



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: MARCH 9, 2021

TO: DESIGN COMMISSION

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

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW
NEW SIX-STORY, 181-UNIT SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
274-282 NORTH OAKLAND AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

Environmental Determination

1. Find that the proposed project is exempt from environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code Section 21155.4). This exemption applies to residential, employment center, and mixed-use development projects within a transit priority area that are consistent with a specific plan; consistent with the general use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies of the applicable sustainable communities strategy; and that meet other specified criteria in the Public Resources Code.

Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance

1. Acknowledge that a tree inventory (Attachment B) identifies removal of four protected mature trees (Trees #3, 5, 6, 10).
2. Find that the removal of the four protected tree meets finding #4 of the Tree Protection Ordinance (PMC Section 8.52.075.A): *"There is a substantial hardship to the property owner in the enjoyment and use of the real property if the injury or removal of the private tree is not permitted;"* and, therefore,
3. Approve the removal of protected trees Nos. 3, 5, 6, and 10.

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 Private Realm Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan; and
2. Based on these findings, approve the application for Concept Design Review subject to the following conditions which shall be further reviewed during Final Design Review:

Conditions

1. The solid vertical walls on the north and south elevations shall be treated with alternative architectural treatments, aside from the proposed smooth stucco and pattern of reveals, to enliven their appearance and soften their harsh solid appearance.
2. The “front porch” concept and transitional space between the entry and the sidewalk shall continue to be refined and the entry doors shall be expanded from a single main door to a double door. The landscape features, including the fountain, walkway width, landscaping and exterior lighting shall also be revised to work more effectively with the second-floor patio and signage to create a building entrance that is a prominent and engaging visual connection to the public realm.
3. Clear glazing shall be used for the ground floor storefronts.
4. Enlarged details and views of the driveway portal shall be incorporated into the plans submitted for Final Design Review to ensure the portal is appropriately integrated into the overall design.
5. Alternative design and materials studies for the balcony railings shall be provided in the submittal package for Final Design Review.
6. The programming of all communal open space areas shall be refined to incorporate more active and coordinated programming, and in the case of the rooftop open space, appropriate code compliant sun shading devices.
7. An exhibit demonstrating compliance with the maximum appurtenance height and coverage development standards shall be included in the drawings submitted for Final Design Review.
8. Additional landscaping (such as vines espaliered on a decorative cabling system permanently affixed to the solid wall surfaces) shall be incorporated into the large solid walls at the patio facing the street at the second level street facing patio to provide visual relief to this area.
9. Comply with the conditions provided by the Departments of Public Works and Transportation as reflected in Attachment C, to the satisfaction of said departments.
10. Air filtration systems with a minimum MERV 13 rating shall be incorporated into the design.

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. New residents shall also be provided with educational materials outlining the health risks of long-term exposure to freeway emissions and recommending against opening windows and prolonged use of balconies along the building perimeter. Educational materials shall be submitted to staff for review and approval prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for the new buildings and new tenants shall be required to sign a document indicating receipt of the materials, copies of which shall also be maintained on-site for future City inspection.

BACKGROUND:

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: Medium Mixed Use (0 – 2.25 FAR, 0-87 du/ac)
- Zoning: CD-3 (Central District Specific Plan, District 3)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Private Realm Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan.
- Site: The subject site is located on the east side of North Oakland Avenue, between Corson Street and Walnut Avenue, and consists of two parcels totaling 21,128 square feet in size. The site is currently developed with four residential units and associated garage structures that were constructed between 1902 and 1947, all of which are proposed to be demolished. The existing structures have been evaluated for historic significance and determined to be ineligible for listing as individual resources. There are also 12 trees on the site, all of which are proposed to be removed. Four of the trees to be removed are protected under the Tree Protection Ordinance (Trees #3, 5, 6, 10 of the Tree Inventory form).
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties consist primarily of vernacular stucco-clad multi-family residential buildings that range between two and five stories in height over at-grade parking. A surface parking lot is located to the south, large two-story apartment complexes are located to the north and west, and a five-story multi-family residential development is located to the east of the subject property. The 210 Foothill Freeway is also to the north. Nearby designated historic resources include the Ford Place Historic District to the south, the Pasadena Civic Center Historic District to the southwest of the site, and the Pasadena Playhouse Historic District to the southeast. Located two blocks to the east of the site, at 267 North El Molino Avenue, is the Lukens House (1896), which is individually designated on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Project Description: This proposal is for the new construction of a six-story, 181-unit Single Room Occupancy (SRO) building, with at grade parking.
- Site Design: The proposed generally rectangular building occupies nearly the entirety of the site. A modest colonnade/forecourt with prominent columns and programmed outdoor space lead to storefronts consisting of full height glazing. The ground level base consists of a centrally located lobby entry, recreation room, a manager's unit/office, mechanical uses,

and all of the proposed parking area, with vehicular access from Oakland Avenue at the south of the site. Above the ground floor base, the building is conceptually separated into three sections. The street facing façade of the first section, above the ground floor base, is composed of two symmetrical volumes separated by a courtyard area open to the sky that is approximately 11 feet wide by 30 feet deep.

- Architectural Style: Contemporary
- Developer: Bridge Advisors, LLC
- Architects: Stanley Saitowitz/Natoma Architects
- Landscape Architect: Virditas Design Landscape Architecture

ANALYSIS:

Design Commission Comments from Preliminary Consultation

On May 12, 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 analysis, are detailed in the chart below. The design team’s full responses are incorporated into the set of plans in Attachment A.

Commissioner Comments, February 14, 2017	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>1. Future submittals should clearly explain the relationship between the proposed extruded rectangular mass of the proposal with the surrounding context. The submittal should also clearly explain how the chosen massing is consistent with the applicable design guidelines and code requirement for Height Averaging.</p>	<p>The Chang Commons building immediately east of (behind) the subject property is the same height and massing as the subject property. Other newer tall buildings with equivalent massing nearby include both recently completed (Theo at SWC of El Molino and Corson) and planned (SEC Los Robles & Corson). Both are within 1 to 2 blocks of the subject property.</p> <p>The built environment in the immediate block that the property is located on (the 200 Block of N. Oakland Ave.) consists of 60’s era 2 story apartment buildings. The existing apartment buildings on Oakland Avenue both adjacent to the subject property and across the street are dated and over time they will be redeveloped into larger-scale multi-family buildings that fit the design guidelines of the CD-3 Zoning District and General Plan</p>	<p>The overall height of the building has been reduced by one story and the applicant has clearly explained how this reduced height is more contextually compatible with other nearby similarly scaled buildings, as well as with anticipated future development in the immediate context.</p> <p>Although the massing of the building is still blocky, the façade is modulated by recessed balconies and the street facing façade is bisected into two distinct volumes, which does provide some visual relief from an otherwise rigid building form. The applicant has indicated that this level of articulation is appropriate with respect to the surrounding context. However</p>

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	<p>Designation. The general plan and Central District Specific Plan have targeted this area for 60' tall, high density (2.25 FAR) transit oriented residential development. The subject property is consistent with the objective of the General Plan and the Central District Specific Plan (CDSP) which, by definition, makes it taller than the older existing immediate surrounding context on Oakland Ave.</p>	<p>additional efforts can be made to add texture and visual interest to soften the harsh solid vertical walls on the north and south elevations, as well as on the interior vertical walls flanking the street facing second story common patio. This could be achieved via the introduction of a rain screen cladding system with dynamic textures and colors, or variations in stucco textures. Therefore, staff recommends a condition of approval that the solid vertical walls be treated with alternative architectural treatments, aside from the proposed smooth stucco and pattern of reveals, to enliven their appearance and soften their harsh solid appearance.</p> <p>Upon implementation of the proposed condition of approval the comment from Preliminary Consultation will be satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>2. The internally focused design lacks a meaningful ground floor connection to the public realm, the simple ground floor detailing appears to be contradictory to the applicable goals, policies and guidelines and, the ground floor does not contribute to the pedestrian environment. As proposed, the ground floor consists of ancillary uses, parking, and circulation which results in the location of the courtyard being</p>	<p>Response: The spacious 1800 SF ground floor lobby area and the exterior "Front Porch" create a meaningful connection to the public realm and contribute to the pedestrian environment. The lobby area includes work stations, relaxing areas, Big Screen TVs, mini kitchen and coffee bar. The ground floor consists of an activated front lobby and exterior "front porch" that is visible to the street and the public realm. The courtyard is intended to be a private "back yard" where the residents can access the outdoors with privacy and security. The 2nd Floor courtyard extends out throughout the building opening to the front of the building providing a</p>	<p>The applicant has satisfactorily addressed the decision making related to the location of the parking at the ground floor, behind the residential lobby and other ancillary uses. The interior programming for the lobby does not appear to be significantly visible from the public realm. Although the concept of a "front porch" is appropriate as a strategy to develop a meaningful transition between the private to the pedestrian environment, this concept is not clearly depicted in the plans for evaluation.</p>

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<p>elevated and obscurely (visually from the street) located within the project. Consider providing subterranean or semi-subterranean parking and relocating the courtyard to the ground floor, rather than elevating it above the street to more effectively respond to the requirements for height averaging and the pedestrian oriented design guidelines.</p>	<p>visual connection to the public realm.</p> <p>The expansive ground floor area next to the reception desk functions as a communal living room amenity. The transparency of this area in relation to the front “porch” zone creates a meaningful connection to the pedestrian environment.</p> <p>Subterranean parking is not necessary, practical nor required. Subterranean parking costs approximately \$70,000 per space (and higher depending upon the efficiency of the site and parking area). This would result in over \$1,750,000 of added cost. 100% of the units in the project will be affordable. The project cannot bear that added expense and remain affordable to the residents. The parking is in the rear of the building and is not visible from the street.</p> <p>Changes: The plans no longer utilize height averaging. The parking area is located at-grade with the ground floor level. The floor of the ground level is located approximately 1'-6" below sidewalk level, including the parking area. The floor of the second level is approximately 11' above sidewalk level.</p>	<p>Staff recommends that the “front porch” concept and transitional space between the entry and the sidewalk continue to be refined and that the entry doors be expanded from a single man door to a double door and the landscape features, including the fountain, walkway width, landscaping and exterior lighting be revised to work more effectively with the second-floor patio and signage to create a building entrance that is a prominent and engaging visual connection to the public realm.</p> <p>Upon implementation of the proposed condition of approval, the comment from Preliminary Consultation will be satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>3. The Central District Design Guidelines encourage a ground floor street elevation that is transparent, has multiple pedestrian entrances that activate the street and are attractive. The proposed courtyard is located above the ground floor and at the center of the site such</p>	<p>Response: The ground floor street elevation is transparent and attractive. A second pedestrian entrance has been added that further activates the street. The large communal “living room” at the ground floor provides a significant connection to the public realm. The courtyard is intended to be a private “back yard” that the residents can use with privacy and security. If the elevator were moved to the rear of the courtyard, it would</p>	<p>The applicant has adequately explained the ground floor programming and circulation. As addressed in the comment above, the submitted plans do not clearly depict the ground floor street facing façade, the entry sequence and ground floor storefronts require further resolution to ensure the pedestrian entrance is an attractive contribution to the streetscape and promotes and</p>

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<p>that there is no meaningful relationship between this proposed space and the public realm. To better integrate the inward-facing central courtyard with the public realm, a better view corridor should be provided from the public realm into the proposed courtyard. Consider introducing a more significant break in the mass at the front elevation that is open all the way through to the central courtyard. Other ways to improve this connection may include relocating the central vertical circulation shaft toward the eastern half of the courtyard and shifting the fitness center to be above the laundry room so that the central courtyard is more prominent and the volume of the elevator penthouse is at the rear of the site. Consider further increasing the height of mass at the rear of the site at level seven in exchange for widening the separation of the street-facing building volumes.</p>	<p>make circulation for the residents more difficult. The logic for the fitness center location on the 2nd floor is so the space can expand in good weather onto the 2nd floor courtyard into an indoor/outdoor fitness use. If the fitness center is stacked on top of the laundry, this flexibility for expansion space is lost.</p> <p>Changes: An increase in the ground floor common area space from 1,360 SF to 1790 SF. On the ground floor, the entire street frontage other than the driveway is active public use, connected to the setback garden by a porch and large sliding glass doors. On the second floor, sliding glass doors open the laundry and fitness rooms to create continuity with the courtyard. These sliding doors create an indoor/outdoor effect that is easily accessible. More detail is shown on the second-floor common space to identify its different uses. This second-floor front common space provides seating and creates a connection between the courtyard and public street frontage. In the courtyard, landscape elements including a planters and seating accentuate the courtyard's openness. Community elements have been added such as an amphitheater and projection screen for resident use. Galleries on the courtyard levels above overlook the space.</p>	<p>enhances an active pedestrian environment. This is a critical element of the design as, due to the reduced parking, most residents will be walking to and from the site on a regular basis.</p> <p>In addition to the recommended condition of approval above, staff also recommends a condition of approval to require clear glazing for the ground floor storefronts.</p> <p>Upon implementation of the proposed condition of approval, the comment from Preliminary Consultation will be satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>4. The driveway entrance is a prominent feature of the street-facing elevation. Ensure that the details for queueing, access control, gate design,</p>	<p>Response: The driveway entrance is set back 20' from the street providing adequate queuing area. The details for queuing, access control, gate design, illumination and interior finishes of the entry</p>	<p>Additional details have been provided for the driveway entrance and the comment from Preliminary Consultation has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>

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illumination and interior finishes of the entry portal are appropriately integrated into the overall design.	portal will be appropriately integrated into the overall design. Changes: Revised drawings indicate more details regarding driveway, garage door and access control, as well as materials and design for the entry portal.	However, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring enlarged details and views of the driveway be incorporated into the plans submitted for Final Design Review to ensure the portal is appropriately integrated into the overall design.
5. The repetitious architectural features should be restudied to create a more visually dynamic exterior wall plane. The Central District Design Guidelines recommend to articulate residential building facades to unify a building's appearance, and add interest, scale, and three-dimensional quality; articulation may be provided through periodic changes in wall plane, building material and/or color, the introduction of building fenestration, or other approaches that create visual interest and/or shadow lines.	Changes: The elevations have been revised and divided into 4 distinct vertical sections (rooftop, top, middle, base) each with varying grid patterns to break up the verticality and create a more visually dynamic exterior wall plane. The balconies and the horizontal and vertical grid patterns on the balcony railings and vertical color patterns on different planes create articulation, shadowing, adds visual interest, scale and three-dimensional quality. Fenestration has been incorporated into each elevation to the maximum amount permitted by the Building code. Articulation is provided by the balconies, the horizontal and vertical grid patterns on the balcony railings and vertical color patterns each on a different plane. This creates interest and shadow lines. A very deep plane break is provided between the two main unit stacks on the front elevation; providing visibility from the interior courtyard to the street beyond. This break also accentuates the front entry. We have increased the articulation of the screen elements to create a more woven and varied façade, by alternating horizontal and vertical elements and vertical color patterns to echo the rich Pasadena Design tradition in a contemporary way. To break the horizontal expression, floor slabs are revealed at the first second and fifth and sixth levels	The applicant has explained how the various proposed architectural strategies regarding the fenestration and balcony treatments are intended to provide an appropriate visually dynamic façade that is contextually appropriate with respect to scale, and appearance. If utilized, the success of these strategies will depend on the quality of materials and execution of the detailing. Therefore, staff recommends that alternative design and materials studies for the balcony railings be provided in the submittal package for Final Design Review. Upon implementation of the proposed condition of approval, the comment from Preliminary Consultation will be satisfactorily addressed.

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	which emphasize base, middle and top of the building.	
<p>6. Although the design does include generous balconies and a logical composition of exterior façade treatments, the regular application of the screen elements counters the physical articulation of the facades that the balconies provide. Similar to the varied modulation and composition of the traditional design elements the project references, (such as multi-gabled Craftsman designs or Spanish Revival design with multiple building volumes) consider adding more movement and texture to the appearance of the building by modulating the depth of the balconies in a varied pattern.</p>	<p>Response: The vertical screen element has been eliminated to emphasize the physical articulation of the facades that the balconies and the balcony railing provide. The grid pattern creates a subtle screening in vertical and horizontal planes along with the vertical color patterns which reduces the heavy horizontal and repetitive nature of balconies. The differing planes of the balcony and horizontal grid pattern and the vertical grid pattern as well as the vertical color pattern creates articulation, visual interest through varying shadowing patterns. We considered modulating the balcony depths in the design process. The balcony depths could be modulated to create articulation, but this would result in smaller balconies for ½ of the units. In order for the modulation to be meaningful, ½ the balconies would need to be reduced significantly in size, resulting in non-functional “Juliet” style balconies for ½ of the residents.</p> <p>The building design is intentionally contemporary with clean contemporary lines. The reference to Pasadena precedents is the use of courtyards and porches (many of the porches and courtyard examples referenced were Craftsman and Spanish Revival design due to the prevalence of those styles in early Pasadena architecture). It was not intended to reference Craftsman or Spanish Revival as a design style nor imply that there would be “multi-gabled Craftsman designs or Spanish Revival design with multiple building volumes”.</p>	<p>Although the applicant has not incorporated the suggested changes into the design, they have demonstrated that they have studied the changes and provided a thoughtful explanation of how the resulting changes would detrimentally impact the overall programmatic needs.</p> <p>The comment from Preliminary Consultation has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>

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<p>7. Research opportunities to provide window openings or functional doors on the east and west walls of the seventh floor to resolve the blank wall conditions and provide additional access from units to the roof decks.</p>	<p>Response: The revised design is a six-story building and the roof top of the sixth floor contains the roof top garden as well as the condenser units. There will no longer be walls on the seventh floor. Therefore, doors are not necessary.</p>	<p>The comment from Preliminary Consultation has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>8. Research opportunities for additional treatments on the north, east and south elevations of the ground floor to provide for visual relief from the blank wall conditions.</p>	<p>Changes: The building exterior material will be smooth stucco finish revised to include reveal joints to break up floor levels, as well as intermittent decorative slab articulations to break up the blank wall condition and provide visual relief. There will be a six-foot-high fence around the perimeter of the North, East and South Elevations which will hide the lower six feet of the wall. There is an existing tree line along the North border of the adjacent property to the South which will also provide a “green screen” for the first floor of the South Elevation.</p>	<p>The smooth stucco and pattern of reveals do little to relieve the blank wall conditions. However, the perimeter fencing will serve to conceal the lower six feet of the wall. In addition, staff also previously recommended in the response to #1 in the table above a condition of approval to utilize additional design strategies to break up the monotony of the blank wall conditions.</p> <p>The comment from Preliminary Consultation has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>9. Research opportunities to add a regular series of smaller window openings to the north and south walls of the front and rear sections to resolve the blank wall conditions on these elevations.</p>	<p>Response: The building exterior material will be smooth stucco finish revised to include reveal joints to break up floor levels, as well as intermittent decorative slab articulations to break up the blank wall condition and provide visual relief.</p>	<p>The applicant has explained that the introduction of windows would adversely affect the interior floor plan of the units and described that the use of smooth stucco and reveals will provide adequate visual relief. However, as addressed above, staff has recommended a condition of approval that alternative exterior cladding strategies be utilized to provide for additional texture and visual relief.</p> <p>Upon implementation of the proposed condition of approval, the comment from Preliminary Consultation will be satisfactorily addressed.</p>

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<p>10. Restudy the organization of the floor plan and its impact on the elevations and consider breaking away from an outwardly facing symmetrical composition, which does not have enough street appeal. Explore how the symmetry could be further broken by shifting units back and forth, providing greater variety in the detailing of the fins and moving away from the strict repetition of the current design, consider differentiating the left from the right side of the elevations. If the fins do remain part of the design, they should be substantial enough to hide clutter on the balconies.</p>	<p>Response: The site is narrow and deep which limits the floor plan options available to work with. We strongly believe that the livability of each small unit is greatly enhanced by an exterior balcony. The combination of exterior balconies plus the narrow and deep site profile dictates the outwardly facing composition.</p> <p>The revised design has removed the vertical fin and shows varying grill patterns on the balcony railing to break up the symmetry and verticality of the design. We have restudied the floor plan & symmetrical composition by conducting two asymmetrical “studies”.</p> <p>After conducting these studies, we believe that the symmetrical design is the best alternative in terms of curb appeal, floor plan design & overall efficiency for a narrow and deep site. The repetitive nature of the fin design has been changed to vary the fin patterns to break up the symmetry and verticality of the design.</p>	<p>The applicant studied several other compositions that de-emphasize symmetry but decided not to pursue those options. However, as demonstrated by the application several minor revisions to the design were implemented to soften the rigid symmetrical composition.</p> <p>The comment from Preliminary Consultation has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>11. The ground floor columns do not look substantial enough for such a large building. Porches and the colonnade are an important Pasadena reference and this aspect should be further developed.</p>	<p>Changes: The first-floor height has been reduced and the ground floor columns have been made more substantial.</p>	<p>The comment from Preliminary Consultation has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>12. The entry should be better articulated as it is not pronounced enough. It should be celebrated and better defined.</p>	<p>Changes: The entry has been re-designed to add articulation and definition when viewed from the street. The entry is highly accentuated by the deep recess on the upper floor directing the eye to the central entrance, and also by a</p>	<p>Although the design has been revised to further emphasize the entry, as noted in the table above, further resolution is need to better coordinate the landscape elements with the storefront design to clearly</p>

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	<p>projecting canopy on which sits the building address in large letters. This front canopy emphasizes the front entry to the building. Sliding glass doors are provided to create a seamless indoor/outdoor flow between the Entrance Lobby/Lounge and landscaped forecourt. This opens the communal lobby floor to the front forecourt, providing a direct relationship and connection to the public realm. The landscaped forecourt includes elements that further accentuate this relationship with a water feature and benches that carve out a gathering area between the sidewalk and interior lobby.</p>	<p>and prominently distinguish the entry, which is a critical component of this pedestrian oriented project.</p> <p>Upon implementation of the proposed conditions of approval noted above, the comment from Preliminary Consultation will be satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>13. Consider reducing the height of the parking and providing the parking as semi-subterranean rather than at grade.</p>	<p>Changes: The parking area is located on the ground floor level, ~1'-6" below the sidewalk grade. The ground floor-to-floor height has been reduced from approx. 15' to approx. 12'-8", allowing the extra height to be redistributed to the residential floors above. Subterranean parking is not necessary, practical nor required. Subterranean parking costs approximately \$70,000 per space (and higher depending upon the efficiency of the site and parking area). This would result in over \$1,750,000 of added cost. 100% of the units in the project will be affordable. The project cannot bear that added expense and remain affordable to the residents. The parking is in the rear of the building and is not visible from the street.</p>	<p>The comment from Preliminary Consultation has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>14. There is ample open space but a lack of common amenity space and the gardens look like leftover spaces that will not be widely accessible by all residents. The</p>	<p>Response: The open spaces areas have been activated for resident use. The ground floor common area amenities space has been increased from 1,360 SF to 1,790 SF. More detail is shown on the second-floor common area space to identify the different uses. The landscape design was changed to</p>	<p>The outdoor open space, central courtyard and rooftop programming is currently depicted as somewhat minimal and how these spaces will be used is still unresolved. Therefore, staff recommends a condition of approval that the</p>

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<p>squeezed in amenity/garden at the second/third levels is not good. The continuity from the public realm to amenities needs to be further developed. Consider relocating the laundry and exercise rooms so the courtyard can be improved.</p>	<p>maximize usable space for the common area. With the sliding glass doors, seating areas, benches and landscaping, the first floor & lobby will be used by residents & guests and visible to the public realm. The second-floor courtyard is intended to be a private “back yard” that residents can use with privacy and security.</p>	<p>programming of these communal open space areas be refined to incorporate more active programming, and in the case of the rooftop open space, appropriate sun shading devices.</p> <p>Upon implementation of the proposed condition of approval, the comment from Preliminary Consultation will be satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>15. The floor-to-floor heights of levels three through seven will be problematic, especially with landscaping on the roof. Future submittals should explain how this would be feasible and practical. Further explain how the proposed wood framed construction will work with the proposed design features. In addition, the crisp lines in the renderings may not be possible with the type of construction proposed, include additional details in future submittals about the feasibility of these design elements.</p>	<p>Changes: The height of the 1st floor has been reduced from 15’ above grade to 11’-1” above grade. The reduction in the first-floor height will be added proportionally to the upper floors 2-6, for a revised typical floor-to-floor height of 9’-4”. The landscaping in the courtyard and on the rooftop will be in elevated planters, thus not requiring any additional floor to floor height. Any larger scale trees have been removed in lieu of fiberglass planters and respective plantings and furnishings, which would not require any additional slab thickness for landscaping. The building exterior material is revised to include stucco reveal joints with intermittent articulations to create a cleaner, crisper finish, as well as create articulation and massing breaks on the side elevations.</p>	<p>The comment from Preliminary Consultation has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>16. Explore alternative exterior cladding materials other than the proposed stucco; consider incorporating art-like treatments to blank walls.</p>	<p>Response: The building exterior material will be revised to a smooth stucco with reveal joints and intermittent decorative articulations at the floor slabs to break up the blank wall condition and provide visual relief.</p>	<p>As noted above, staff has recommended a condition of approval that the exterior cladding be re-studied, as the proposed solution does not adequately address the blank wall conditions.</p>

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		As conditioned, the comment from Preliminary Consultation has been satisfactorily addressed.
17. The references to the Asian Arts and Crafts architectural style are positive. Explore using more natural materials in the design rather than faux.	Using natural lumber for the Arts and Crafts style balcony railing grid pattern is not practical from a construction standpoint and would be an ongoing maintenance nightmare. New natural lumber used for such long, thin rails has a naturally occurring warping over a long span and it will be difficult to achieve the precision required for the long, thin, straight rail pattern at the time of new construction. Over time, the constant exposure to sun and rain will quickly cause such long thin planks of natural wood to warp further and the railings will require constant repainting, or they will soon be subjected to dry rot. After repainting a few times, these types of railings lose their precise clean look as paint build up accumulates. The docents at the Green and Green designed Gamble House describe the constant maintenance required of the Arts and Crafts wood elements at that famous house. There are a variety of excellent modern synthetic products available on the market today that can approximate the appearance of natural wood and will provide a more precise, clean look and result in a much more durable application of the long, thin Arts and Crafts railing pattern	<p>The applicant has adequately explained the maintenance issues associated with using natural lumber. However, the details for railings simply note “powder coated metal,” which is vague. Although wood is not preferred, a simple powder coated metal can be too plain for such an important part of the design, and there are many non-wood alternatives with exciting textures and finishes that may be appropriate for this project.</p> <p>As noted above, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring alternative design and materials studies for the balcony railings be provided in the submittal package for Final Design Review.</p> <p>Upon implementation of the proposed condition of approval, the comment from Preliminary Consultation will be satisfactorily addressed.</p>

Programming and Circulation

The programming and circulation for this proposed development is simple. The building occupies nearly the entirety of the site, with the ground floor comprised of common space, building facilities, building administration and 25 at-grade parking spaces (the number of required parking spaces is 47 spaces, however, pursuant to Section 17.43.050.B.5, one of the permitted Affordable Housing concessions is to reduce the parking requirement by as much as 50%. As a result, this

project is allowed to provide 24 parking spaces as their first granted concession). Residents would primarily access the site through the ground floor residential lobby, which also contains the common mail area, “co-working” desks, recreation space, kitchenette, reception and a manager’s office. A central vertical circulation core at the south end of the lobby serves as the primary path of travel to the upper floors, which have open circulation corridors that ring around the elevated central courtyard. At the second floor is a common laundry room, which is to the north of the central courtyard, with a small fitness center to the south of the courtyard. The third floor features common open space at the north and south ends of the open space that looks down upon the second floor courtyard. This space is programmed with bench seating, planters, and amphitheater like seating. At the rooftop are additional common open space areas at the north and south ends, which are programmed with seating, planters, and common amenities such as an outdoor kitchen. The northern portion of the roof decks are covered with open trellis’s that are intended to serve as sun shades.

The simple programming and circulation have been clearly explained by the applicant and appear to achieve the applicants’ desired programmatic objectives. However, as addressed in the table above, the outdoor open space, central courtyard and rooftop programming is currently depicted as somewhat minimal and how these spaces will be used is still unresolved. Therefore, staff recommends a condition of approval that the programming of these communal open space areas be refined to incorporate more active programming, and in the case of the rooftop open space, appropriate sun shading devices. As conditioned, the proposed programming and circulation will be consistent with the applicable guidelines and contextually compatible and appropriate.

Orientation

The proposed building has a primary pedestrian lobby entrance at the ground floor that directly engages with the street, as well as windows and balconies for each unit that arranged in a clear pattern on all sides. In addition, the horizontal breaks and vertical composition of the upper floor volumes, which, combined with the proposed address signage, also provide visual emphasis over the entry. Within the site, all unit entries face the central open space, which is open to the sky. However, the pedestrian lobby is still not significantly differentiated from the adjacent street facing façade at the ground level and the vehicular entrances still draws a disproportionate level of attention. As addressed in the table above, staff recommends a condition of approval that the proposed landscaping, programming in the front yard, and storefront details be revised so that the entry becomes a more distinct focal point at the pedestrian level view and is treated with the emphasis necessary for a pedestrian oriented design. As conditioned, the proposed orientation will be consistent with the applicable guidelines and contextually compatible with similarly scaled development.

Height, Massing and Modulation

The height limit at this location is 60’, measured from the lowest point of existing grade. The height may be increased up to 75’ upon approval of a request for height averaging, or if using the affordable housing concession menu established in Section 17.43.050.B.1, one of the permitted concessions may increase the maximum allowable height of each building by up to 12 feet, for no more than 60% of the proposed footprint. In this case, the maximum height would be 72’ for no more than 60% of the building footprint. Appurtenance heights may exceed the base height by a maximum of 15 feet for no more than 25% of the roof area. Compliance with this requirement is unclear at this point, but based on the provided drawings may exceed 25%.

The drawings submitted show the proposed building height is 69'4", which complies with the concession requirement. However, not enough information was included in the plans to determine if the percentage of appurtenances on the roof area are above the maximum height limit of 60'. As such, staff recommends a condition of approval to ensure that this is adequately addressed in the drawings submitted for Final Design Review.

The proposed rectangular building occupies nearly the entirety of the site. The design introduces façade modulation through several architectural strategies. A modest colonnade/forecourt with prominent columns and programmed outdoor space lead to recessed storefronts of full height glazing. Above the ground floor base, the building is conceptually separated into three sections. The street facing façade of the first section starting at the second level is composed of two symmetrical volumes separated by a courtyard area open to the sky that is approximately 11 feet wide by 30 feet deep. This open space is programmed as an open roof deck. This street-facing section is separated from the middle section behind it by a north/south oriented open circulation corridor. The circulation corridor is articulated such that it also serves as a visual separation between the front and middle sections.

The middle section contains the primary vertical circulation core (elevators/stairs and a trash chute) and units that are oriented to the north or to the south, with east/west oriented open single-loaded corridors that overlook the open central courtyard. At the second level, the open central courtyard is flanked on the east and west by a fitness center and a laundry room. Beginning at levels three and above, the open space expands in width. The middle section is separated from the rear section by a north/south oriented open circulation corridor. The circulation corridor is articulated so that it also serves as a visual separation between the rear and middle sections. On all exterior facades, balconies with alternating horizontal or vertically oriented metal slat style railings provide some relief from the blocky building form. However, there are significant areas of the facades that consist of large expanses of solid walls, clad with smooth stucco and a coordinated pattern of reveals. Although the reveals do provide a limited amount of visual interest, these large solid expanses are still visually overwhelming and as noted above, staff recommends several conditions of approval related to additional façade treatments to soften these expanses.

The applicant has made significant efforts explain how they feel the proposed design is consistent with design guidelines and previous comments from the Commission. As conditioned, the modulation depicted in the elevation drawings is appropriate.

Architectural Style and Detailing

The chosen architectural style for the proposed building is Contemporary. The building has a flat roof, with subtly articulated massing that conceptually separates the building into three volumes, and a restrained color and materials palette. The applicant has explained that the "front porch" concept and its rich architectural history in Pasadena has significantly influenced the design of the project, particularly the visually distinct composition of balconies.

As addressed in the table above, several conditions of approval are proposed to address the cladding and materials, as these aspects of the design need further resolution to ensure the building is appropriately detailed and consistent with the applicable design guidelines and the surrounding context and contributes positively the built environment.

Compatibility

The proposed building has been reduced in height and its overall height is now more compatible with its immediate surroundings as well as potential future development in the immediate context. To the east are other six-story buildings and there are similarly scaled buildings that exist and are proposed to the west. As addressed in the table above, staff recommends several conditions of approval to enhance the ground floor storefront and entry sequence so that the project is more pedestrian oriented. As conditioned, the proposed building will be compatible with its surroundings in terms of height, massing, setbacks and architectural design.

Conceptual Landscape Design

The preliminary landscape plans outline a modest amount of live plantings. The front yard setback area is the only portion of site with native soil, and is programmed with three smaller shade trees (Peppermint Willow) and Kurapia ground cover, in addition to two low lying rectilinear forecourt fountains. In addition, two concrete benches are located in the colonnade. A subterranean electrical vault is also proposed in the front yard setback, and a Fire Department Connection will most likely be located in this area. At the second level, within the street facing deck and in the central courtyard, wood slat benches, porcelain pavers and fiberglass planters with various succulent and perennial shrubs are proposed. At the third level, wood slat benches, porcelain pavers, and fiberglass planters are proposed, with perennial and shrubs proposed at the various seating areas, including the southerly amphitheater seating. At the roof deck, wood slat benches, porcelain pavers, fiberglass planters, a rectilinear fire pit, a portable ping pong table, and two outdoor kitchens are proposed, in addition to one picnic table.

As previously indicated, the programming is minimal and how these spaces will be used is still unresolved as some of the more active features, such as the outdoor kitchens, are clustered together, with the picnic table and ping pong table appearing to be placed at random into empty spaces. Therefore, staff previously recommended a condition of approval that the programming of these communal open space areas be refined to incorporate more active programming, and in the case of the rooftop open space, appropriate code compliant sun shading devices to ensure that all of the outdoor space is usable for the on-site population. Staff also recommends that additional landscaping, such as vines espaliered on a decorative cabling system that is permanently affixed to the solid wall surfaces be incorporated into the large solid walls at the patio facing the street at the second level street facing patio to provide visual relief to this area.

Protected Tree Removal

The application includes a tree inventory that identifies removal of four protected trees (Trees #3, 5, 6, 10). The application states that Tree Protection Ordinance (TPO) finding #4 is proposed by the applicant to allow the removal of the protected trees. This finding states, "There is a substantial hardship to the property owner in the enjoyment and use of the real property if the injury or removal of the private tree is not permitted."

The trees are not particularly prominent features of the site and are in locations where the building is proposed. Further, the required number of replacement trees cannot be accommodated in the small area of native soils proposed as part of the landscape design for this project, and trees planted in above ground tree wells in the courtyard or at the rooftop may

not achieve a significant canopy. Strict compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance would restrict the development on the site, therefore, staff recommends approval of the proposed private tree removals as specified above.

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, Current Planning and Cultural Affairs Divisions. Recommended conditions from the Departments of Public Works and Transportation are included in Attachment C.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The City engaged Michael Baker International (MBI), an experienced environmental consulting firm to prepare an environmental analysis of the project to determine if it qualifies for an exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Senate Bill (SB) 743, which is codified as Public Resources Code Section 21155.4 and exempts certain transit-oriented development projects from CEQA.

The analysis prepared by MBI (Attachment D) shows that the project is consistent with the CDSP and more recently adopted development standards set forth in the City's SRO Ordinance and the Pasadena Affordable Housing Ordinance. The analysis demonstrates that the project is consistent with the development scenario evaluated in the CDSP final environmental impact report (FEIR), certified by the City of Pasadena in 2004, and that the project would not result in new significant environmental effects. In addition, it would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects, does not involve a substantial change in circumstances that would affect the determination of impact significance or adequacy of mitigation measures set forth in that FEIR, and that no new information of substantial importance has become available.

As such, this project is considered to be fully within the scope of the environmental impact analysis prepared for the CDSP. While the project is consistent with the CDSP and the CDSP FEIR, City approval of a Design Review application is required to ensure that the design is consistent with the standards set forth in the CDSP.

CONCLUSION:

As conditioned, the project design has satisfactorily addressed the comments provided during Preliminary Consultation and will be consistent with the applicable design guidelines and contextually compatible with its surroundings. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the application for Concept Design Review for the project with the recommended conditions, which will further resolve the design as the project moves forward to Final Design Review.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Attachments:

- A. Current plans & elevations
- B. Tree inventory and exhibit; Private Tree Removal application
- C. Recommended conditions from Departments of Public Works and Transportation
- D. Environmental Documentation (CEQA)
- E. Non-CEQA Studies: Health Risk Assessment