



**PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT**

DATE: APRIL 27, 2021
TO: DESIGN COMMISSION
FROM: DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION - NEW CONSTRUCTION OF A FOUR STORY MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING
758-766 SOUTH FAIR OAKS AVENUE

Project Description:

This proposal is for the demolition of an existing one-story, non-historic, commercial building and the new construction of a four-story medical office building with two levels of subterranean parking at 758-766 South Fair Oaks Avenue. The project site consists of two legal parcels, totaling 46,689 square feet, and is located at the southwest corner of South Fair Oaks Avenue and Fillmore Street, in the IG-SP-2 zone (Industrial General, South Fair Oaks Specific Plan) and has a General Plan land use designation of High Mixed-Use. The application materials submitted for this review do not indicate that any protected trees are on the project site.

The surrounding context is in transition, with the built environment consisting of surface parking lots, older non-historic, one-story commercial buildings and newer three-to-four story medical office buildings, including the Huntington ambulatory surgery center, the HMRI building, and the Shriners for Children Medical Center. The Metro light rail line Fillmore Station is also located to approximately two blocks to the east of the project site. There are no historic resources within a four-block radius of the project site. However, there are other historic resources found within the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan area, including the former Southern California Cooperative Wind Tunnel at 950 South Raymond, the Glenarm Power Plant at 72 East Glenarm Street, and the former Pacific Electric Railroad Substation at 1154 S. Fair Oaks Avenue.

The proposed plans show the 100,285 square-foot building, which is proposed to be used as medical offices, with approximately 4,450 square feet of ground floor retail space, and two levels of subterranean parking containing 185 parking spaces. The four-story building would have a maximum height of 56' with an additional 15' volume for a stair and elevator shaft, as well as a rooftop terrace surrounded by planters.

The applicant previously presented a project with the proposed site plan arranged around a vehicular passenger-loading zone, fountain and monument signage at the corner of South Fair Oaks Avenue and Fillmore Street, which is the northwest corner of the site. The loading zone would provide one-way access, with a 50' wide entry from South Fair Oaks Avenue and an exit on Fillmore Street via a 20' driveway. The motor court results in the majority of the office building having an approximately 65' setback from South Fair Oaks Avenue.

The Design Commission reviewed this project in November 2020 and provided extensive comments to the applicant about the general overall design and the passenger-loading area, with the consensus among the commissioners that the strong emphasis on the passenger drop-off area facing South Fair Oaks Avenue was inconsistent with the surrounding context and applicable guidelines. The applicant worked closely with staff after the meeting to understand the comments and the applicant has since returned to the city with a revised package of three general design evolution concepts that respond to those comments.

The first concept maintains the originally presented site plan with only minor revisions, including an enlarged plaza at the northwest corner, reduced curb widths, curb cuts existing on Fillmore St. that have been shifted further east, and a larger covered passenger drop off area.

The second concept (labeled Option 1 in the submittal package) is a more significantly revised version of the original design. Although this design maintains a vehicular entrance and prominent passenger drop area accessible from South Fair Oaks Avenue, the drop off does not have an independent exit to Fillmore St. The drop-off instead connects to the driveway at the northwest corner of the site of Fillmore St. that leads to the subterranean parking. This design results in a large plaza at the northwest corner, only one curb cut on Fillmore, increased building frontage along South Fair Oaks Avenue and, better pedestrian connectivity to both the light rail station and the Huntington Hospital main campus. This design also brings a possible roof terrace down to the second floor, facing the corner.

The last concept (labeled Option 2 in the submittal package) is an even more significantly revised version of the proposal, and expands on the general design evolution that is presented in Option 1. This version has no vehicular access from South Fair Oaks Avenue and all vehicular access would be from Fillmore St. A circular one-way driveway would lead to a passenger drop-off area on the north elevation, and would connect to the driveway at the northwest corner of the site off Fillmore St., which exits the site or provides access to the subterranean parking. This design is more significantly pedestrian oriented with improved connectivity to the light rail station and the Huntington Hospital Main campus, maximizes the amount of building frontage on Fillmore St and South Fair Oaks Avenue, and includes a possible terrace at the second floor facing a pedestrian plaza at the northwest corner facing the intersection.

The proposed architectural style and treatments are consistent with the originally proposed concept. The Contemporary design includes a flat roof, articulated glazed curtain walls, and rain screen tiled surfaces. Landscaping is proposed in the pedestrian plaza at the corner of South Fair Oaks Avenue and Fillmore Street. The extruded mass of the building is characterized by the visually distinct west elevation facing South Fair Oaks Avenue, which consists of an articulated convex curved glass curtain wall that rises to four stories in height. Open terraces have been brought down to the second level to better connect to the street.

Applicable Design Guidelines:

- Design-Related Goals and Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan
- Design Guidelines in the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan

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

Previous/Existing Entitlements:

- None

Approvals Needed/Project Scheduling:

- Conditional Use Permit (Hearing Officer)
- Concept and Final Design Review (Design Commission)
- Building Permits

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.
- 5.2: Require buildings in the Central District, Transit Villages, Neighborhood Villages, and along corridors specified by the adopted specific plans to be located along the street/sidewalk and designed to promote pedestrian activity. This can be accomplished by incorporating transparent facades, small plazas, and dining areas; while locating parking to the rear or underground and placing primary entries on the street.
- 5.6: Policy 5.6 Property Access. Discourage vehicle driveways on streets with higher pedestrian volumes within the Central District, Transit Villages, and Neighborhood Villages.

- 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.
- 23.1: Design and modulate buildings to avoid the sense of “blocky” and undifferentiated building mass, incorporate well-defined entries, and use building materials, colors, and architectural details complementing the neighborhood, while allowing flexibility for distinguished design solutions.
- 23.2: Minimize the visibility of parking areas and garages.
- 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.

South Fair Oaks Avenue Specific Plan - Private Realm Design Guidelines:

- 3.3.3-B.1: Buildings shall be located to the front of the parcel and parking areas shall be located to the rear of the parcel. Buildings shall have a mandatory zero setback at a portion of street-edge property lines. While the intention is to mass the building on the property line, portions of the facade may be notched, recessed or extruded to accentuate Private Outdoor Nodes.
- 3.3.3-B.2 A maximum of two street driveways to any parcel over 200 feet shall be permitted. For parcels with Fair Oaks Avenue addresses that include alley access, driveways from Fair Oaks Avenue should be one-way ingress only with egress to the alley. Driveways should be co-located with the Primary Building Entry and designed as pedestrian environments into which vehicles are integrated. Driveway design features should include paving and landscape.
- 3.3.3-B.3 Private Nodes include provision of open space and encouragement for architectural enhancements that foster these human needs in the urbanized and private enterprise conditions of the Specific Plan area. Private Node design should be based upon the intended type of development, correlated human activities and program of uses as determined by the owner and architect. Private nodes should be integrated with the design of the building and site and serve as focal points of emphasis. There are two types of Private Nodes. A Private Outdoor Node is a required outdoor open space. Private Nodes shall be used in lieu of yards as set forth in Section 3.3.3-C.1.5. A Private

Indoor Node is an indoor space such as a lobby, atrium or corridor. Private Indoor Nodes are expressed as architectural volumes as set forth in Section 3.3.3-C.1.2.

3.3.3-B.4.1 Parking lots and/or structures, service and loading areas shall be located to the rear of the property behind the building and along the rear property line.

3.3.3-C.1.1 Architectural design in the Specific Plan area should emphasize the distinction between the "interaction spaces" and the "work/service spaces" given the program of uses for a building. Each building will have an architectural program of uses that sets forth the activities and their spatial and functional requirements such as size, character and adjacency to one another: To emphasize in architectural design terms the distinction between the "interaction spaces" and the "work/service spaces" means to create perceptible differences between the character and identity of these parts as follows: Architects should utilize such elements as volume, massing, materials, proportion and scale, among others, to create these design distinctions. Interaction spaces are Private Indoor Nodes as set forth in Section 3.3.3-C.1.2. They should be prominently placed on a site to be seen from the street and to enhance the public realm. They should be placed to terminate vistas, to anchor street corners and along street edges, among others. Work and services spaces include laboratories, equipment rooms, rest rooms and storage, among others. They should be designed as "background" spaces utilizing a regular bay rhythm and modulation placed, for example, internally to the building or along non street property edges.

3.3.3-C.2.1 Primary Building Entries should be located at any point along the front property line or may be setback a maximum of 15 feet from the front property line to the front surface of the doorway. Any retail use should be accessed directly from a public sidewalk. A Primary Building Entry should be architecturally expressed.


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

- 1.1: Relationship to Public Realm. Buildings should be oriented to positively define and frame adjacent public streets, and/or public or common spaces, while promoting the collective form of neighborhoods by:
- 2.2: New buildings should be designed with frontages that activate the street by providing direct access to their ground floor dwellings and commercial spaces.
- 2.3: Buildings on corner lots should be designed to acknowledge their particular location. Different frontage types can be used on each of the two street facing facades, the same frontage type can be used on each facade, or a frontage type can wrap around the corner from one facade to the other.
- 3: New buildings placed in significant urban sites (termination of streets, corner lots, adjacent to public or historic buildings) should be designed to reflect the prominence of their location.
- 9.4: When an alley is present, parking should be accessed from the alley

Design Observations:

- Option 2 best demonstrates consistency with the applicable design guidelines and the surrounding context, including vehicular and pedestrian circulation. This design also most successfully embodies the concept of pedestrian nodes and interaction spaces that activate the street. Staff recommends this option be utilized moving forward in the review process.
- Consider incorporating an additional secondary pedestrian entrance on South Fair Oaks Avenue to activate the ground floor of this frontage, or incorporate wayfinding features that may lead pedestrians to the entrance on the north elevation.
- The plaza should be carefully considered and treated with appropriate amenities and landscape features that buffers the users from the busy traffic of South Fair Oaks Avenue. Consider incorporating signage into landscape elements at the corner to provide for an appropriate buffer and promote the active use of this space.
- The second floor terrace is a significant opportunity to develop a stronger connection between the building and the public realm and to visually anchor the building to the corner. The design and materials of the terrace should be integrated into the west elevation and the prominent curved façade to ensure it does not appear as a “tacked on” feature.
- The support columns on the north elevation facing Fillmore St. should be further studied and revised so that they appear substantial enough to support the building volume above. Consider creating a solid wall between the two westerly columns.
- Restudy the extensive use of glazing on the west elevation. Future submittals shall include detailed specifications for the proposed glazing. Consider breaking up some of the larger areas of glazing by more distinctly expressing the major horizontal or vertical structural supports on the exterior façade.
- The proposed design would include large solid areas clad with a rain screen facade system. Explore alternative textures and colors for the proposed rain screen cladding system to soften the appearance of these large solid surfaces.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Attachments:

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