



**PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT**

**DATE:** MARCH 9, 2021  
**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION  
**FROM:** DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
**SUBJECT:** PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION - NEW CONSTRUCTION OF A THREE-STORY MIXED-USE PROJECT WITH 2,200 SQUARE FEET OF COMMERCIAL FLEX SPACE AND 70 SUPPORTIVE HOUSING RESIDENTIAL UNITS  
710 NORTH FAIR OAKS AVENUE

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**Project Description:**

This proposal is for the demolition of all existing non-historic structures and the new construction of a new 109,006 square-foot, three-story mixed use building. The building would contain 70 supportive housing residential units and approximately 2,200 square feet of commercial flex space. The project site (710, 722, 730, 738 N. Fair Oaks Avenue & 19, 25 E. Orange Grove Boulevard) is located in the Fair Oaks Orange Grove Specific Plan, specifically, within the Limited Commercial District 3, Sub-district "a", or the FGSP-C-3a zoning district. This sub-district is intended to: build on the historical function of this area as a commercial and neighborhood center; create a pedestrian-oriented and transit-oriented district to support businesses and residential uses in the area; provide for commercial and mixed-use development along Fair Oaks Avenue to maintain compact urban character; and provide for commercial retail and office, residential, and mixed-use development at the intersection of Fair Oaks Avenue and Orange Grove Boulevard and, along Orange Grove Boulevard. Although there are trees on and around the site, a tree inventory was not provided with the application and staff will review if any are protected under the tree protection ordinance at Concept Design Review.

The proposed site design arranges the connected three-story buildings in a "U" shaped configuration around a central private courtyard with a smaller publicly accessible recessed plaza facing Orange Grove Blvd. This plaza separates the ground floor commercial space from ground floor residential space facing South Orange Grove Blvd. Ground floor uses, preliminarily identified as a multi-purpose room, community room, and commercial flex space, are proposed behind a continuous storefront that wraps the corner from South Orange Grove Blvd to North Fair Oaks Avenue. The project will utilize an existing driveway along North Fair Oaks Avenue to access proposed surface parking that is located behind the northwest portion of the building. The existing driveway is currently used by Heritage Square Senior Apartments, a three-story companion building to the north. The project site is diagonally across from a one-story shopping center that includes amenities, such as a groceries, restaurants, and banking. To the north is the three-story Heritage Square North Senior Apartments development. To the south is a double height commercial building (CVS) with surface parking. To the east is a two story-mixed

use development with retail on the ground and residential above. Directly to the west is a non-descript one-story multi-tenant commercial building with surface parking.

The buildings are designed in a generally contemporary style that is intended to complement the Heritage Square North development. The design features a ground floor that is detailed as contemporary main street commercial storefronts with large areas of glazing including transom windows. The ground floor commercial area is separated from the upper floors by a large horizontal belt course, and the upper residential floors are characterized by flat roofs, repeating projecting and recessed building volumes, balconies and open circulation corridors, including east/west oriented bridges that span over the north/south ends of the central courtyard. The southwest corner of the building faces the intersection, and recognizes this by incorporating a ground floor chamfered corner, with residential above, and a large covered common open space at the third floor.

**Applicable Design Guidelines:**

- Design-Related Goals and Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan
- Design Guidelines in the Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan
- Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Districts

**Previous/Existing Entitlements:**

- None

**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.

***Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan:***

Section 5.8: Private Realm Design Guidelines:

- 5.8.1 Buildings should be oriented toward the major street to strengthen the street edge and to promote and interesting pedestrian environment. In developing sites at the Fair Oaks/Orange Grove intersection, special consideration should be given to building design. The intersection is a key focal point, and building design should express the importance of the location.
- 5.8.2 Architectural Character
  - All projects, both smaller infill projects and large projects should be designed to be compatible with the scale, materials and architectural character of the block.
  - Larger projects that involve lot consolidation or redevelopment of an entire block should support the creation of a “village” atmosphere by featuring varied and articulated facades, individual openings to stores and offices, and appropriately scaled signs.
  - To avoid large blocky facades, buildings should be articulated in form using techniques such as step-back of second and upper floors, stepped terraces, changes in plane, and articulated roof lines. Building facades should be articulated with appropriate details such as architectural features typical of older buildings in the area.

- Buildings on corner lots should incorporate architectural elements which emphasize the corner, such as a curved or angled façade, and entrance off the corner, a tower element or other treatment.

5.8.7 Retail buildings should provide windows at street level with a majority of the building wall, fronting the street, having windows with vision glass (glass through which people can see in both directions, as opposed to mirror or deeply tinted glazing). As a guideline, approximately 60 percent of the building façade should provide visual display. The window area requirement may include display windows to reinforce street activity. (No merchandise storage should be allowed in the storefront windows.)

5.9.1 New Residential Development. In the development of new residential structures, careful consideration should be given to predominant architectural styles and features as well as materials, textures and colors present in the neighborhood.

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

- 2.2 Activating the street. 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.

**Potential Design Issues:**

- The location of the site at the northeast corner of the major intersection of Fair Oaks Avenue and Orange Grove Boulevard is identified as a key focal point in the Specific Plan area. Consider appropriately increasing the street facing setbacks to accommodate additional outdoor commercial amenities facing North Fair Oaks Avenue.
- Consider buffering the ground floor residential spaces adjacent to the alleyway with additional well-lit landscaping or other means to create a more comfortable living experience.
- The massing should continue to be refined to promote a village like atmosphere, engage the corner and intersection, further articulate the facades, provide for more visual interest and convey a greater sense of quality and permanence. This may be achieved with more significant setbacks and upper floor step backs, the incorporation of deeply recessed punched windows or the additional use of projecting or recessed balconies protected by overhead shade covers, such as awnings. Explore a lighter appearing arbor at the third floor of the southwest corner of the building.
- Consider enhancing the village atmosphere by omitting the open circulation corridors at the second and third floors of the south elevation, and replacing the enclosed hallway at the south elevation and bridges that connect the two primary building volumes with a simple gate with an open design, so that the passageway is open to the sky and allows greater visibility from the public realm into the central courtyard. Consider also physically separating the northeastern building volume at the lobby and elevator shaft, from the rest of the building. Separating the building volumes and introducing transparent fencing will also contribute to a village like feeling.

- Consider more significantly distinguishing the appearance of the non-residential ground floor uses from the residential space above through the use of upper floor step backs, materials, colors and other architectural features. Special care should also be taken to emphasize those aspects of the design that contribute to or will further enhance the pedestrian experience.
- The various entries to the development, including the secondary residential lobby facing Fair Oaks Avenue should be more significantly differentiated from the other adjacent storefronts, either by a more distinct recess, or by accentuating it with surface details, canopies, or special lighting features.
- Due to the location and solar orientation of the development, the use of awnings and outdoor seating should also be strongly considered as an integral part of the design and incorporated where appropriate
- Landscaping will play a critical role in ensuring a successful design at this key focal point location. The specific plan encourages the use of shade giving-street trees, pedestrian scaled lighting, and underground utilities. Although utilities are typically considered during the later stages in the Design Review process, special consideration should be taken early on in the development process to ensure the utilities can be sited and screened so that they are not significantly visible from the public right-of-way. All parking areas should be screened with landscaping and fences, if proposed, should be integrated with the landscaping plan to soften their appearance.

**Project Scheduling/Sequencing:**

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

Respectfully Submitted,



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Prepared by:



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Reviewed by:



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Leon E. White  
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**Attachments:**

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