



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** FEBRUARY 22, 2022

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

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

**SUBJECT:** ADVISORY REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SCEA) FOR CENTRAL PARK APARTMENTS PROJECT  
86 SOUTH FAIR OAKS AVENUE

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#### RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

1. Recommend that the City Council approve the Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) (SCH # 2021030197), findings, and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for the Central Park Apartments project.

#### BACKGROUND:

The applicant, Architectural Resources Group, Inc., has proposed a new development project, including the demolition of the existing surface parking lot, residential amenity space and advertising billboard on the approximately 0.74-acre project site and construction of a new mixed-use building with subterranean parking and landscaping. The proposed building would include 6,200 square feet of ground-floor retail space and restaurants, four work/live units, and 84 residential units, including eight on-site residences for very low-income residents. A Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) was prepared for the proposed project. The Draft SCEA was released on March 8, 2021 and the comment period concluded on May 6, 2021. All impacts studied in the SCEA were found to be less than significant or less than significant with mitigation. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21155.2(b)(6), the legislative body of the lead agency (the City Council in this case) is the review authority for review and approval of a SCEA. On January 24, 2022, the City Council considered the SCEA and required the Design Commission to conduct an advisory review prior to taking action.

The project site is located at the northeast corner of South Fair Oaks Avenue and Dayton Street in the Central District and within the Old Pasadena Historic District (non-contributing property). The main project site encompasses 32,362-square feet (.74 acre) and is currently used as a surface parking area and residential amenity space serving the adjacent Green Hotel Apartments building at 50 E. Green Street, in addition to an outdoor advertising billboard and landscaping.

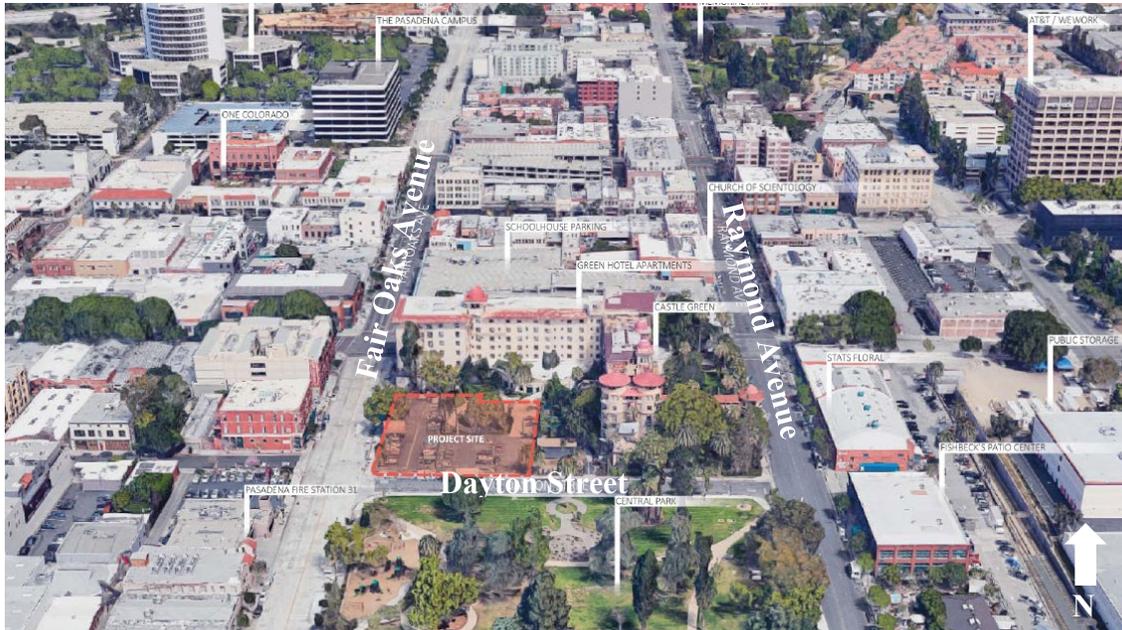


Figure 1 – Project Site

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

The applicant has proposed a new development that includes the demolition of the existing parking and other facilities on the site and construction of a new mixed-use building with subterranean parking and landscaping. The proposed building would be 93,355 SF and would include 6,200 square feet of ground-floor retail space and restaurants, four work/live units, approximately 1,300 square feet each, and 84 residential units, including eight on-site residences for very low-income residents. All parking for the proposed project would be located in four levels of underground parking, including replacement of existing parking spaces for the adjacent Green Hotel Apartments. Access to and from the proposed project site would be along Dayton Street on the southeast corner of the proposed project site. The types of housing units would be intermixed on each level and would consist of 24 studio units, 40 one-bedroom units, and 20 two-bedroom units.

The project is in compliance with Zoning Code requirements and does not require any Zoning entitlements. As such, design review by the Design Commission is the only discretionary action required for the project to be constructed. The Design Commission conducted a Preliminary Consultation for the project on October 24, 2017 and provided a series of design comments to the applicant team at that time. A public hearing on a pending application for Concept Design Review will be scheduled if the City Council approves the SCEA at a subsequent public hearing

following this advisory review. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21155.2(b)(6), the legislative body of the lead agency (the City Council in this case) is the review authority for review and approval of the required CEQA document, a SCEA.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

In accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) was prepared to identify and analyze the project's potential impact on the environment.

SB 375 provides CEQA streamlining opportunities for Transit Priority Projects that are “consistent with the use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in either a sustainable communities strategy or an alternative planning strategy, for which the ARB has accepted a metropolitan planning organization’s determination that the sustainable communities strategy or the alternative planning strategy would, if implemented, achieve the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets established by ARB (see Public Resources Code, § 21155 (a)).”

**Transit Priority Projects**

SB 375 provides CEQA streamlining opportunities for certain Transit Priority Projects (TPP). A TPP is a project that meets the following three criteria:

- A. Contains at least 50 percent residential use, based on total building square footage and, if the project contains between 26 percent and 50 percent nonresidential uses, a floor area ratio of not less than 0.75;
- B. Provides a minimum net density of at least 20 units per acre; and
- C. Is within one-half mile of a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor included in a regional transportation plan.

The proposed project is a mixed-use development consisting of 84 apartment units of varying types and sizes, including eight on-site residences for very low-income residents. The residential component of the proposed project encompasses approximately 54,448 square feet of the project's total 93,355 square feet of floor area, or 58 percent of the total floor area. As such, the proposed project would be consistent with Criterion A. The proposed project site is approximately 0.74 acres; with 84 residential dwellings, the proposed project would have a density of approximately 113 units per acre. As such, the proposed project would be consistent with Criterion B. The proposed project is located within a High Quality Transit Area (HQTA) as defined by SCAG and a transit priority area as defined by SB 743. The project site is located within one-quarter mile of the Metro Del Mar Station and within one-half mile of the Memorial Park Station. As such, all development on the project site is within one-half mile from the light rail station. The L Line (formerly Gold Line) provides service intervals less than 15 minutes during peak commute hours. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with Criterion C. Based on this analysis, the proposed project is consistent with all three criteria and is considered a TPP.

### Consistency with Sustainable Communities Strategy

On May 7, 2020, SCAG's Regional Council approved Connect SoCal (2020 – 2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy) for conformity purpose by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). On September 3, 2020, the Regional Council formally adopted the Connect SoCal plan to provide a roadmap to expand transportation options, improve air quality and bolster Southern California's long-term economic viability.

As described in Section 3.0 of the SCEA, the proposed project would be consistent with the land use patterns promoted by the Connect SoCal Forecasted Regional Development Pattern. The project site, which is within one-half mile from a major transit stop, is in an area that is considered by SCAG as a Priority Growth Area. Furthermore, the project would not be located in any absolutely constrained areas such as on agricultural land, open space, or tribal lands.

### SCEA Analysis

The SCEA was prepared to analyze the potential environmental impacts of a project proposing 84 residential dwelling units, four work/live units and 6,200 square feet of commercial space. The SCEA analyzed the potential impacts to Aesthetics, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems and Wildfire. Of these twenty areas, the SCEA found there would be potentially significant impacts related to Cultural Resources, Noise and Tribal Cultural Resources. The SCEA found that mitigation would reduce all potential impacts to less than significant levels. All other impacts were found to be less than significant.

### Comment Period

On March 8, 2021, the Draft SCEA was made available for review during a 30-day public comment period that was originally set to close on April 6, 2021. The comment period was extended by public request and officially closed on May 6, 2021.

### SCEA Comments

During the comment period, staff received written comments from a total of three state and local agencies, eight organizations, and 45 individuals. Public Resources Code Section 21155.2(b)(4) requires the City to consider all of the comments received prior to taking action on the SCEA. In order to aid the City Council in considering the comments received, the City's consultant, Impact Sciences, and City staff have prepared master responses to similar comments received, which are included in Section 7.0 of the SCEA, which can be accessed on the project website, here: <https://www.cityofpasadena.net/planning/central-park-apartments/>.

The SCEA was revised in response to comments that were raised. The revisions include typographical errors and corrections, are minor in nature, and do not affect any of the analysis or conclusions in the document. Edits made after circulation of the draft SCEA are noted in strikeout and underline format within the document.

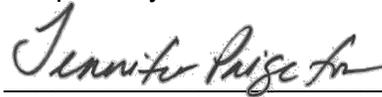
Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) describes procedures that would be followed to implement mitigation measures adopted in connection with the approval of the proposed project and the methods for monitoring such actions. A MMRP is necessary only for impacts that would be significant if not mitigated. The MMRP table consists of the mitigation measures required for the project and specifies the timing of the measure, the responsible entity for mitigation monitoring, and provides an entry to record when the mitigation measure was completed and measures its effectiveness. The MMRP is included as Attachment B.

**CONCLUSION:**

The SCEA has adequately and appropriately evaluated all potential environmental effects resulting from the project, as required under CEQA and has responded to public comments received during the public comment period. Staff recommends that the Design Commission recommend that the City Council approve the findings, SCEA and MMRP for the Central Park Apartments project as attached to this report and posted on the City's website.

Respectfully Submitted,



David M. Reyes  
Director of Planning and  
Community Development

Prepared by:



Kevin Johnson  
Principal Planner

Reviewed by:



Luis Rocha  
Planning Manager

Attachments:

- A. Draft City Council Resolution & Findings
- B. Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

The SCEA document itself is available on the project website at  
<https://www.cityofpasadena.net/planning/central-park-apartments/>):