



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: NOVEMBER 23, 2021

TO: DESIGN COMMISSION

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

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR FINAL DESIGN REVIEW
NEW TWO-TO-THREE STORY, 13-UNIT MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
439 NORTH HILL AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION:

The 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 July 13, 2021, 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 Alternative At-Grade Parking Location

Acknowledge that a request for at-grade parking pursuant to Section 17.46.020.K.1, was granted on July 13, 2021 in conjunction with Concept Design Review and the plans submitted for Final Design Review are consistent with the plans approved at Concept Design Review.

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 for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Properties; 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 plans shall comply with the conditions provided by the Departments of Public Works and Transportation in Attachment B, to the satisfaction of said departments
2. The new residential units shall incorporate into their design air filtration systems with a minimum MERV 13 rating. Filter replacement shall be conducted as recommended by the manufacturer and the manufacturer's recommendations and records of filter replacement shall be maintained on-site for inspection by the City.
3. The residential building air intakes shall be installed on the façade furthest away from the 210 Freeway.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Option A for the exterior cladding shall be utilized. This option depicts the residential building volumes as clad entirely in fiber cement shingles and the covered parking clad in stucco, and follows a clear compositional logic with the habitable space being clad in shingles, with the parking areas clad in stucco.
7. The details for the horizontal belt course shall be revised to a fiber cement panel, rather than a stucco band.
8. The chosen color for the stucco shall more accurately match the renderings, or the color shall be revised to match the color of the shingles.
9. The windows shall incorporate exterior dimensional mullions in addition to the interior simulated divided lights.
10. All vents shall be routed through the roof if feasible. All through-the-wall vents shall be located on secondary elevations not facing the street or main garden, to the extent possible.

11. The design of the column bases shall be revised to match the detailing of the front porch, and the exact specifications for the tiled fountain and benches be clearly noted in the plans submitted for building plan check.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.

BACKGROUND:

On July 13, 2021, the Design Commission approved an application for Concept Design Review for construction of a new two-to-three story, 13-unit multifamily development with at-grade parking. This application is for Final Design Review of the same project.

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: High Density Residential
- Zoning: RM-48, HL 36 (Multi-family residential, 0-48 Units per acre, Height Limit Overlay of 36 feet)
- 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 for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts.
- Site: The 11,580 square-foot project site is a rectangular shaped lot located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Hill Avenue and Tyler Alley, between East Villa and Maple Streets. The project site is currently developed with one non-historic, single-family residence built in 1912 by architect/developer Henry C. Deming and a garage built in 1938, all of which are proposed to be demolished. There are also six trees on the site, three of which are proposed to be removed. All the trees to be removed are small fruit trees, which are not protected under the Tree Protection Ordinance.

- **Surroundings:** The surrounding context is in transition. The surrounding properties include single- and multi-family residential buildings ranging between one and three stories in height. The property directly adjacent to the west is zoned RM-48, HL-36 and is developed with a three-story multi-family residential building; the properties to the south are zoned the same and are developed with two, two-story multi-family residential buildings with a large carport structure at the front; at the north, is Tyler Alley and garages, open parking, trash bins and fenced backyards serving the RS-6 zoned residential properties fronting on Villa Street. The Holliston Avenue Landmark District, consisting largely of Craftsman style single-family houses, is located two blocks to the northwest of the project site. A Vernacular hipped cottage built in 1904 at 401 N. Chester Ave. (two blocks to the west of the site) was determined to be eligible for city designation as an individual landmark.
- **Project Description:** This proposal is for the construction of a two-to-three-story, 13-unit apartment building with at grade parking. The building itself features cubic massing with gabled roofs that vary in height from two to three stories and graduates from east to west. The front portion of the building consists of a two-story volume with flats on each floor. The rear portion of the building consists of two-stories of flats atop a surface parking garage.
- **Site Design:** The building is proposed to be sited around a roughly rectangular shaped open space area that consists of the main garden. This garden is attached to the front yard by a short walkway. The footprint of the proposed building is generally rectangular, with a recessed portion at the southeastern portion facing the southern interior property line to accommodate the proposed main garden area. This configuration of open space is intended to protect and provide visual emphasis of two existing mature trees that are proposed to be retained as part of this project: a Guava tree located at the southeast corner of the property and an Ash tree located near the southern property line, both with a diameter-at-breast-height (DBH) of 30.”
- **Architectural Style:** Contemporary Craftsman
- **Architect:** Garo Minassian
- **Landscape Architect:** Larry Tison

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, January 23, 2018:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
1. The plans shall comply with the conditions provided by the Departments of Public	Agreed	The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied.

Concept Design Review Conditions, January 23, 2018:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
Works and Transportation in Attachment B, to the satisfaction of said departments.		However, staff recommends that this condition also be incorporated into this decision, to reinforce its significance.
2. The new residential units shall incorporate into their design air filtration systems with a minimum MERV 13 rating. Filter replacement shall be conducted as recommended by the manufacturer and the manufacturer's recommendations and records of filter replacement shall be maintained on-site for inspection by the City.	Agreed	The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied. However, staff recommends that this condition also be incorporated into this decision, to reinforce its significance.
3. The residential building air intakes shall be installed on the façade furthest away from the 210 Freeway.	Agreed	The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied. However, staff recommends that this condition also be incorporated into this decision, to reinforce its significance.
4. 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.	Agreed	The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied. However, staff recommends that this condition also be incorporated into this decision, to reinforce its significance.
5. The plans submitted for Final Design Review shall show enlarged details of the proposed stucco.	Stucco finish sample of sand float is provided on the color & material sheet A4.0.	The applicant has provided the requested detail. The Condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied.
6. The solid blank wall condition facing the main garden shall be softened by enlarging the fountain area, having the proposed freestanding trellis/arbor be engaged with the exterior	All of the above enhancements were submitted at the Concept Design review on sheet A4.1	The plans depict these blank walls to be treated with decorative tile work and the landscaping plans indicate an appropriate amount and type of landscaping is also

Concept Design Review Conditions, January 23, 2018:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
<p>walls, installing additional decorative tilework to the walls, installing additional planters with engaged bench seats and planted with climbing vines or tall shrubs adjacent to the walls, or any other appropriate means to alleviate the blank wall conditions facing the main garden.</p>		<p>proposed in these locations to soften the appearance of the blank walls that enclose the parking area.</p> <p>The Condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied.</p>
<p>7. The freestanding arbor, if not attached to the building, shall be enlarged to the extent possible to provide for more sheltered open space.</p>	<p>The arbor was enlarged on the same sheet A4.1 at the Concept Design review</p>	<p>There is a minor discrepancy in plans and one of the sheets still depicts a smaller arbor, but the majority of the sheets and the site plan correctly depict the enlarged arbor.</p> <p>The Condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied.</p>
<p>8. The applicant shall provide alternative materials studies showing the residential units with a shingle material, with the use of stucco cladding reserved for the podium/parking areas only, as well as studies showing varying heights for the stucco base at the ground floor of the residential units at the easterly end of the site.</p>	<p>Two new A3.1 Option A & Option B colored elevation sheets have been prepared to address this comment to go along with the Original A3.1 Concept review colored elevation. The two new ones have the siding brought down to include the first floor, one all the way down the second to a stucco wainscot base level.</p>	<p>The applicant has provided the requested alternative studies on Sheets A3.1 (Option A, and Option B, with a third unlabeled option on Sheet A4.3 and the condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied.</p> <p>Staff recommends a condition of approval that Option A, which depicts the residential building volumes as clad entirely in fiber cement shingles and the covered parking clad in stucco, and follows a clear compositional logic with the habitable space being clad in shingles, with the parking areas clad in stucco. This alternative also emphasizes the use of high quality materials and detailing, and more closely reflects other Craftsman style architecture in the nearby vicinity. Staff</p>

Concept Design Review Conditions, January 23, 2018:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
		also recommends a condition of approval that the details for the horizontal belt course be revised to a fiber cement panel, rather than a stucco band.

Materials & Colors:

The proposed materials and color palette reflected in the submitted plans appropriately reinforces the chosen Craftsman inspired architectural style and are compatible with the existing development in the general vicinity. The proposed exterior cladding consists of a combination of materials with the primary material being a fiber cement staggered edge shingle panel in “Key Lime,” which is a light green color. The secondary exterior cladding material is stucco with a sand float finish, in “Mirage-X-28,” which is a warm beige color. The exterior trim elements, such as the porch balustrade, balcony and stair railings, window and door trim, rafter tails and fascia are made of wood, with a medium brown stain. As noted in the table above, several alternatives for the composition of the exterior cladding materials have been prepared for the Commission’s consideration. Although the chosen stucco color on the plans is illustrated as a greyish beige, the color sample is for a warmer beige with peach tones. Staff recommends a condition of approval that the chosen color more accurately match the renderings, or that the stucco color match the color of the shingles.

The proposed details and materials doors and windows are also compatible with the chosen architectural style. The proposed vinyl windows (by Milgard) would come with a deep brown factory finish and have a Craftsman inspired three-over-one simulated divided light design. The proposed solid wood paneled doors by Creative Entryways are also Craftsman inspired and would have dark greyish-brown stain and feature a row of three narrow windows. The proposed panelized roll-up garage doors for the individual garages are also detailed with three-light windows. The metal overhead gate to the main parking area would also be similarly detailed to reflect the same general design, but in an open metal design. Although the doors and windows are generally appropriate, staff recommends a condition of approval that the windows incorporate exterior dimensional mullions in addition to the interior simulated divided lights to ensure high quality detailing.

Mechanical Screening:

The majority of the proposed mechanical equipment and utilities are appropriately screened within the enclosed parking area. The heating and cooling units, utility services and electrical meters and refuse and recycling room are clearly depicted on the first floor plan, within the parking area. The wall mounted gas meters are depicted at the north elevation, facing the alleyway and are proposed to be screened by landscaping. Passive ventilation through screened openings is provided for the parking area. The plans do not clearly depict the location of the venting for the individual units, although Sheet A4.0 includes a detail for a simple utilitarian wall vent with a dark bronze finish. Since the exact details of the venting is not clear in the plans, staff recommends a condition of approval that all vents be routed through the roof if

feasible and that all through the wall vents be located on secondary elevations not facing the street or main garden, to the extent possible.

Landscaping:

The proposed hardscape and landscaping plans are complimentary to the chosen architectural style and depict a lushly planted main garden and front yard. The plans include three 48-inch box Parkinsonia “Desert Museum” (Palo Verde) trees, and an extensive program of shrubs and ground covers that includes Dodonaea viscosa (Hopseed bush), Aldygyne Huegrhi (Blue Hibiscus), and Senecio serpehs (Blue senecio ice plant). The plant palette is appropriate for the Pasadena climate and includes hardscape details such as a decorative pedestrian gate covered with an arched wooden trellis, and stone pavers by Belgard, which complement the Craftsman inspired architectural style. Further, the plans on Sheet A4.1 include details for on-site amenities, such as a custom tiled water features with integrated planters, wooden benches and a large wooden arbor. The details for the arbor indicate the open roof will be supported by paired posts with tiled bases. Overall, the design and details are appropriate, however staff recommends a condition of approval that the design of the column bases be revised to match the detailing of the front porch, and that the exact specifications for the tiled fountain and benches be clearly noted in the plans submitted for building plan check.

Lighting:

The proposed plans do not depict an extensive amount of exterior lighting. Sheet A4.0 depicts a single Craftsman style exterior light fixture by LNC with a dark bronze finish. The elevations show that this fixture is proposed near the unit entries and stairs. A small landscape path light fixture by Hinkley with a dark bronze finish is also proposed. The proposed lighting fixtures are high quality and consistent with the design of the building. Staff recommends that the decision also be subject to the standard condition of approval requiring all metalwork to be the same dark bronze color, independent of the different manufacturers’ color names and that the lighting temperature not rise above 3,000 Kelvin.

Signage:

Detailed signage plans are not provided for this review and it is not anticipated that this modest residential project will require an extensive amount of signage. If proposed, all new signage would be subject to the signage related development standards in the Municipal Code and require design review 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 also incorporating the same condition into 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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Development Department

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Attachments:

- A. Plans, elevations, details, materials
- B. Comments/conditions from other City Departments/Divisions