



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: APRIL 13, 2021

TO: DESIGN COMMISSION

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

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR MAJOR CHANGES TO AN APPROVED CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW
CHANGE FROM A TWO-STORY 14,008-SQUARE-FOOT COMMERCIAL/OFFICE BUILDING TO A FOUR-STORY, 20,530-SQUARE-FOOT MIXED-USE BUILDING WITH 3,724 SQUARE FEET OF COMMERCIAL SPACE AND 17 RESIDENTIAL UNITS
85 WEST GREEN STREET

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

Environmental Determination

Find that the application for Changes to an Approved Project was subject to environmental review in the Categorical Exemption adopted by the Hearing Officer for Minor Conditional Use Permit #6647 on September 13, 2018, and that there are no changed circumstances or new information which would require further environmental review.

Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance

Acknowledge that the Design Commission approved with conditions the after-the-fact removal of two protected trees in conjunction with the approval of Concept Design Review on March 28, 2017 and that the proposed changes are consistent with the previous approval.

Findings for the Approval of Height Limit Exception through Height Averaging

1. Find that the height limits documented in the height averaging exhibit apply to the finished rooflines of the building and that they comply with the regulatory provisions in the zoning code (§17.30.050). These provisions limit an increase in height (to 50 feet in this case) over a maximum of 30% of the building footprint if the additional height is counterbalanced by

lower heights elsewhere on a development site such that the average height does not exceed the otherwise required maximum building height (40 feet in this case).

2. Find that the request for additional height complies with the following findings for height averaging:
 - a. The additional height will provide for a more sensitive transition to adjacent historic buildings;
 - 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; and
3. Based on these findings, approve the request for height averaging.

Findings for Major Changes to an Approved Concept Design Review

1. Find that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the modification of the original Concept Design Review approval, specifically a request from the applicant to reduce the scale of the project to ensure compliance with Zoning Code requirements;
2. Find that the proposed major changes are consistent with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the design guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation; and
3. Based on these findings, approve the application for Major Changes to an Approved Project subject to the following conditions:

Conditions:

1. The project shall comply with all applicable Code requirements prior to issuance of a building permit, unless deviation is authorized by a Zoning entitlement. The review process for the Zoning entitlements required for the project shall be completed prior to the Design Commission's review of an application for Final Design Review.
2. Pursuant to PMC §8.52.075.C, prior to issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall pay an alternative replacement fee instead of planting 50% of the required number of replacement trees. The amount of the fee shall be verified by staff and shall include \$3,850.00, which is documented in a letter dated February 22, 2019 from William R.

McKinley, Consulting Arborist (Attachment C) as being 100% of the appraised value of the tree that cannot be replaced.

BACKGROUND:

On December 8, 2020, the Design Commission, acting under the provisions of §17.61.030 and 17.64.050 of the Pasadena Municipal Code, reviewed an application for Major Changes to an Approved Project (Concept Design Review) to change a previously approved two-story 14,008-square-foot commercial/office building to a four-story, 20,530-square-foot mixed-use building with 3,702 square feet of commercial space and 18 residential units at 85 W. Green Street. The staff report for that review is included in Attachment A. The Commission provided comments on the design and continued the public hearing to a date uncertain to allow the applicant to revise the design to address the comments provided. The revised project now proposes 3,725 square feet of commercial space and 17 residential units.

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: Medium Mixed Use (0.0 – 2.25 FAR)
- Zoning District: CD-1 AD-1 (Central District Specific Plan, Alcohol Overlay District)
- Design Guidelines:
 - Design-related Goals and Policies of the General Plan Land Use Element
 - Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan
 - Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation
- Site: The 8,534 sq. ft. site is located at the northwest corner of West Green Street and South De Lacey Avenue, and is located within the Old Pasadena Historic District (non-contributing property) and the Central District Specific Plan area. The north side of the site fronts on Martin Alley. The site is a rectangular-shaped corner parcel of land, with street frontage of approximately 80 feet along West Green Street and 100 feet along South De Lacey Avenue. The site was formerly occupied by a gas station and was redeveloped in 1994 with the Twin Palms Restaurant, which consisted of two semi-enclosed structures and a large canopy, designed to accommodate a large outdoor dining area. These structures have since been removed. The site continues to be surrounded by a stucco wall with openings.
- Surroundings: The site is surrounded by commercial and mixed-use buildings ranging between one and three stories in height. There is also a church at 80 West Dayton Street to the south. The project site is non-contributing to the Old Pasadena Historic District; however it is immediately adjacent to two contributing structures (101 and 111 West Green Street) and the surrounding context is historically and architecturally sensitive.
- Project Description: The project consists of the new construction of a four-story, mixed-use project with a total of 3,725 square feet of ground-floor commercial space and 17 residential units. Two existing buildings on the site that are non-contributing to the Old Pasadena Historic District have been partially demolished after receiving approval of an application for Relief from the Replacement Building Permit Requirement and two protected trees were previously approved for removal after-the-fact. No parking is proposed on-site; parking

credits and an off-site lease agreement have been determined to satisfy the project’s parking requirement.

- Site Design: The proposed site design consists of a single four-story building with no setback from the west property line where it adjoins an existing building on the neighboring property. The building has minimal setbacks from the north and south property lines and at the extreme north and south ends of the east elevation, primarily at ground-floor recessed entries. The central portion of the east elevation is set back approximately 12’ from the property line. A two-story recessed niche at the rear northwest corner of the site provides space for an electrical transformer. No on-site parking or loading areas are proposed.
- Architectural Style: Main Street Commercial
- Developer: Sunshine Management Group, LLC
- Architect/Landscape Architect: Alen Malekian, AIA

ANALYSIS:

Design Commission Comments from December 8, 2020 Changes to an Approved Project Hearing

On December 8, 2020, the Design Commission reviewed an application for Major Changes to an Approved Project (Concept Design Review) for this project. The Commission continued the public hearing to give the applicant an opportunity to respond to the following comments (the architect’s and staff’s responses are detailed in the chart below; the architect’s full responses are in Attachment B and the full revised plans and elevations are in Attachment D):

Commission Comment, December 8, 2020	Excerpts from Architect’s Response	Staff Comments
1. The architect should explore alternative designs for the project with freedom to deviate from the design of the previous project that was approved for the site, in an effort to identify the most appropriate design solution for the site and proposed program. The Commission identified the following list of challenges with the current design that should be considered when exploring alternative designs:	<p>“The proposed project will be a mixed-use 4 story building with the ground level being of commercial use with 3 levels of residential units above it.</p> <p>The new design will greatly take into account the immediate adjacent property to the west which is a contributing historic brick vernacular building from 1912. The proposed building will echo the rhythmic pattern of the historic building’s windows and moldings and will feature a timeless appearance of elegance by integrating contemporary</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The design team has comprehensively reviewed the building design and submitted a revised proposal that identifies the most appropriate design solution that they have identified for the site. As outlined below, they have directly addressed the design challenges outlined by the Commission in its previous review. Staff finds the revised design to be a simple, contemporary interpretation of the traditional main street commercial buildings found within the Old Pasadena Historic District and a compatible new addition within the district that is clearly distinguishable as a new feature.</p>

Commission Comment, December 8, 2020	Excerpts from Architect's Response	Staff Comments
	<p>detailing into a classically proportioned building. The use of honed granite and limestone will provide contrasting colors to emphasize certain areas of the façade and create interest. Rectangular fenestration rather than arches (previous design) will now dominate the façade to mimic the adjacent building. The project will also feature a 3rd story step back along Green Street to create a less imposing structure and be sensitive to the streetscape which is consist of mostly 1 to 2 story storefronts.”</p>	
<p>a. Avoid stepped balconies.</p>	<p>“The stepping balconies along both Green Street and De Lacey Avenue are removed.”</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The revised design eliminates stepped balcony conditions that were previously proposed. Balconies have been eliminated from the design entirely, in favor of common courtyard spaces at the third floor and roof level.</p>
<p>b. Ensure style consistency and overall expression, including the fourth floor. If the fourth floor continues to have a different expression from the lower floors, provide the reasoning for this decision and the logic between the two different expressions.</p>	<p>“The revised design now shows a more consistent overall expression and style from ground floor to the 4th floor.”</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The 4th floor is now proposed to have similar cladding and fenestration to the rest of the building, although it remains spatially set back from the outer edges of the building in order to reduce its prominence.</p>
<p>c. The colonnade and its usefulness, such as for outdoor dining.</p>	<p>“The colonnade is removed and the building will just feature an open outdoor area lined with trees along De Lacey Avenue.”</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The colonnade has been removed and the setback area at this location is now proposed to be an open-air forecourt space. One of the two</p>

Commission Comment, December 8, 2020	Excerpts from Architect's Response	Staff Comments
		commercial tenant spaces is proposed to have its entrance opening into this area. The required replacement trees are proposed to be planted in this location.
d. Massing response to the scale of buildings along Green Street to the west.	"The third level of the building is stepped back emphasizing the first 2 levels and create a two-story volume along Green Street that aligns with the adjacent west building (101 W. Green St.)."	<i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i> Along Green Street, the third floor steps back approximately six feet to create a clear two-story volume that relates well to the adjacent contributing building to the west.
e. Consideration of the character of Old Pasadena.	"The building follows a utilitarian/functionalist massing which is a commonality to the surrounding buildings and will feature classical proportions fused with contemporary simplicity. The third story step back along Green St. will maintain the rhythmic patterns of the street which has predominantly one or 2 story storefronts."	<i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i> The building is a simple, contemporary representation of the character of the historical mixed-use buildings within the Old Pasadena Historic District.
f. Dual entries with the same hierarchy.	"The building will have dual entries consistent in style and height along both Green Street and De Lacey Avenue."	<i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i> The building entries are generally consistent with each other. The restaurant and lobby entries at the north and south ends of the De Lacey Avenue façade are designed to match, while the coffee shop entry within the De Lacey Avenue forecourt and the second lobby entry along Green Street are slightly differentiated to create a secondary hierarchy.

Commission Comment, December 8, 2020	Excerpts from Architect’s Response	Staff Comments
2. Previously approved mitigation for unpermitted protected tree removals should be maintained when exploring alternative designs.	“Four 36” Box Olea Europaea “Fruitless” (Fruitless Olive Tree) trees will be planted on the open area provided along De Lacey Avenue.”	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The four proposed 36” box trees satisfy the Tree Protection Ordinance requirements, along with the payment of the alternative replacement fee as previously approved by the Commission for the previous designs that it has reviewed for this project. To ensure that the alternative replacement fee is paid, staff recommends including a condition of approval in this decision.</p>

Height Averaging

The property is within an area of the Central District Specific Plan, which allows a maximum height of 40 feet or 50 feet with height averaging with a maximum three-story height limit, subject to Design Commission approval. The additional height is permitted over no more than 30% of the building footprint, provided that the average height of that footprint does not exceed the otherwise required maximum building height.

The project proposes a four-story building with a maximum height of 49.68 feet, with the portion of the building extending above 40’ being 19% (1,426 square feet) of the 7,342-square-foot building footprint. The project is proposing to utilize height averaging to create two rooftop residential units set back from the street facades and surrounded by common deck space. A total of 1,170 square feet of the building footprint is proposed to be substantially lower in height than the maximum allowed to balance the portion that exceeds the height limit. Based on the calculations provided, the average height of the building is 39.97 feet, which is slightly lower than the base height limit of 40 feet. The provisions of height averaging in PMC Section 17.30.050.B of the Zoning Code are as follows:

Extent of height averaging allowed:

- a. *Additional building height is permitted over no more than 30% 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 additional height proposed is 1,426 sq. ft. of the 7,342 sq. ft. building footprint, which is approximately 19% of the roof area. As described above, the average height of the building is proposed to be 39.97 feet.

- b. *Height averaging shall not be applied to parking and/or accessory structures.*

The project is not proposing to use height averaging for parking or accessory structures.

- c. *The additional height allowed by this Subsection B. through height averaging shall require Design Commission approval.*

This review constitutes the required Design Commission review.

Required height averaging findings:

- 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 height at the interior of the building allows for the provision of additional residential units in a location that creates a more sensitive transition to adjacent historic structures to the north and west within the Old Pasadena Historic District.

- 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 is designed and placed in a manner that will ensure that it will not be detrimental to adjacent contributing properties within the Old Pasadena Historic District to the north and west.

- 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 provides for a more sensitive transition to historical properties and will not create detrimental impacts, as indicated above.

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

The additional height will create a superior design solution, which is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Specific Plan and General Plan.

Based on the revisions made to the plans, staff recommends that the Design Commission approve the application for Concept Design Review with a condition regarding payment of the alternative replacement fee for the previous tree removals and a condition regarding Zoning compliance (see discussion below). The design-related conditions that staff had previously recommended have been addressed in the proposed re-design submitted for this review and staff has not identified any new design-related concerns that would necessitate additional recommended conditions of approval.

Zoning Review

Staff of the Current Planning Section has reviewed the revised design and determined that, with the exception of affordable housing concessions requested for FAR and loading and a Variance requested for parking, the project complies with the development standards in the Zoning Code. Staff has recommended a condition of approval requiring compliance with the requirements of the Zoning Code, other than those approved through these processes, and will ensure that staff of the Current Planning Section reviews and approves the plans submitted for Final Design Review before they are presented to the Design Commission for review.

CONCLUSION:

The primary issues identified at the previous hearing have been addressed in the revised plans. Staff recommends that the Commission approve the application for Major Changes to an Approved Project with conditions requiring payment of the alternative replacement fee and Zoning compliance.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Director of Planning and
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Prepared by:



Kevin Johnson
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Reviewed by:



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Attachments:

- A. Staff Report from December 8, 2020 Design Commission meeting
- B. Architect's responses to Commission comments from December 8, 2020 public hearing
- C. Tree appraisal dated February 22, 2019
- D. Current plans and elevations