



**PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT**

**DATE:** MAY 25, 2021  
**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION  
**FROM:** DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
**SUBJECT:** PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION - NEW CONSTRUCTION OF A SEVEN-STORY 154,000 SQUARE FOOT COMMERCIAL & MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING, A SEVEN-STORY INDEPENDENT & ASSISTED LIVING BUILDING AND PRESERVATION OF THREE HISTORIC BUILDINGS  
465-577 S. ARROYO PARKWAY

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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

This proposal is for the construction of a new maximum-seven-story, approximately 154,000 square foot medical office building with ground-level commercial space and a maximum-seven-story, maximum-95-unit independent living building with additional assisted living units and amenities, along with the preservation of three historic buildings at 465-577 S. Arroyo Parkway. Five levels of subterranean parking are proposed to be constructed in conjunction with the project.

**Existing Site Conditions**

The site consists of five contiguous lots totaling approximately 3.3 acres along the west side of S. Arroyo Parkway between Bellevue Drive and E. California Boulevard. It is currently developed with nine buildings, surface and subterranean parking, and landscaping. The table below provides basic information about the existing buildings and their proposed dispositions in conjunction with the project:

<b>Address</b>	<b>Year Built</b>	<b>Historic Status</b>	<b>Proposed Disposition</b>
465 S. Arroyo Parkway	1923 & 2008	1923 building may be eligible for landmark designation	Retain
491 S. Arroyo Parkway	1945	Not evaluated – does not appear to be eligible for historical designation	Demolish
495 S. Arroyo Parkway	1925	Not evaluated - does not appear to be eligible for historical designation	Demolish
499 S. Arroyo Parkway	Unknown	Not evaluated - does not appear to be eligible for historical designation	Demolish

Address	Year Built	Historic Status	Proposed Disposition
501 S. Arroyo Parkway	Unknown	Not evaluated - does not appear to be eligible for historical designation	Demolish
503 S. Arroyo Parkway	1940	Determined eligible for landmark designation	Retain
523 S. Arroyo Parkway	1922	Determined eligible for landmark designation	Retain
541 S. Arroyo Parkway	1961	Not evaluated - does not appear to be eligible for historical designation	Demolish
577 S. Arroyo Parkway	2003	Ineligible for historical designation	Demolish

A tree inventory identifies 23 non-protected trees on the site (most of which are Queen Palm trees between 15 and 20 feet high), all of which are proposed to be removed, as well as 17 street trees along the project site’s street frontages. Two street trees are proposed to be removed, which will require a Public Tree Removal permit through the Urban Forestry Division of the Department of Public Works.

**Surrounding Context:**

The surrounding context along S. Arroyo Parkway south of the project site largely consists of one-story commercial buildings. However, there is a five-story mixed-use building across Arroyo Parkway from the 491-495 S. Arroyo Parkway buildings at the north end of the project site and the Whole Foods building and others north of the site are larger-scaled buildings up to four stories in height. The Metro L Line (formerly Gold Line) tracks adjoin the west side of the site; the Del Mar Station is approximately 1,600 feet walking distance north of the northernmost point of new construction on the site and the Fillmore Station is approximately 1,300 feet walking distance from the southeast corner of the site. Nearby designated historic resources include the following:

- Home Laundry at 432 S. Arroyo Parkway to the northeast (1923, Marston, Van Pelt & Maybury)
- Bryan Court at 427 S. Marengo Avenue to the northeast (1916, D.M. Renton)
- Evanston Inn at 385 S. Marengo Avenue to the northeast (1887, architect unknown)
- South Marengo Historic District to the east (Marengo Avenue between Bellevue Drive & E. California Boulevard)
- Marengo-Pico Landmark District to the southeast (Marengo Avenue between E. California Boulevard & Pico Street)
- Royal Laundry at 443 S. Raymond Avenue to the west (Main Plant: 1927, Gordon Kaufmann & Drive-up Building: 1939, George Whyte)

**Zoning/General Plan Designations:**

The site is within the CD6 Zoning District (Central District Specific Plan, Arroyo Corridor/Fair Oaks subdistrict) along with all other properties along Arroyo Parkway roughly south of Del Mar Boulevard to the City limits. The General Plan designation of the property is High Mixed Use (0-

3.0 FAR). The height limit for the property and all others along Arroyo Parkway within the CD6 Zoning District is 50' or 65' with height averaging. As noted in the Zoning Compliance Matrix in Attachment A, the project has requested a Zone Change to a Planned Development (PD) District as well as a Variance for Historic Resources to allow its construction.

**Proposed Project Design:**

As noted above, the existing Whole Foods Market building at the northern end of the site, including the former Pacific Electric Railroad Garage Building of which it is a part, is proposed to be retained. Immediately south of this building is proposed a vehicular access driveway, partially covered by building volume above, with a drop-off zone, small surface parking area and a ramp to the subterranean parking garage at the rear northwest corner of the site. The assisted/independent living building is proposed to be constructed south of this driveway and is configured in an L-shape plan with the narrower, five-story leg of the building adjoining the street and the longer, seven-story (90'6" maximum height) leg adjoining the Metro right-of-way at the rear, behind the two historic buildings to be retained. The building is proposed to include a two-story volume immediately behind the historic buildings, which engages the rear of the 523 S. Arroyo Parkway building. A second driveway, drop-off zone and subterranean parking ramp, configured similarly to the northerly vehicular access previously described, but open to the sky, is proposed south of the historic buildings and the seven-story (93'6" maximum height) medical office building is proposed south of this access point, at the southern edge of the site. Outdoor roof decks are proposed at the sixth floor of the building along both street frontages, creating five-story articulated volumes at those locations. A third vehicular access driveway with a small surface parking zone and ramp to the subterranean garage is proposed at the southwest corner of the site along E. California Boulevard. Both buildings are proposed to be set back 10 feet from the west property line/Metro right-of-way, are largely designed with zero setbacks along the street frontages, with the exception of a re-entrant corner design at the corner of Arroyo Parkway and California Boulevard, and open spaces surrounding the historic buildings.

The ground floor of the medical office building is shown in the plans having commercial space at the southern end with entries facing the street corner and a lobby space at the northern end with entries facing north toward the vehicular drop-off zone. An elevator from the subterranean garage terminates at the northeast corner of the building and a stair terminates at the southwest corner. A bank of elevators and stairs is shown at the western end of the lobby space, landing roughly in the center of the upper levels of the building. An additional stair along the east side of the subterranean garage terminates at ground level adjacent to Arroyo Parkway between the southerly historic building and the southerly driveway.

The ground floor of the assisted/independent living building is shown with a grand foyer at the southern end with entries facing south toward the vehicular drop-off zone and a stair leading up to an activity space and outdoor deck at the two-story volume of the building described above. The remainder of the ground floor is proposed to be used for dining space and back-of-house operations. An elevator extends from the subterranean garage to the southwest corner of the grand foyer space and an additional elevator terminates within an open space area between the two historic buildings. Two banks of elevators are shown within the assisted and independent living portions of the building; the northerly bank is shown extending from the subterranean garage while the southerly bank terminates at the ground floor. An additional stair extends from the ground floor at the southwest corner of the back-of-house area and another extends from the subterranean garage to ground level at the northeast corner of the site. The second and

third floors, as well as a portion of the fourth floor are shown as assisted living units with additional amenity spaces on the second and third floors and an outdoor courtyard space at the second floor. The remaining portion of the fourth floor, as well as the entire fifth and seventh floors are shown with independent living units; the sixth floor also has independent living units as well as additional amenity spaces and an outdoor roof deck at the eastern end.

The buildings are generally designed in a restrained contemporary design with flat roofs, punched window openings designed in a repeating and stacked pattern, variations in exterior cladding, and both solid and open roof coverings at the outdoor roof decks. The medical office building also appears to incorporate areas of floor-to-ceiling glazing juxtaposed with areas of solid cladding, projecting vertical fins and a glass parapet railing. Conceptual materials described in the project narrative include brick, dark-colored window framing and metal projections with fenestration intended to respond to the two-story historic building being retained.

**Applicable Design Guidelines:**

- Design-Related Goals and Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan
- Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan
- Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation

**Previous/Existing Entitlements:**

- Design review and Zoning entitlements for the Whole Foods Market project
- Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR). A PPR comment letter was provided to the applicant on October 3, 2019. The project was presented to the City Council on December 16, 2019

**Approvals Needed/Project Scheduling:**

- Planned Development & Variance for Historic Resources (City Council)
- Public Tree Removal (Urban Forestry Advisory Committee/City Manager)
- Concept and Final Design Review (Design Commission)
- Building Permits (Building Staff)

**CEQA Clearance:**

This is preliminary consultation regarding design review and is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

**STAFF OBSERVATIONS:**

**Applicable Design Guidelines:**

The following design guidelines are applicable to the project and should guide further development and study of the project as it moves forward in the design review process:

***Design-Related Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan:***

- 4.10: Locate and design buildings to relate to and frame major public streets, open spaces, and cityscape. New development at intersections should consider any number of corner treatments, and should balance safety and accessibility concerns with the vision of the area and the need for buildings to engage the street and create a distinct urban edge.
- 4.11: Require that development demonstrates a contextual relationship with neighboring structures and sites addressing such elements as building scale, massing, orientation, setbacks, buffering, the arrangement of shared and private open spaces, visibility, privacy, automobile and truck access, impacts of noise and lighting, landscape quality, infrastructure, and aesthetics.
- 7.1: Design each building as a high-quality, long term addition to the City’s urban fabric; exterior design and buildings material shall exhibit permanence and quality, minimize maintenance concerns, and extend the life of the building.
- 7.2: Allow for the development of a diversity of buildings styles. Support innovative and creative design solutions to issues related to context and environmental sustainability.
- 7.3: Require that new and adaptively re-used buildings are designed to respect and complement the defining built form, massing, scale, modulation, and architectural detailing of their contextual setting.
- 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.

***Central District Specific Plan Design Guidelines:***

- SP 1.3 Discourage developments that are internally focused at the expense of an active street environment, or developments that result in “left-over” space.
- SP 1.4 Establish clear pedestrian connections on-site that are well- marked and gracious; direct pedestrians from surface or structured parking to buildings, streets, and public spaces.
- SP 2.3 Encourage recessed main building or shop entrances consistent with a traditional “main street” design that is inviting and does not interrupt street and/or retail continuity.
- SP 2.4 Permit “eroded” building corners at street intersections sufficient to promote visibility and to allow for the comfortable collection of people.
- SP 2.5 Allow large developments to pull back from the street edge for plazas or gracious entry fore-courts, provided street continuity is not unduly interrupted along the majority of the block.

- SP 3.1 Encourage the presence of well-defined outdoor space, such as on-site plazas, interior courtyards, patios, terraces and gardens; these are especially encouraged in association with major developments.
- SP 3.2 Site outdoor spaces in accordance with the location and scale of adjacent streets, buildings, and uses; for instance, on-site plazas should not unduly interrupt the retail continuity of a street.
- SP 3.3 Site outdoor spaces to establish a comfortable transition between the exterior and interior of a building.
- SP 3.7 Link adjoining outdoor spaces with comfortable paths and walks to create a network of spaces.
- SP 4.1 Make plazas and courtyards comfortable for human activity and social interaction – standing, sitting, talking, eating.
- SP 4.2 Create a pleasant microclimate, including shade from summer sun and access to winter sunlight; locate seating with consideration to noontime sun and shade.
- BD 1.3 Establish a harmonious transition between newer and older buildings; compatible design should respect the scale, massing and materials of adjacent buildings and landscape.
- BD 1.4 Complement the architectural character of an adjacent historic building or area; however, imitation of historical styles is discouraged.
- BD 1.5 Avoid mimicry of historical architectural styles; new buildings should not appear to have been constructed during a past era, and references to period architecture should be interpreted in a contemporary manner.
- BD 1.6 Discourage excessive and overly gratuitous ornamentation that detracts from the visual clarity of Downtown’s historic architecture.
- BD 1.7 Employ design strategies and incorporate architectural elements that reinforce Downtown’s unique qualities; in particular, Downtown’s best buildings tend to support an active street life.
- BD 2.1 Design building volumes to maintain a compatible scale with their surroundings; in general, break down the scale and massing of larger buildings.
- BD 2.2 Rely on building massing and orientation to place strong visual emphasis on the street and other important civic spaces.
- BD 2.3 Employ strong building forms such as towers to demarcate important gateways, intersections, and street corners; strong corner massing can function as the visual anchor for a block.
- BD 2.4 Employ simple, yet varied masses, and emphasize deep openings that create shadow lines and provide visual relief; discourage monolithic vertical extrusions of a maximum building footprint.
- BD 2.5 Use articulated sub-volumes as a transition in size to adjacent historic or residential structures that are smaller in scale.
- BD 2.6 Vary three dimensional character as a building rises skyward; in general, differentiate between the base, middle and top levels of a building.
- BD 2.7 Emphasize the horizontal dimension to make a tall building appear less overwhelming.

- BD 4.1 Promote active, pedestrian-oriented uses with a high degree of transparency along the street; uses should be readily discernable to the passer-by.
- BD 4.2 Design buildings to encourage multi-tenant occupancy and walk-in traffic at the street level; as far as feasible, uses which have little need for walk-in traffic should be discouraged from street-front locations.
- BD 5.4 Accentuate the entrance(s) to a building's main lobby or interior office space; these main building entrances should be prominent in terms of size, articulation, and use of materials.
- BD 5.6 Differentiate a main building entrance from storefront entrances into street level businesses.
- BD 7.6 Provide overhead cover along the sidewalk for pedestrian comfort, especially where there are few mature street trees; canopies and awnings are encouraged.
- BD 8.1 Express roofs in a visually interesting manner that complements the composition of the building and the surrounding area; sculpted roof forms are encouraged.
- BD 8.3 Use a strong, attractively detailed cornice or parapet in conjunction with a flat roof.

***Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:***

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

**Potential Design Issues:**

- The proposed buildings are substantially higher than existing surrounding development and also exceed the height limit for new development along Arroyo Parkway. While the current design appropriately places lower-scaled volumes at the street edge with taller volumes behind, and incorporates strategies to provide lower volumes and open access points adjacent to the historic buildings to be retained, the height and massing of the buildings should continue to be studied to incorporate street-edge volumes that comply

with the height limit of the Zoning District, as well as additional lower-height volumes north of the historic buildings. Consider placing building volumes over portions of the central vehicular access driveway and drop-off zone, particularly toward the western side of the site, to allow for creation of additional massing articulation without significant reduction in proposed floor area. Additional lower-scaled volumes could be placed adjacent to the historic buildings to further complete the streetscape and site; the small two-story volume behind the buildings could be slightly increased in height to create a more evident height transition from the historic buildings to the taller volumes to the west.

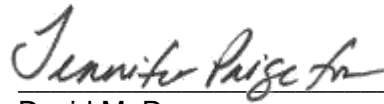
- Continue to explore ways that the different buildings and uses on the site interact with and relate to each other, both functionally and architecturally, including the existing historic buildings and the Whole Foods Market. In future submittals, provide exhibits to demonstrate how the design features of the new buildings relate proportionally to those of the historic buildings to be retained.
- Incorporate additional entrances to the commercial space and medical office building lobby from Arroyo Parkway and California Boulevard. Provide architectural frontage elements and other architectural treatments to highlight the main building entries. Further define the proposed uses of the historic buildings and ensure that they maintain visual and functional engagement with the public realm.
- Provide a pedestrian circulation plan that outlines the intended paths of travel for the various users of the site and ensure that the buildings, open spaces and vertical circulation points are integrated with public and private pedestrian pathways that are meaningful, comfortable and inviting. Provide additional detail of the design and orientation of stairs and elevators that terminate in outdoor locations adjoining the public realm.
- Further define the programming of open spaces and ground-level plazas and ensure that design features to support the intended uses of these spaces are incorporated into the design.
- Further study the treatment of rooflines and parapets in conjunction with the Central District design guidelines. Ensure that the tops of the buildings are articulated from the middle portions below and are visually attractive, sculptural and detailed in a manner consistent with the design of the buildings.
- The historic buildings to be retained should be carefully reviewed by a qualified Historic Architect to identify rehabilitation treatments to be implemented in conjunction with the proposed project. Any structural or exterior cosmetic damage that is identified should be repaired and any missing or altered exterior features restored in conjunction with the project. Provide a rehabilitation plan for the buildings in future design review submittals.



**Project Scheduling/Sequencing:**

- Zoning Entitlements (PD Zone Change & Variance for Historic Resources)
- Concept and Final Design Review by the Design Commission
- Building Permits

Respectfully Submitted,



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Prepared by:



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**Attachments:**

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