



## 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 FOUR STORY MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING WITH SUBTERRANEAN PARKING  
590 SOUTH FAIR OAKS AVENUE

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#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The staff recommends that the Commission:

#### **Environmental Determination**

Find that the application for Final Design was subject to environmental review in the Errata to the Addendum to the Certified Environmental Impact Report certified by the City Council for Conditional Use Permit #6831, which became effective on March 8, 2021, and that there are no substantial changes to the Project, no substantial changes in the circumstances under which the Project is being undertaken, and no new information of substantial importance that was not known to the Lead Agency at the time the EIR was certified or the time the Addendum was considered that trigger any of the conditions identified in Public Resources Code Section 21166 or State CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 which would require a subsequent or supplemental EIR or MND. Find also that there are no changed circumstances or new information since the Commission approved Concept Design Review for this project on September 14, 2021, which would require further environmental review.

#### **Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance**

Acknowledge that there are no protected trees on the project 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, the design-related goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, and the Design Guidelines in the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan; 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. Elevations and details for the ground level equipment enclosures and stairwells clearly depicting the exact specifications for all exterior materials, doors, planters, etc. shall be incorporated into the plans submitted for building plan check, for review and approval by staff.
2. The decorative feature wall details of the north stairwell shall be incorporated into the east elevation to ensure that this highly visible feature has a consistent high quality appearance.
3. The project shall comply with all of the conditions of approval from CUP No. 6831, to the satisfaction of the respective reviewing departments or divisions.
4. The proposed new street trees shown in the landscape plan 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 public trees.
5. The Fire Department Connection shall be located as far away from the pedestrian entrances, Fair Oaks Avenue and California Boulevard to avoid adversely affecting the street facing appearance of the building.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. A minimum of four large-scale (minimum dimensions of 8' x 4') mock-ups of the precast concrete panels shall be prepared and installed onsite for staff or a subcommittee to review prior to construction and installation.

10. The Okalux windows shall span the entirety of the elevations on which it is proposed to be used, in order to maintain and reinforce expression of the ribbon and large expanses of glazing.
11. The dimensions and materiality of the canopies shall be revised so that they better reinforce the distinct appearance of the ribbon.
12. 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.
13. 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:**

The application presents design revisions in response to the conditions of approval from the previous Concept Design Review phase in addition to providing more detailed plans, 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.

On September 14, 2021, the Design Commission approved an application for Concept Design Review for construction of a new four story medical office building with subterranean parking at 590 S. Fair Oaks Avenue. This application is for Final Design Review of the same project.

#### **Project Overview**

- General Plan Designation: High Mixed-Use (0.0-3.0 FAR, 0-87 dwelling units per acre)
- Zoning: IG-SP-2 (Industrial General, South Fair Oaks Specific Plan)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts.
- Site: The project site is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of California Boulevard and Fair Oaks Avenue, with Edmonson Alley directly adjacent to the site to the east. The site is currently developed with a one-story non-historic commercial structure and a surface parking lot. No protected trees have been identified on the property.

- Surroundings: The surrounding context is in transition, with the immediate built environment consisting of surface parking lots, older non-historic, one and two 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. A fast food restaurant is directly to the south of the project site on the adjacent property. The Metro light rail line Fillmore Station is also located to the southeast 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.
- Project Description: The project involves construction of a 99,946, square-foot, four-story medical office building with subterranean parking.
- Site Design: The proposed building is situated at the northwesterly corner of the site, closest to the intersection. The building is four-stories in height, with the tallest point at the northwest corner. At the easterly end of the site, the building is set back from Edmondson Alley and a landscaped buffer, passenger drop-off area and pedestrian lobby are located on the east elevation, facing the alleyway. An east-west oriented pedestrian paseo is located to the south of the building and connects the easterly lobby to a mid-block crossing that connects Edmondson Alley to Fair Oaks Avenue. A large pedestrian oriented building entrance is located on the west elevation, facing Fair Oaks Avenue. The vehicular entrance and exit ramp to the subterranean parking is located at the southwest corner of the site, accessible from Fair Oaks Avenue. A large equipment/service enclosure is located at the southwesterly corner of the site.
- Architectural Style: Contemporary/Modern
- Developer: 590 Fair Oaks Development, LLC
- Architects: Smith Group
- Landscape Architect: Smith Group

## **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 and B for the complete set of revised plans, elevations, wall sections, architectural details and materials specifications and imagery.

<b>Concept Design Review Conditions, September 14, 2021:</b>	<b>Architect Responses</b>	<b>Staff Comment:</b>
<p>1. All future submittals shall include accurate elevations, renderings, and landscape plans that are internally consistent with each other and contain enlarged details for all exterior features, including but not limited to the canopies, glazing, metal paneling, landscape/hardscape design</p>	<p>In adherence to the conditions required by City Staff and the Design Commission, we are submitting a coordinated technical set of drawings with floor plans, elevations, building sections, exterior wall details, landscape plan and planting palette. In addition, to convey the design intent of the entry canopies and roof top trellises, have added enlarged 3D images in pages 5 through 11 of the Power Point Presentation file.</p>	<p>The submittal package includes details for the architectural features of the primary structure sufficient for this review. However, the submittal is lacking information about minor project features, such as site walls and equipment enclosures. Therefore, staff has recommended conditions of approval related to these features, which are addressed later on in this report.</p> <p>Therefore, the condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied.</p>
<p>2. The glazing and ribbon specifications shall be extensively discussed in the Final Design Review submittal, with multiple alternative products presented for consideration, including the proposed GFRC (accompanied by appropriate drawings, details, product literature, images, and physical samples). The detailing for the glazing and ribbon shall minimize the appearance of joints and mullions, so that the expression of the glazing and ribbon maintain their visual prominence</p>	<p>In adherence to the conditions required by City Staff and the Design Commission, the design team upon consideration of various options for the 'ribbon' including metal panels, GFRC, plaster and Precast concrete panels is recommending Pre-cast concrete panels. The reason being that the fabrication and installation of the Pre-cast concrete panels is better suited to achieve the monolithic continuity of the ribbon and provide contrast against the glass systems. We are showing an example of existing Precast concrete panels installation and color samples in pages 19 and 20 of the Power Point Presentation file. We are also providing wall sections and details to show the interfacing between ribbon and the glazing, as well samples of projects in Pasadena where we have used the same glass type in pages 13 and 25. In addition, we are submitting physical samples of the exterior materials.</p>	<p>The submittal package includes a discussion of the various merits and challenges associated with metal panels and precast concrete panels. Due to a desire to distinguish the project from the Shriner's For Children Medical Center, which is a metal panel clad structure approximately three blocks south of the project site, a desire to avoid an overly wide ribbon design, and the ability to manufacture larger panels with fewer joints, precast concrete was selected as the exterior cladding material.</p> <p>A more in-depth discussion of the proposed material is included in the Color and Materials subsection below</p>
<p>3. A more thorough discussion of, and enlarged details or illustrations for all publicly</p>	<p>In adherence to the conditions required by City Staff and the Design Commission, we are providing renderings that illustrate</p>	<p>The applicant has provided multiple images of potential interior details as well as a materials palette and the</p>

Concept Design Review Conditions, September 14, 2021:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
<p>visible interior aspects of the project (including interior lighting, partition or cubicle walls, demising walls, structural columns, window treatments, etc.) shall be included in the Final Design Review submittal</p>	<p>the connectivity of the building lobby between Fair Oaks Avenue and Edmonson Alley. As planned the lobby is visually open from both entrances, it is inviting with simple wayfinding to elevators and reception, and the interiors materials pallet complements the exteriors materials. Please refer to pages 28 through 29, and physical samples of the proposed lobby and hardscape materials. In addition, since the tenant is not yet identified, we have taken the liberty to show example interior tenant floor plans, and potential interior lighting, partitions, and structural columns. Refer to pages 30 and 31</p>	<p>condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied.</p>
<p>4. The visual prominence of the equipment enclosure and northerly stairwell shall be minimized</p>	<p>In adherence to the conditions required by City Staff and the Design Commission, we have minimized the visual prominence of the equipment enclosure by adding hedges in the north and south elevations of the equipment enclosure and have identified the west elevation of the north stair as a potential art wall. Refer to pages 33 and 34.</p>	<p>In order to soften and minimize the appearance of the north stairwell, additional landscaping on the elevation of the stairwell and a concept for a feature wall or public art, also on the west elevation, is proposed.</p> <p>The proposed landscaping adjacent to the north stair well is identified as “Plant Mix 3” and consists of <i>Dianella revoluta</i> ‘little rev,’ <i>Iris douglasiana</i>, and <i>Lavandula stoechas</i> ‘boysenberry ruffles.’ These plants are compact clumping plants that typically grow up to two feet tall, with the grass-like <i>Dianella revoluta</i> capable of growing up to 4 feet tall, with a wispy appearance. On page 34 of the presentation package the stairwell is depicted as having a decorative feature wall consisting of vertical slats on the west elevation but no formal details for the structure or other elevations were included in the plans. Likewise, enlarged details for</p>

Concept Design Review Conditions, September 14, 2021:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
		<p>the southerly equipment enclosure are also missing from the plans.</p> <p>The general concept for treating these highly visible but utilitarian site features is appropriate. However, as the plans lack specific details and information, staff recommends a condition of approval that elevations and details that very clearly depict the exact specifications for all exterior materials, doors, planters, etc. be incorporated into the plans submitted for building plan check, for review and approval by staff.</p> <p>Staff also recommends that the decorative feature wall details of the north stairwell also be incorporated into the east elevation to ensure that this highly visible feature adjacent to a primary pedestrian entrance has a consistent high quality appearance.</p>
<p>5. The project shall comply with all of the conditions of approval from CUP No. 6831, to the satisfaction of the respective reviewing departments or divisions</p>	<p>In adherence to the conditions required City Staff and the Design Commission, the project will comply with all conditions of approval from the Conditional Use Permit, which will be reflected in the technical set as requested in condition number 9.</p>	<p>The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied.</p> <p>However, staff recommends that the condition of approval be incorporated into this decision to reinforce its significance.</p>
<p>6. The applicant shall include a separate written response to each condition of approval associated with Concept Design Review. Written responses shall be accompanied by illustrated before and after diagrams</p>	<p>In adherence to the conditions required by City Staff and the Design Commission, we are providing this memorandum with our responses and accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation that illustrates before and after diagrams.</p>	<p>The condition of approval from Concept Design Review has been satisfied.</p>

Concept Design Review Recommendations, September 14, 2021	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
<p>1. Further explore the base condition and consider re-introducing the curb/planter walls on all sides, as depicted in the original project imagery</p>	<p>The recommendation provided by City Staff and the Design Commission has been accepted, so the planter at the ground floor has been reintroduced to maintain the original composition of the ribbon. Refer to page 36.</p>	<p>The design has been revised to address the comment and incorporate precast concrete planters into the overall design.</p> <p>This approach further grounds the base of the building, however it also reduces the appearance of the height of the ground floor so that the overall design further diverges from the original imagery, which depicted a tall light filled and transparent ground floor.</p>
<p>2. Explore if minor changes in the height of the ribbon can further return the design of the building even closer to the original project imagery. Consider raising the height of the ground floor ribbon, with more equal spacing of the ribbon on the upper floors</p>	<p>In response to the recommendation provided by City Staff and the Design Commission, we explored the composition and spacing of the ribbon. At ground floor the bottom of the ribbon elevation has been set as high as possible to account for the depth of the structural floor, and at the upper floors we feel strongly that the interim ribbons should be equally spaced. If they are not, the second floor becomes the dominant part of the form and is emphasized unnecessarily. Refer to pages 37, 38 and 39.</p>	<p>The applicant has provided a thorough explanation of their decisions and sample studies to support their choice to maintain the equal spacing between floors. Although irregular spacing between floors, and allowing for a taller ground floor, would bring the overall design closer to the original iconic design, the logic behind the current proposal is reasonable.</p>
<p>3. Explore if additional opportunities exist to add more landscaping or site features at the southern edge of the site</p>	<p>The recommendation provided by City Staff and the Design Commission has been accepted, so we have studied additional opportunities to add additional landscaping and site features at the southern edge of the site. The south plaza seating area has been reconfigured to provide more planter space that can accommodate larger trees, which help to shade the space better for users. These raised planters also serve to buffer from the adjacent loading area to the east and parking lot to the south,</p>	<p>The open space adjacent to the driveway ramp has been revised to create a more intimate, heavily landscaped area with ample opportunities to sit down and enjoy the space. This configuration is more purposeful and welcoming than the prior design and can be more effectively utilized by visitors to the site.</p>

Concept Design Review Recommendations, September 14, 2021	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
	improving the comfort level and quality of the space. Features from the entry drop-off plaza, including pavers and wall-mounted bench seats, have been incorporated into the south plaza space as well to better delineate the site gathering spaces. Please see pages 40 and 41.	

**Materials & Colors:**

The final color and materials palette does not reinforce the original modern and iconic imagery and design inspiration that was presented to the Design Commission at Preliminary Consultation or discussed at other stages of the design review process. The inspiration imagery referenced more fluid designs and high quality, eye-catching, metal panels. Although the general shape and configuration of the ribbon element is consistent with Concept Design review, the initial iconic appearance of the original has evolved into a simpler, more contemporary design. The Design Commission previously very clearly expressed a desire for the final design to be more true to the original imagery, and conditioned that a study of multiple materials be provided for the Commission’s consideration during Final Design Review. The current submittal package includes an exploration of two materials (although GRFC and metal panels are mentioned, separate discussions about each material were not provided) and briefly describes the merits and challenges associated with these different materials. However, the package also describes in detail that based on the overall goals for the project and direction from ownership, as well as construction and maintenance considerations such as the ability to procure large sized panels and maintain better quality control during manufacturing, a precast concrete barrier system with very crisp edges and detailing was identified as the chosen exterior cladding material (Clark Pacific 1-N in white, with a sandblasted finish).

In addition, the architecture team indicated to staff that while more curvilinear forms and rounded details were considered for the ribbon during the design evolution to reinforce the organic nature of the original imagery, it is the desire of ownership to maintain the rigid linear influence of International style designs. The precast concrete panels allow for the desired crisp lines and can be manufactured with larger dimensions than metal panels. The appearance of the joints can be minimized, allowing for a clearer, more pronounced expression of the ribbon, and ensuring that it will remain the most prominent feature of the design. Further, the joints would be treated with a silicon sealant, allowing them to blend in with the adjacent surfaces and avoid shadow lines. The applicant also believes that the precast concrete barrier system contributes to a coordinated design approach that utilizing materials and colors that create a more comfortable and inviting healthcare setting. The explanation for the material choice by the applicant is logical and, although the building no longer reflects an iconic modern style, the precast concrete material is generally compatible with the surrounding context.

As precast concrete is the chosen ribbon material, the applicant provided a physical sample to staff for review. The material is available in a multitude of different colors and aggregate

mixtures and the appearance of the material is variable and certain qualities of the material, such as the size and reflectivity of the aggregate, are difficult to convey via renderings and smaller physical samples. Therefore, it cannot be determined how the project will appear in a more realistic setting at the project site. Staff recommends a condition of approval deferring the final color selection until multiple large-scale (minimum of 8' x 4') mock-ups of the precast concrete panels in a range of colors be prepared and installed onsite for staff or a subcommittee to review during construction.

Aside from the precast concrete panels, the building design includes large spans of glazing that consist of low-E vision glass, low-E shadow box glazing and glazing with an integral wood shading system (Okalux Okawood insulating glass with timber grid in "White Seraya"). The use of the Okalux is proposed on the east and west elevations and terminates mid-plane. The decision to terminate mid-plane introduces a visually distinct demarcation on the longer east and west elevations that significantly detracts from the horizontal layers of the ribbon, further diluting the original iconic building design. Therefore, staff recommends a condition of approval that the Okalux span the entirety of the elevations on which it is proposed to be used, to maintain and reinforce expression of the ribbon and large expanses of glazing.

The elevation drawings also depict that each pedestrian entry is roofed with a metal canopy, which seems somewhat incongruous with the rest of the design, as the exterior cladding has been revised to precast concrete. The current design of the metal canopy also appears to connect the ribbon at the ground floor, rather than emphasizing its return to the ground. Therefore, staff recommends a condition of approval that the dimensions and materiality of the canopies be reconsidered and revised so that they better reinforce the appearance of the ribbon. Also of note is that the reflected ceiling plan contains a note for roll up shades, with no further detail. The applicant indicated to staff that these are proposed to be opaque shades in a neutral color and are not intended to detract from the overall design.

### **Mechanical Screening:**

The majority of the proposed mechanical equipment is appropriately screened and concealed from public view using design strategies that are well integrated into the overall design. The mechanical equipment affixed to the building consists of a metal clad rooftop appurtenance, an interior mechanical room at the east elevation of the fourth floor screened by low-E shadow box glazing and Okalux windows. As described in the table above, grade level equipment is also proposed and consists of an above ground equipment enclosure which is clad in precast concrete screened with hedges at the southeast corner of the site. An aboveground stairwell at the northeast corner clad in pre-cast concrete and a feature wall with landscaping and signage is incorporated into the design at the northeast corner adjacent to the alley. Additional utilities and meters are located in the subterranean parking levels. However, the location of the Fire Department Connection (FDC) is not specified in the plans. The FDC can be very large for a project of this size, and may significantly impact the proposed landscaping and elevations. Therefore staff recommends a condition of approval that the FDC be located as far away from Fair Oaks Avenue and California Boulevard and pedestrian entrances to avoid adversely affecting the street facing appearance of the design.

### **Landscaping:**

The proposed landscape and hardscape design appropriately reinforces the proposed modern design of the building. The proposed building and subterranean parking occupies nearly the entirety of the site, with a limited area of remaining ground space available for planting. However, the applicants have included information in the submittal indicating that landscaping and biophilic design is a critical component of the design philosophy and the concept of nature as a healing element is critical to the proposed healthcare environment. Therefore, the available space has been well utilized, and landscaping has been incorporated on all sides of the building.

The entry plaza on the east elevation and south plaza are planted with Citrus limon and Citrus paradisi trees, tall grasses and shrubs including Lavandula soechea, Rosmarinus officinalis, and Thymus citriodorus, with horizontal wooden slat bench seating by Universe System landscape forms, which is integrated into the precast planters and concrete bases. The narrow precast planters at Fair Oaks Avenue are planted with clumping shrubs such as Condropetalum tectorum and Dianella revoluta ‘little rev’ and the deeper, shaded, California Boulevard planters are filled with shade tolerant plans such as Aspidistra elatior, Aucuba japonica ‘picturata’ and Podocarpus nivalis.

Although the ground-level landscape plan identifies the planting of new street trees as a major component of the project, the street trees are not within the purview of the Design Commission. Rather, the street trees are subject to review and recommendation to the City Manager by the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee. To ensure this is clear in the record, staff recommends inclusion of a condition of approval specifying that the street trees are not approved as part of this review.

### **Lighting:**

The proposed exterior lighting design is intended to emphasize the fluid profile of the ribbon and accent the site features. Nine different lighting fixtures/elements are proposed and include recessed downlights in the soffits, in-grade canopy up lights, recessed step lights, an art wall wash, illuminated impact bollards, pathway illuminated bollards, wall mounted area lights, linear under bench lights and tree floodlights. All of the proposed light fixtures appear to be high quality and consistent with the design of the building. A discussion of the lighting plan and renderings of how the building may appear in the evening has been included in the submittal. Consistent with prior Final Design Review decisions, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring all metalwork to be the same dark bronze color, independent of the different manufacturers’ color names as well as the standard condition regarding lighting temperature not rising above 3,000 Kelvin.

### **Signage:**

Detailed signage plans were not provided for this review, although the general locations of potential signage are noted on the elevations and generally appear to be appropriate and well integrated into the building design. The Zoning Code requires design review for signage on all new development projects and as such, any future signage for this project will require either Consolidated Design Review or a Master Sign Plan, depending on the locations and quantities, with the review authority being the Planning Director.

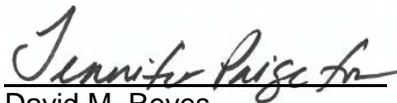
**Comments from Other Departments:**

During the review process for Conditional Use Permit No. 6831, the project was routed to other City departments such as Public Works, Transportation, Fire and Housing Departments, and other divisions of the Planning & Community Development Department, including the Building, Current Planning and Cultural Affairs division. Conditions of approval from that review are attached to this report as Attachment C. As noted in the table above, staff recommends a condition of approval to continue to reinforce that those conditions must be satisfied, to the satisfaction of the respective reviewers.

**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,



David M. Reyes  
Director of Planning & Community  
Development Department

Prepared by:



Amanda Landry, AICP  
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



Leon White, Principal Planner

Attachments:

- A. Plans, elevations, details, materials
- B. Copy of Power Point Presentation
- C. Conditions of Approval from Conditional Use Permit #6831