconsistencies on the floor plan and elevations, particularly with respect to the openings and balcony locations. For example, on the third floor there appears to be a conflict between unit entries noted in the plans and elevations, as on the south elevation units #305 and #304 are shown with balconies that are not reflected on the floor plans.

Overall, the modulation depicted in the elevation drawings is appropriate and responsive to the design guidelines and previous comments from the Commission. However, as noted in the table above, staff recommended several conditions of approval so that the execution of the height and massing is further refined and simplified. Staff also recommends a condition of approval requiring a review of consistency between the floor plans and elevations, ensuring that the floor plans are modified where necessary to be consistent with the conceptual elevations provided.

Architectural Style and Detailing

The chosen architectural style is described as "Contemporary Craftsman." The execution of this chosen architectural style has been significantly revised from the imagery presented at Preliminary Consultation to better reflect the traditional components of the Craftsman style. However, significant revisions to the design details are necessary. As noted in the table above, staff finds that, in general, the concept of the proposed changes do not fully address the Preliminary Consultation comments or comply with the applicable design guidelines and a

series of conditions of approval have been recommended in the table above to ensure that the overall design more appropriate reinforces the chosen Craftsman influenced architectural style.

Pasadena Building Elements/Craftsmanship Features

Section 17.22.080. E of the Pasadena Municipal code requires new multi-family developments subject to the RM City of Gardens development standards to feature one Craftsmanship and two Building Elements. Craftsmanship elements are described as a feature such as iron grates, tile fountains, cast terra cotta, wood work, stenciled ornament or other elements as approved by the Design Review authority. Building Elements are described as upper floor loggias, roofed balconies supported by brackets or by columns at the ground floor, exterior wooden or masonry stairs with closed risers, or tile or masonry fountain, or other elements as approved by the Design Review authority.

The proposed project includes a large freestanding wooden trellis over a stairwell in the main garden, which the applicant has indicated on the landscape plan as a Craftsmanship Element. However, this trellis is poorly integrated into the design and appears to be looming awkwardly over the main garden. If it is intended to fulfil the Craftsmanship Element, as previously noted above, staff recommends a condition of approval that the trellis be revised to be better integrated into the design, or relocated to the ground level as a freestanding element and combined with one of the proposed benches. The simple rectilinear fountain in the main garden does not appear to be tile detailed or of a custom design, and as such would not satisfy the Craftsmanship Element. The plans do not appear to identify any specific feature as a Building Element. In order to fulfil the Building Element, requirement, staff recommends a condition of approval that the front porch on the east elevation be revised to reflect a higher quality design and detailing that is more true to the Craftsman style, by incorporating more substantial column bases and posts. This would improve the most publicly visible street facing elevation and satisfy one of the Building Element requirements. As the project also includes an extensive number of balconies, they are simply detailed and staff recommends another condition of approval that the balcony detailing be revised to include appropriate decorative support brackets, railings, and roofs that are well integrated into the design, to the extent possible allowed by code.

Compatibility

The proposed new building is compatible with its immediate surroundings, particularly the larger higher density multi-family building to the rear of the property, in terms of height, massing, setbacks and architectural design. The revised design submitted for this review relates better to the existing Craftsman and Period Revival character of the Hill Avenue context.

Conceptual Landscape Design

The preliminary conceptual landscape plans show a rectangular shaped main garden at the southern edge of the site as well as a landscaped front yard. Two protected mature trees are proposed to be retained as part of the development, a 30" Guava in the front yard setback area and a 30" Ash in the main garden straddling the southern property line. Since the project is not proposing any subterranean parking and the proposed buildings are outside of the protected trees driplines, it is likely that these trees will survive the construction process. In addition, the City's standard tree protection measure will apply, further ensuring that the trees will be protected during construction and increasing their likelihood of survival.

Within the main garden, large permeable pavers create a walkway that runs the length of the garden from east to west and lead to the ground floor other amenities including a rectilinear fountain at the north end of the garden and several benches. Specifications for the fountain and benches are not included as part of this review, as these details are typically reviewed in detail during Final Design Review. Overall, the proposed garden has a simple shape and design that complies with the RM City of Gardens development standards. Although it is not significantly programmed to promote the active use of this space, it does provide several areas for quiet reflection and passive use.

COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS:

Staff routed the project for comment to several City Departments, including the Public Works, Transportation, Fire and Housing Departments, as well as other divisions of the Planning & Community Development Department, such as the Building, Current Planning and Cultural Affairs Divisions. The Department of Transportation and Public Works Departments provided standard comments, which are included in Attachment B. Current Planning staff identified deviations from the parking requirements, as noted above. Cultural Affairs staff indicated that the project is not subject to the public art requirement.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The project will be constructed on a previously developed site in an urbanized area and is consistent with the General Plan, and Zoning designations that apply to the property. Staff engaged Impact Sciences, an environmental consulting firm, to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the project and determine whether it would meet the required findings for a Categorical Exemption under class 32, “infill development projects.” A project may qualify for a Class 32 Categorical Exemption if the following are applicable: (a) the project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations; (b) the proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses; (c) the project site has no value, as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species; (d) approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality; (e) the site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services. Based on the air quality and noise/vibration technical studies prepared (Attachments C and D), the project would not have the potential to result in significant impacts related to air quality, traffic, noise, water quality or cultural resources. The project is also proposed on a previously disturbed site less than five acres in size in an urbanized area and is consistent the General Plan land use designation and zoning designation. Therefore, staff recommends that the Commission determine that the project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15332.

Climate Action Plan Consistency

The project is also subject to the City of Pasadena’s Climate Action Plan, which is a qualified greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction plan developed in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15183.5. The project is required to demonstrate that the anticipated Green House Gas (GHG) emissions generated by this project will be below the accepted thresholds established for the City. The City has developed a tool, the Climate Action Plan Consistency Checklist, which applicants can use to demonstrate consistency with Pasadena’s Climate Action Plan (CAP). Projects that meet the requirements

of this Checklist will be deemed consistent with Pasadena's CAP and will be found to have a less than significant contribution to cumulative GHG (i.e., the project's incremental contribution to cumulative GHG effects is not cumulatively considerable), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15064(h)(3), 15130(d), and 15183(b). Projects that do not meet the requirements in this Checklist will be deemed inconsistent with Pasadena's CAP and must prepare a project-specific analysis of GHG emissions, including quantification of existing and projected GHG emissions and incorporation of the measures in this Checklist to the extent feasible.

The CAP Checklist provides three options for applicants to use to demonstrate compliance. The applicant has selected Option A, Sustainable Development Actions. The applicant has indicated, on the provided checklist (Attachment E), specific features or actions that will be incorporated into the project that demonstrate that the project contributes its fair share to the City's cumulative GHG reduction goals and the project is therefore deemed consistent with the CAP. To ensure that the project continues to incorporate these features, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring that the features be clearly incorporated into and shown on the plans submitted for Final Design Review.

HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT:

Staff also engaged Impact Sciences to prepare a Health Risk Assessment (Attachment F) to identify and disclose the potential health risks to the future residents of the project and identify measures to lower those risks. The report concludes that the most effective measure to lower risks to an acceptable level (as identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency) would be installation of a high efficiency air filtration system (MERV 13 rating) along with compliance with the manufacturer's recommended schedule for replacing filters in the system. It would also be recommended that residents be educated about the potential health risks of opening windows, as this would negate the effectiveness of the filtration system. Staff has recommended a condition of approval to ensure that these measures are implemented in the project. It should also be noted that the assessment is conservative, as it assumes 30 years of continuous exposure to freeway emissions, which is not likely for the proposed rental apartments.

CONCLUSION:

As conditioned the project design will satisfactorily address the comments provided during Preliminary Consultation and will be consistent with the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial & Multi-Family Residential Districts. Staff recommends approval of the application for Concept Design Review for the project with conditions to further refine the design to reinforce the chosen architectural style and improve circulation within the site and ensure compliance with conditions from other departments.

Respectfully Submitted,



For
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Attachments:

- A. Current plans & elevations, project narrative
- B. Recommended conditions from the Departments of Public Works and Transportation
- C. Air Quality Technical Study
- D. Noise/Vibration Technical Study
- E. CAP Checklist
- F. Health Risk Assessment