



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 CONSTRUCTION OF A 17-UNIT, FOUR-STORY, MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH TWO LEVELS OF SUBTERRANEAN PARKING
139 SOUTH OAK KNOLL AVENUE
(CONTINUED FROM DECEMBER 22, 2020)

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; and
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; therefore, there are no unusual circumstances.

Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance

1. Acknowledge that a tree inventory for the project site shows that no protected trees are proposed to be removed as part of the proposed project.

Findings for the Approval of Height Limit Exception through Height Averaging

1. Find that the request for additional height for the rooftop trellis structures does comply with all of the following findings for height averaging:
 - a. The additional height allows for preservation of vistas and view corridors, and/or a more sensitive transition to an adjacent historic structure, and/or provides for a more interesting skyline;
 - b. The additional height will not be injurious to adjacent properties or uses, or detrimental to environmental quality, quality of life, or the health, safety, and welfare of the public;
 - c. The additional height will promote a superior design solution that enhances the property and its surroundings, without detrimental impacts on views and sight lines; and
 - d. The additional height is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Central District Specific Plan and the General Plan.
3. Based on these findings, approve the request for height averaging.

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 in the Central District Specific Plan; and
2. Based on these findings, approve the application for Concept Design Review as depicted in Attachment A, subject to the following conditions to be further reviewed during Final Design Review:

Conditions

1. The composition of the central volume on the north elevation, consisting of a large solid vertical expanse, the open rooftop balcony railings and the rooftop trellis on the north elevation shall be restudied and revised so that it better reflects the architectural character of the rest of the design.
2. The solid vertical expanse on the east elevation, to the north of the central entry, shall be re-studied and additional architectural treatments shall be applied or incorporated into this expanse, consistent with the chosen architectural style.
3. Additional architectural treatments shall be incorporated into the south and east elevations, to the greatest extent possible, to further resolve the appearance of the projecting unsupported mass over the driveway
4. 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.

5. The project shall comply with the conditions provided by the Departments of Public Works (dated June 26, 2020) and Transportation (dated April 17, 2020), included in this report as Attachments D and E, to the satisfaction of said departments. The plans submitted for Final Design Review shall also be re-routed to City Departments and revised conditions, if any, shall be incorporated into the conditions of approval for Final Design Review.

BACKGROUND:

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: Medium Mixed Use (0 – 2.25 FAR) & 0-87 dwelling units per acre.
- Zoning: CD-4 (Central District Specific Plan, Pasadena Playhouse Sub-district)
- 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 in the Central District Specific Plan.
- Site: The subject site is comprised of a single 8,610- square-foot lot at the southwest corner of South Oak Knoll Avenue and Mira Monte Place, between East Green and Cordova Streets. The project site is a rectangular-shaped parcel currently developed with a surface parking lot surrounded by a perimeter concrete block wall built in 1959, all of which are proposed to be demolished. The site was previously developed with a two-story single-family residence estimated to be built in the 1890's and demolished in 1955-1956. There are three non-protected trees within the site and are all proposed to be removed. There are also seven street trees (palms) in the public right of way, which are proposed to be retained.
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties include single- and multi-family residential buildings ranging between one and four stories in height. Directly adjacent to the west is a one-story single-family residence built in 1898, (710 Mira Monte Place) which was originally part of the subject site and is not a designated or eligible historic resource, according to the Pasadena Central District Survey recorded in August 30, 2000. Directly adjacent to the south is a three-story multi-family residential building with at grade parking built in 1989. To the north, across Mira Monte Place, there is a four-story multi-family residential building with underground parking built in 1994. To the east, across South Oak Knoll Avenue, there is a three-story commercial office building, an at-grade parking lot, and the Immanuel Lutheran Church.
- Project Description: The proposal is for the construction of a four-story multi-family residential development with 17 dwelling units, and 20 subterranean parking spaces located at 139 South Oak Knoll Avenue.
- Site Design: The proposed site design consists of a single building mass with a footprint that would occupy the majority of the site except for the required front and side yard setbacks, a vehicular driveway at the south edge of the property, and an open garden space along the westerly edge. The building's primary facade would be oriented to the east, facing Oak Knoll Avenue; and vehicular access is proposed along the same frontage, at the southeast corner of the property. The secondary façade would face north, toward Mira

Monte Place. Pedestrian access would be available from both of the street-facing elevations.

- Architectural Style: Spanish Colonial Revival
- Developer: Balian Investments, LLC
- Architects: Onyx Architects
- Landscape Architect: Armstrong & Walker Landscape Architecture

ANALYSIS:

Design Commission Comments from Concept Design Review

On December 22, 2020, the Design Commission reviewed an application for Concept Design Review for this project (Attachment B). After careful review of the proposed plans, the Commission's provided detailed comments and suggestions regarding the proposed design and voted to continue the request to allow the applicant additional time to resolve the specified design related issues (Attachment C). The applicant has since revised the project to address the Commission's comments and the revised plans and narrative response are depicted in Attachment A.

Upon review of the revised plans and illustrated narrative, the applicants have satisfactorily addressed the majority of the Commission's comments. However, several portions of the publicly visible fades still depict large areas with unresolved solid-to-void proportions, including the central portion of the north elevation that is capped by the rooftop trellis, and the cantilevered solid mass over the driveway to the subterranean parking requires further resolution to appropriately ground this portion of the design. Therefore, staff recommends several conditions of approval to further resolve these aspects of the design.

Request for Height Averaging

The project proposes to utilize height averaging to allow the rooftop trellis structures, which are not considered appurtenant structures and, as such, are counted toward the overall maximum allowed height. The provisions of height averaging in PMC Section 17.30.050.B.2 provide that additional building height is permitted over no more than 30 percent of the building footprint on a development parcel, provided that the average height over the entire footprint does not exceed the otherwise required maximum building height. The Design Commission is the review authority for requests for Height Averaging, and the following findings must be made in order to grant a request.

- a) The additional height allows for preservation of vistas and view corridors, and/or a more sensitive transition to an adjacent historic structure, and/or provides for a more interesting skyline;

The additional proposed height is associated with a rooftop trellis structure that is well integrated into the design and is generally consistent with the chosen Spanish Colonial

Revival architectural style, and therefore does provide for a more interesting or aesthetically pleasing skyline.

- b) The additional height will not be injurious to adjacent properties or uses, or detrimental to environmental quality, quality of life, or the health, safety, and welfare of the public;

The additional height will not be detrimental to adjacent properties.

- c) The additional height will promote a superior design solution that enhances the property and its surroundings, without detrimental impacts on views and sight lines; and

The additional height will not detrimentally impact views or sight lines; and the additional height of the trellis structure is well integrated in to the project design and chosen Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style.

- d) The additional height is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Central District Specific Plan and the General Plan.

The revised plans are consistent with the objectives and policies of the Specific Plan and General Plan.

Upon review of the revised drawings, the required findings can be made and, staff recommends that the Design Commission approve the request for height averaging.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends approval of the application for Concept Design Review with minor conditions to refine the massing and improve the quality and detailing of the architectural design. As conditioned, the project design will satisfactorily address all of the comments provided during Preliminary Consultation as well as the comments provided at the December 22, 2020 hearing, will be consistent with the applicable guidelines and meet the required findings for approval of Concept Design Review.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Attachments:

- A. Applicant Submittal, Including Continuation Responses, Current Plans & Elevations
- B. Concept Design Review Staff Report Dated December 22, 2020
- C. Concept Design Review Letter of Continuance
- D. Recommended conditions from the Department of Public Works
- E. Recommended conditions from the Department of Transportation
- F. CAP Consistency Checklist