



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** AUGUST 10, 2021

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

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

**SUBJECT:** APPLICATION FOR FINAL DESIGN REVIEW  
NEW CONSTRUCTION OF A 19-UNIT, FOUR-STORY, MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH TWO LEVELS OF SUBTERRANEAN PARKING  
150 SOUTH OAK KNOLL AVENUE

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#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Commission:

#### **Environmental Determination**

Find that the application for Final Design Review was subject to environmental review in the Categorical Exemption adopted by the Design Commission for Concept Design Review on December 22, 2020, 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 there are no protected trees on the site.

#### **Findings for Final Design Approval**

1. Find that the project, upon implementation of the conditions of Final Design Review approval, will comply with the conditions of Concept Design Review;
2. Find that the project, upon implementation of the conditions of Final Design Review approval, will be consistent with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan and the Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific; and,

3. Based on these findings, approve the application for Final Design Review subject to the following conditions, which shall be subject to staff review and approval prior to issuance of a building permit:

**Conditions:**

1. The material specifications for the trellis shall be revised to depict a smooth finish without a faux woodgrain in the plans submitted for building permit plan check.
2. 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.
3. 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 Attachment C, to the satisfaction of said departments.
4. The transformer shall be undergrounded, and if possible undergrounded in the driveway approach unless documentation from PWP is provided confirming the transformer cannot be undergrounded anywhere on the site.
5. All metalwork, including windows, perforated panels, metal cladding, light fixtures, flashing, etc. shall be a consistent dark bronze color, independent of manufacturers' color names. In particular, review the window framing color for consistency with other dark bronze finishes proposed.
6. The proposed or altered street trees shown in the plans are not approved as part of this review. Separate review by the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee and action by the City Manager is required for replacement of, or alteration to, public trees.
7. The project shall comply with the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance and any changes to the proposed landscape design that may be required shall be reviewed and approved by staff prior to issuance of a building permit.
8. A copy of this decision letter, including written responses to each condition indicating how and where they are addressed, shall be included in the plans submitted for building permit plan check.
9. The lighting temperature specified on the final plans shall not rise above 3,000 kelvin for all proposed exterior fixtures. Replacement lighting elements should be regulated by maintenance staff in the future.
10. Prior to issuance of a building permit, submit to staff written confirmation from utility providers (Pasadena Water & Power and The Gas Company) that the utility equipment shown on the plans are sufficient to meet the demands of the project and that the locations shown in the plans are approved.

11. An 8' x 8' minimum mock-up panel of the building finishes shall be provided and reviewed by staff prior to construction and installation.
12. This project will be subject to 50%, 75%, and 100% inspection points and sign-off by staff of the Design & Historic Preservation section to ensure that the project is constructed as indicated and specified in the decision letter and that all work is performed consistent with the approved plans.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The application presents design revisions in response to the conditions of approval from the previous Concept Design Review phase in addition to providing plans that are more detailed, elevations, sections and color and material information for the project. The current drawings are more fully detailed and present a palette of materials that is consistent with the design of the building. Upon reviewing the drawings in detail, staff recommends approval of the application with the conditions of approval outlined above and explained within this report.

### **BACKGROUND:**

On December 22, 2020, the Design Commission approved an application for Concept Design Review for this project. This application is for Final Design Review of the same project.

### **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 measures approximately 9,900 square feet and is comprised of a rectangular-shaped interior lot located on the easterly block face of South Oak Knoll Avenue, between East Green and Cordova Streets. The project site is currently developed with a surface parking lot with a perimeter concrete block wall, which is proposed to be demolished. There are no existing structures or trees within the property, however, two street trees fronting the site are proposed to be retained.
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties include single-story commercial and religious buildings, multi-family residential buildings ranging between one and four stories in height throughout the block between East Green Street and Cordova Street, and two 5-story multi-family residential buildings adjoin the rear property line of the subject site.
- Project Description: The proposal is for the construction of a four-story multi-family residential development with 19 dwelling units, and 25 subterranean parking spaces located at 150 South Oak Knoll Avenue.

- Site Design: The proposed four-story project consists of a single building mass with a footprint that would occupy the majority of the site except for the setback areas (required by Code) at the front, rear, and sides of the property, a vehicular driveway at the south edge of the property, and an open garden space at the northeast corner of the site, fronting the street. The building’s primary facade would be oriented to the west, facing Oak Knoll Avenue; and vehicular access is proposed along the same frontage, at the southwest corner of the property. Pedestrian access would also be available from the street-facing elevation.
- Architectural Style: Contemporary style
- Developer: Balian Investments, LLC
- Architects: Onyx Architects
- Landscape Architect: Armstrong & Walker Landscape Architecture

**ANALYSIS:**

**Conditions of Concept Design Review:**

Below are the Commission’s conditions of approval and recommendations from Concept Design Review for the project, as well as the architect’s responses and staff’s comments. See Attachment A for the complete set of revised plans, elevations, wall sections, architectural details and materials specifications and imagery.

Concept Design Review Conditions, December 22, 2020	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
1. Combine or simplify the configuration of walkways that connect the sidewalk to the main building entry and to the residential units fronting the street. In addition, provide additional landscaping and permanent amenities that can potentially activate the front garden spaces.	The walkways within the courtyard have been revised to engage circulation through the active amenities within the space. The walkway at the northwest corner of the courtyard provides access directly off the public right of way avoiding the need for a pedestrian ramp. The natural grade of the sidewalk slopes down as you move south resulting in a secondary stepped entry portal leading to the courtyard centered on the building facade. The circulation through the courtyard meanders between built in multi-level stepped planters as well as permanent seating and gathering spaces. The north residential unit entry off the courtyard has been tucked in between planter areas to create a sense of	The ground level plan and proposed landscaping have been revised to better coordinate the site and ground floor unit access, and have been treated with revised planter areas, which will hold more lush landscaping and seating.  The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfactorily addressed.

Concept Design Review Conditions, December 22, 2020	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
	<p>privacy while maintaining a relationship to the courtyard itself. The stepped planters double to provide shade and privacy to the residential windows fronting the communal area.</p> <p>The private patio for the south residential unit has been redesigned with direct access to the courtyard. This revision avoids a separate direct connection to the sidewalk as previously designed and provides a safer transition to the unit and relationship to the amenity spaces. On grade pavers with area drains serve as the main floor finish within the courtyard and private patio spaces along the street frontage. The finish on the stepped planters are an architectural board formed poured in place concrete with low level step lights in contrasting colors. The large steel entry canopy serves as a sheltered transition to the main building entry as well as the two units fronting the street.</p>	
<p>2. Modify the trellis designs on the fourth floor level and roof so that they are well integrated to overall development. In addition, explore alternative trellis designs that can provide protection from the elements so that the terraces can be used year-round.</p>	<p>The trellis on the 5th level roof terrace has been removed per City staff and design commission request. The trellis on the 4th level roof deck has been redesigned and no longer extends off the exterior parapet wall to create a layering effect keeping the posts stepped back from the main facade. The trellis also avoids any ledger connections to the building itself and acts as a stand alone system. The horizontal members have been revisited and provided with more slats to for added shade to the usable areas.</p>	<p>The design and location fourth level terrace has been appropriately revised to better coordinate with the architectural design. However, the actual materials of the trellis are specified on the color and material board as “Alumawood” which is a manufactured product with a faux wood finish. Staff recommends a condition of approval that the material specifications for the trellis be revised in the plans submitted for building plan check to depict a smooth finish without a faux woodgrain.</p>

Concept Design Review Conditions, December 22, 2020	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
		Although the trellis has been eliminated from the roof level, the landscape plan includes multiple planters and several smaller trees in pots, which will provide necessary shade. As conditioned, the condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfactorily addressed.
3. The plans submitted for Final Design Review shall include product specifications and clearly depict all of the proposed permanent amenities within the roof terraces, courtyard, and communal balconies.	Product specification have been included in the AB-900 series drawing sheets. Landscape plans have been provided and are coordinated in tune with courtyard and roof terrace architectural plans. Proposed permanent amenities are provided including product imagery.	The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfactorily addressed.
4. Refine the configuration, materials, colors, and finishes of the courtyard planters and walkway walls to enhance their connection with the street level and to express the high-quality design of the building.	On grade pavers with area drains serve as the main floor finish within the courtyard and private patio spaces along the street frontage. The finish on the stepped planters are an architectural board formed poured in place concrete with low level step lights in contrasting colors. The large steel entry canopy serves as a sheltered transition to the main building entry as well as the two units fronting the street.	The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfactorily addressed.
5. The east and south building elevations shall receive the same level of roof height variation and dimensionality as depicted on the north and west elevations in order to maintain a harmonious design on all sides of the building.	East and South building elevations have been revisited as needed. Variations in roof parapet heights have been provided, as well as slightly reconfigured facade design to tie all elevations harmoniously.	The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfactorily addressed.
6. Submit revised landscape plans for Final Design Review, clearly indicating the locations of planting species, a legend, general dimensions of landscaped and hardscape	Updated landscape plans have been provided.	The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfactorily addressed.

<b>Concept Design Review Conditions, December 22, 2020</b>	<b>Architect Responses</b>	<b>Staff Comment:</b>
<p>areas, and photographs of the proposed landscape species.</p>		
<p>7. The applicant shall include an illustrated written response to each condition of approval associated with Concept Design Review. Brief written responses without accompanying diagrams are not acceptable.</p>	<p>All conditions of approval have been addressed with written responses. These response pages include illustrative exhibits to support each response.</p>	<p>The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>
<p>8. 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.</p>	<p>City of Pasadena Climate Action Plan features as listed in the attached checklist are shown on the floor plans. Please see attached completed checklist.</p>	<p>The condition of approval has been satisfactorily addressed.</p> <p>Staff recommends that this condition be carried forward as a condition of approval for Final Design Review to reinforce that continued compliance is required.</p>
<p>9. 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 B and C, 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.</p>	<p>All Department of Public Works and Department of Transportation conditions have been taken into consideration, and the project will ensure compliance of each item as listed. The conditions of approval for each department have been added to the front end drawing sheets and all conditions that can be addressed on the plans have been incorporated.</p>	<p>The condition of approval has been satisfactorily addressed.</p> <p>Staff recommends that this condition be carried forward as a condition of approval for Final Design Review to reinforce that continued compliance is required.</p>
<p>10. Vents and drainage appurtenances shall be not be located on the street facing elevation and should be routed through the roof to the greatest extent possible.</p>	<p>All previously shown downspouts evident on the north elevation have been converted to internal drains and overflow within the exterior wall cavities. There are no external downspouts for this project. The intake and exhaust vents have been avoided on the west street facing elevation and all other vents will be dimensioned for proper placement and color matched to</p>	<p>The condition of approval has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>

Concept Design Review Conditions, December 22, 2020	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
	<p>their adjacent wall finishes as needed for best aesthetic appeal.</p>	
<p>11. The blade-like wall supports for the balconies shall be further refined with respect to materiality and massing and termination into other adjacent surfaces in the Final Design Review submittal</p>	<p>The "blade-like" aluminum siding wall has been redesigned to address the condition of approval.</p> <p>The wall has been expanded to an 8' wide application to bisect the otherwise lengthy private balcony on each floor level and detailed to provide approximately 15 inches of thickness. The depth of the wall allows for introduction of a recessed alcove on the balcony facing side of the wall as a feature element for the residential units.</p> <p>At each balcony a return soffit is provided with the same cladded finish. This soffit anchors the wall back into the main mass of the building for an added impression of structural support. The soffit in turn doubles as a chase to house the exhaust vents from the respective residential units.</p> <p>The wall has also been extended up to the roof terrace level to break up the long expanse of guardrail and provide added color, materiality and parapet height variation to the roof deck area.</p>	<p>The aluminum siding wall has been revised in width and thickness and extends up to the roof terrace level to appear more substantial and to break up the long expanses of the balconies on the south elevation. This wall is detailed with functional elements such as an alcove for residential use and houses mechanical exhaust vents.</p> <p>Although the Alumaboard cladding does appear to be somewhat heavy and floats unsupported above the driveway the wall is proportional with a similar volume on the east elevation and does integrate into the materials logic of the rest of the design.</p> <p>Therefore, the condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfactorily addressed.</p>

**Materials & Colors:**

The color and material board on Sheet AB-900 through AB-906 indicates that the exterior cladding consists primarily of Omega smooth troweled cement plaster in three colors, Omega integral 9202 "Snow" (off-white), integral 9257 "Thumper" (light grey), and an unidentified dark grey paint. The elevation drawings also depict several sub volumes in a reddish color, which is to be clad in vertically oriented Alumaboard planks with 6-inch reveals. This material would come in a factory smooth finish in red and would transition to stucco at interior corners. This material is also proposed to be used for the balcony soffits/undersides in black/charcoal. The balcony fascias consist of a break metal with a painted black/charcoal finish. All exterior metals such as guardrails, balcony railings, the ground level entry canopy and the anodized aluminum curtain walls and storefronts by Kawneer at the east elevation would also have a consistent



black/charcoal finish. Sheet AB-801, detail 4 shows that some portions of the roof overruns have a brake metal coping/fascia, painted charcoal grey. The proposed windows and patio doors are Milgard Ultra Series fiberglass windows in “Black Bean” a dark grey/charcoal factory finish. A large angled metal canopy with a charcoal/black finish is prominently located over the main pedestrian entry.

Overall, the chosen materials and colors palette appropriately reinforces the Contemporary design of the building. Consistent with the applicable design guidelines, staff also recommends a condition of approval requiring consistent metalwork colors, independent of manufacturers’ color names to ensure consistency of metal finishes throughout. Finally, consistent with standard conditions of recent Final Design Review approvals, staff also recommends that a large-scale mock-up panel be provided for staff review during construction to ensure high-quality material installation.

### **Mechanical Screening:**

The roof plans on Sheets AB-104 through AB1-106 depict the placement of mechanical systems on the roof of the building, screened by parapets. As noted in the table above, the exterior downspouts on the north elevation and roof and overflow drains are concealed within the exterior walls. Furthermore, all of the balconies are designed with open railings and will not require overflow drainage. The garage level plans on Sheets AB-100.P1 and P2 depict mechanical rooms, electrical rooms, elevator equipment rooms, and the trash collection room. The ground floor plan/first level plan on Sheet AB-101 shows the location of the back flow preventer and the gas meters at the northwest corner of the site, within the front yard setback area facing the street. These areas are screened to the extent possible with landscaping. Garage exhaust vents are also depicted at the ground level near southern property line and through the roof. As noted in the table above, the through-the-wall vents have been relocated (to the extent possible) so they do not face the public streets, and where visible, consist of a simple vent cap painted to match the adjacent wall surface.

However, the ground level plans also show a transformer pad within a landscaped area directly adjacent to the South Oak Knoll frontage. It appears that the transformer is proposed to be above ground. As the proposed location of the transformer pad is adjacent to the proposed driveway, staff recommends a condition of approval that the transformer be undergrounded in the driveway entrance as there is no underground infrastructure in this area, unless documentation from PWP is provided that the transformer cannot be undergrounded. Siting the transformer in this location is also consistent with other new comparably sized developments. As conditioned, the location and integration of mechanical equipment, appurtenances and necessary infrastructure is consistent with the applicable design guidelines and well coordinated with the design of the proposed building.

### **Landscaping:**

Landscape plans for this project are included in this report at Attachment C. The proposed project includes substantial landscaped open space areas at the ground floor, small landscaped common open spaces at the second and third levels, a mid-sized fourth floor landscaped terrace and an extensive landscaped area at the roof level. The ground pavers for all areas are Tile-Tech porcelain pavers in “rustic maple” a blend of neural beige and tan tones and “black-

stone,” a mottled dark grey color. Sheet AB-101 depicts the overall first floor plan and includes notes for new 6” CMU block perimeter walls with a smooth troweled plaster skim coat and two 3’- 6” swinging gates facing South Oak Knoll Avenue that will match the design balcony guardrails.

The plant palette on Sheet L-6 depicts a mix of native and non-native water efficient plants in shades of white, yellow, pink and purple. Notable trees include native *Cercis occidentalis* (Western redbud) and *Chilopsis linearis* (Desert willow), dwarf citrus trees, and non-native *Geijera parviflora* (Australian willow) and *Hymenosporum flavum* (Sweetshade) and *Lagerstromia indica* “hopi” (Crape myrtle hybrid). Sheet L-6 also depicts imagery for a variety of ceramic pots by Asian Ceramics in shades of grey and taupe, with contemporary style site furniture, including outdoor sofas, tables, chairs, fire pits, freestanding hammocks, and a portable barbecue. Overall, the proposed landscaping and open space programming appropriately coordinates and compliments the design of the building and ensures the active use of the open space areas.

The City has recently adopted a Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance, and the planting plans will require review for compliance during plan check. Staff has included a condition of approval that all revisions to the landscaping plan in order to comply with the Ordinance shall be reviewed and approved by staff to ensure consistency with the imagery depicted in the plans submitted for Final Design Review. It should also be noted that the ground-level landscape plan includes notes pertaining to street trees; however, street trees are not within the purview of the Design Review authority, and any alterations to the street trees will require further review and recommendation to the City Manager by the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee. Staff recommends inclusion of a condition of approval specifying that any work related to street trees is not approved as part of this application review.

### **Lighting:**

Exterior lighting is depicted on the elevations on Sheets AB-301-through AB-303 and in the Landscape plans in Attachment B. Fixture specifications are included on Sheet AB-905 and show Kuzco ER 3003 models step lights with a matte black finish, Mode split and single outdoor path floodlights with a dark bronze finish, and Maxim Focus 5589BGBK wall sconces with a brushed black metal finish.

The proposed lighting design and is simple and the proposed landscape and wall mounted fixtures are appropriate for the proposed architectural design. As previously stated, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring all metalwork to be the same dark bronze color, independent of the different manufacturers’ color names, including light fixtures. Subject to the standard condition regarding lighting temperature not rising above 3,000 Kelvin, the proposed lighting fixtures are high quality and consistent with the design of the building.

### **Signage:**

Detailed signage plans are not provided for this review. One sign identifying the address of the project is shown on the west elevation and address and parking signs are shown on the east elevation. The Zoning Code requires design review for signs on all new development projects, and future signage at this location will be reviewed through the Consolidated Design Review process.

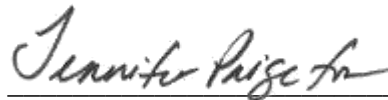
**Comments from Other Departments:**

During Concept Design Review, the Departments of Transportation and Public Works provided a series of recommended conditions, which were incorporated into that previous approval. To reinforce that compliance with these conditions will continue to be required, staff recommends including this condition of Concept Design Review in this decision.

**CONCLUSION:**

Upon implementation of recommended conditions of approval, the project will comply with the conditions of Concept Design Review. The submitted drawings include materials specifications and architectural details that are high-quality and compatible with the overall building design. Staff recommends that the Commission approve the application for Final Design Review with conditions described in this report, which will be further reviewed by staff during building plan check.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Community Development

Prepared by:



Amanda Landry, AICP  
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



Leon E. White  
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Attachments:

- A. Architectural plans, elevations, details, and materials specifications
- B. Landscape plans
- C. Comments/conditions from other City Departments/Divisions