



August 10, 2021

City of Pasadena Design Commission  
Attn: Michi Takeda  
Hale Building  
175 N. Garfield Ave., 2nd Floor  
Pasadena, CA 91101

**Re:139 S. Oak Knoll Ave.**

Dear Members of the Design Commission:

Pasadena Heritage commented strongly on this proposal when it came for Preliminary Design Review, but since then, we have met with the architect and seen it improve. Though S. Oak Knoll Ave. is largely multifamily at this point in time, there are some historic residential properties along Mira Monte Place. At the western terminus of Mira Monte Place stands the graceful Mira Monte Hotel, and on the eastern terminus of the street, at 128 S. Oak Knoll Ave., is an important cultural history site, the former Pasadena Swedish Baptist Church, which is now the Immanuel Lutheran Brethren Church.

We believe that this project should be respectful of the neighborhood and demonstrate a relationship to surrounding buildings. It is better, in our view, to build on a surface parking lot than to tear something down. The initially proposed building forms and styling evoked that of the historic walk-up apartments in Los Angeles and Pasadena from the 1920s, but needed some refinement. For that reason, we challenged the architect to design a contemporary "Hollywood apartment" and to look at nearby historic buildings for examples. In that sense it is now largely successful. The masses and balconies have been simplified, and the main entrance accentuated by a decorative surround.

The one element that we still find lacking is the top of the building, which seems to need some kind of cornice or other treatment to define the top and balance out the base. Other than that, with the improvements made, we find it an acceptable design that demonstrates how small apartment buildings can work within the context of Pasadena.

We thank you for considering our thoughts on this project.

Sincerely,

Susan N. Mossman  
Executive Director

Andrew Salimian  
Preservation Director