



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** MARCH 22, 2022

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

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

**SUBJECT:** APPLICATION FOR CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW  
NEW APPROXIMATELY 89,600 SQUARE-FOOT, FIVE-STORY,  
INDEPENDENT SENIOR LIVING FACILITY WITH 76 RESIDENTIAL UNITS  
AND ONE LEVEL OF SUBTERRANEAN PARKING  
995 SOUTH FAIR OAKS AVENUE

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#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

#### **Environmental Determination**

Find that the proposed project was subject to environmental review in the Categorical Exemption (Class 32, In-Fill Development Projects) that was adopted by the Hearing Officer for a Modification to Conditional Use Permit #4577 on May 26, 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 a tree inventory (Attachment B) identifies that there are no protected trees on site that are proposed for removal.

#### **Findings for Concept Design Approval**

1. Find that the project, upon implementation of the conditions of approval, will comply with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies of 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; and
2. Based on these findings, approve the application for Concept Design Review subject to the attached conditions of approval (Attachment A) to be further reviewed during Final Design Review.

## **BACKGROUND:**

### **Project Overview**

- General Plan Designation: Medium Mixed Use
- Zoning: IG SP-2 AD-2 (South Fair Oaks Specific Plan, Industrial General, Alcohol Overlay)
- 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 20,869 square-foot project site is located at the northwest corner of South Fair Oaks Avenue and Arlington Drive and is currently developed with a non-historic 6,617 square-foot office building with attached industrial/manufacturing space built in 1949. This building is proposed to be demolished as part of this project. There are 66 private trees on-site. A tree inventory indicates that there are 56 on-site trees that are not protected by species or size. An additional 10 existing on-site trees have been surveyed, of which the species and size of these trees was not provided in the inventory, however, these additional trees are noted to be protected in place. Seven public street trees are located along the South Fair Oaks Avenue and Arlington Drive frontage and will remain.
- Surroundings: The surrounding properties vary in building form and use. Located directly north of the project site is a two-story office building with surface parking constructed in 1975, and at the north end of the block face is the constructed first phase of the overall development, a four-story Mediterranean vernacular style residential care facility, constructed in 2008. Located further to the north is the new Shriners for Children Medical Center. To the east, across South Fair Oaks Avenue, is a two-story office building with surface parking and a fast food restaurant with surface parking. A three-story office building sits southeast of the project site. South of the project site is a three-story medical office building and a surface parking lot, and one- and two-story single-family residences. A surface parking lot belonging to the earlier constructed phase of the residential care development abuts the western edge of the project site. There are no designated or eligible historic resources located directly adjacent to the site. However, the Glenarm Power Plant, a designated Historic Monument, is located approximately one block south of the proposed project, at 72 East Glenarm Street.
- Project Description: The project involves the demolition of a non-historic office and warehouse building and the construction of a new five-story independent senior living facility containing 76 residential units and one level of subterranean parking, encompassing a total of approximately 89,600 square feet. The project is contemporary in style with pedestrian-scaled features including balconies and awnings. Though 44 on-site trees are proposed to be removed for the construction, none of these trees are protected by size or species. This project is the third phase of a larger project; Phase I, located along South Fair Oaks Avenue, is an 87,000 square foot building that was built in 2003 and Phase II, located along Hurlbut Street, is approximately 47,000 square feet in size and was built in 2008.

- Site Design: The proposed building will be constructed in an “L” configuration to reflect the layout of the lot, with a continuous street wall along Arlington Drive that wraps the street corner and continues along the shorter South Fair Oaks Avenue frontage. The existing surface parking lot to the west will be reconfigured to provide a wider two-way drive access to connect to the existing round-about at the north building, and a new drop-off loop that is proposed along the west side of the new building. As the new building runs north along the interior of the lot, it is proposed to connect to the southern tip of the existing building at the first floor only, and provide a courtyard garden with the crook of the “L.” The subterranean garage ramp is also proposed to be located along the widened access drive, towards the north end of the new building. The proposed building setback along South Fair Oaks Avenue is six feet; where the Zoning Code allows a zero setback (build to property line). The proposed building setback along Arlington Drive is 13’; where the Zoning Code allows a zero setback (build to property line). The proposed increased setback along Arlington Drive was provided to maintain the health of the existing street trees and to provide additional clearances to the proposed project and its construction. Due to the reduced buildable area on the ground floor resulting from the greater setbacks to achieve the tree protection measures, the applicant received approval of additional building height through the entitlement process, above what is permitted by the zoning district, consistent with Zoning Code Section 17.44.090.D (Tree Retention, Modification of Development Standards). The approved height is 59’5”.
- Architectural Style: Contemporary
- Developer: Pasadena Senior CA Landco, LLC
- Architects: KTG Architecture + Planning
- Landscape Architect: David Evans and Associates, Inc.

## **ANALYSIS:**

### **Design Commission Comments from Preliminary Consultation**

On April 9, 2019, the Design Commission reviewed an application for Preliminary Consultation for this project. The Commission’s comments from that meeting, with excerpts from the design team’s responses, and staff’s comments, are detailed in the chart below. The design team’s full response are provided in Attachment C.

Commissioner Comments, April 9, 2019	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>1. The building massing is relatively simple and appears to appropriately consider the neighboring context. However the observable design on the facade of the vertical and horizontal rhythm of the building's structure, cladding and fenestration should be further studied. The interplay of vertical and horizontal modulation should establish a clear hierarchy and pattern. The use of horizontal design features, such as the proposed molded belt course, should be further studied to ensure it is used consistently.</p>	<p>"See revised elevations. There are 2 different major languages, both with clear vertical and horizontal organization. The southwest and southeast corners are the most important parts of the building and are intended to be different, stepping away from the ordered grid and introducing a wood-colored siding."</p>	<p><i>This comment can be satisfactorily addressed through recommended conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>The project has been revised to address the Preliminary comments. However, staff finds that the design paradigm can be further enhanced by providing distinctive corner forms to anchor the project. The southeast corner, particularly, lacks a defining element that is not carried through to the ground plane. Additionally, this portion of the building is lower in height when it should have visual prominence as a corner element. As currently designed, the elevations feature a duality of cornice treatments at the vertical alignment of the inset balconies, with a break in the cornice at the western volume of the façade, and a continuous cornice at the eastern portion of the façade overlooking Arlington Drive. This pattern is repeated at the west façade overlooking the drop-off entry. Continuing the cornice break language will provide visual consistency throughout the project, and provide an added element of rhythmic vertical breaks in the massing.</p> <p>Staff recommends conditions of approval to address these issues, for further review during Final Design Review.</p>

Commissioner Comments, April 9, 2019	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>2. If the intent of the design is to be compatible with the Phase 1 or 2 buildings, more closely follow the architectural language and composition of those buildings. Provide a study of features and composition of the existing buildings and more clearly explain how the design of the proposed building relates to those features.</p>	<p>“See general explanation above. The building is intended to be the next step in the evolution of the aesthetic from phase I to phase II.”</p>	<p><i>This comment can be satisfactorily addressed through recommended conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>Though the rationale behind the proposed architectural design is clear, and the configuration and distance between the buildings warrants the different design, the plans do not clearly indicate how the proposed building connects to the existing Phase II building. Recommended conditions of approval ask for further study of the proposed connection to incorporate a “hyphen” of transparency or modular form to be considered as a connecting element between the two buildings and provide a necessary visual break between the two building and their differing architectural styles. The formalized connection can serve as enhanced programmatic space such as a double-height lobby, garden atrium, with clear connecting paths of circulation and interconnectivity between the two buildings and abutting programming.</p>
<p>3. Future submittals should include a broader site plan that depicts Phase 1, 2 and 3 in greater detail. Elevations should also include or show Phase 1 and 2 to provide for a better understand of the relationship of the existing buildings to the proposed Phase 3. Future submittals should also include a Fair Oaks Avenue elevation that shows the existing buildings with the proposed buildings to better evaluate compatibility of the proposed project with the surrounding context.</p>	<p>“See site plan of all three phases on sheet A1-0. A new context elevation has been provided on sheet A1-1.”</p>	<p><i>These comments can be satisfactorily addressed through recommended conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>Though a contextual street elevation has been provided of the proposed and existing building along South Fair Oaks Avenue, a contextual elevation was not provided of the existing and proposed buildings along the interior, west elevation. Additionally, details on how the buildings would potentially connect between Phase II and the proposed Phase III were not provided. Recommended conditions of approval ask for conceptual plans and elevations of this connection point, and a contextual elevation of the west, interior elevation showing all phased buildings.</p>

Commissioner Comments, April 9, 2019	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>4. Architectural features, such as but not limited to projecting bays and windows, shall be further studied and more appropriately detailed so that they follow a clear hierarchy and appear to be solid permanent features integral to the design, and not as merely applied details. The architectural features on the south and east elevations do not appear to be fully integrated into the design. In addition, the exterior expression of the internal programming should be more significant, particularly on the Fair Oaks Avenue elevation to create a more effective connection between the project and the public realm.</p>	<p>“The new design has removed all “applied” architectural features so that the elements on the elevations are all integral parts of the design. The programming has been modified to best fit the needs of the end user. As such, there is no longer common space facing Fair Oaks.”</p>	<p><i>These comments can be satisfactorily addressed through recommended conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>The design proposes integrated balconies and canopies with a clear rationale to their patterning and placement. However, the project still appears disengaged with the public realm, particularly along South Fair Oaks Avenue. Staff recommends a condition of approval requiring repositioning of internal amenity programming to the southeast corner to promote façade activation, an opportunity for heightened architectural expression at the corner, and interconnectivity between the public realm and semi-public spaces of interior amenity zones. Additionally, the condition requires for the ground floor of the Fair Oaks Avenue façade to be enhanced with pedestrian-oriented fenestration and frontage elements such as projecting canopies, light fixtures, or other similar features.</p>
<p>5. Further study and clearly explain in the plans the pedestrian and vehicular circulation to, from, and within the site, including to Phase 1 and 2.</p>	<p>“The main vehicular entry for all phases is located at the southern driveway from Arlington Drive. The pedestrian entry is located adjacent to the vehicular drive. There is also a strong pedestrian connection at the ground level between phase I and phase III.”</p>	<p><i>This comment can be satisfactorily addressed through recommended conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>A clear logic is proposed for the vehicular circulation with a widened access drive and drop off zone located along the building's west elevation. Interior circulation is not clearly defined between the proposed building and the existing building. A recommended condition of approval discussed earlier seeks to remedy this through a visually clear connection of formalized and programmatic expression. A recommended condition of approval also calls for enhanced design or formal expressions at the ground-floor lobby entrance.</p>

Commissioner Comments, April 9, 2019	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>6. Study the entrances to both the site and building and provide appropriate details in future submittals that show these features are appropriately integrated.</p>	<p>“Access points were studied and addressed in the latest submittal.”</p>	<p><i>This comment can be satisfactorily addressed through recommended conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>The storefronts proposed for the primary entries are not clearly articulated to reflect interior programming, or the primary entry. A recommended condition of approval calls for enhanced design or formal expressions at the ground-floor lobby entrance and other amenity spaces, and aligned visual axis between the lobby entrance and courtyard garden.</p>
<p>7. Ensure that the communal open spaces for the project include suitable amenities that will allow for their active and safe use by the residents of the project.</p>	<p>“Common spaces are suitable for the independent living use.”</p>	<p><i>This comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The project proposes outdoor amenity spaces consisting of a swimming pool, outdoor dining area, a fire pit and seating area, a putting green, a barbeque, and shade structure.</p>
<p>8. Study the surrounding context, including the street trees, and consider refinements to the site plan and design to ensure appropriate protection of the street trees</p>	<p>“Setbacks have been increased along the streets in order to enhance the resident experience and give the ability to keep all street trees except for the one at the southeast corner of the site.”</p>	<p><i>This comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>Setbacks have been increased to provide a buffer between the existing street trees and the proposed construction, and preserve the existing urban street forestry. The setbacks of 13 feet along Arlington and 6 feet along Fair Oaks Avenue also apply to the subterranean garage parking structure, and were required in conjunction with the CUP Modification to protect the existing street trees. Part of the 6 foot setback along Fair Oaks Avenue consists of a 2-foot dedication required by the Department of Public Works.</p>
<p>9. Study the unadorned blank wall conditions of the elevator shafts and refine the exterior detailing so that these building volumes are more compatible with the rest of the building.</p>	<p>“The elevators have been moved to less prominent locations on the building. Where the elevator shaft is visible, it has been clad in siding to add interest.”</p>	<p><i>This comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>Vertical circulation systems are now located along non-prominent elevations and are visually characterized by materiality.</p>

## **Programming and Circulation**

The project proposes to have an “L” shape configuration with a continuous street wall along the two street edges. The configuration allows for a courtyard garden space to be located in the crook of the “L” while also responding to the existing two-story building immediately north of the project site, which is not a part of the project. The main pedestrian entrance into the building is located at the west elevation in front of the proposed vehicular drop-off. The ground floor of the building contains the primary amenity spaces consisting of the entrance lobby, bar/bistro/lounge, dining rooms, kitchen, private dining room, activity/club room, theater, and business center. The ground floor also opens directly onto the courtyard garden area. At the northern end, the building connects to the existing senior living building through a combination of circulation and business center as programming space. Elevators and stairs are proposed at the north end of the building, centered within the building, and near the east end towards Fair Oaks Avenue. As the ground floor moves east along Arlington Drive, towards Fair Oaks Avenue, the programming transitions to individual residential units located along a double-loaded corridor. The second floor consists of residential units along a double-loaded corridor with the exception of an indoor and outdoor fitness space as the building connects to the adjacent building at the north. The third floor is made up exclusively of residential units along a double-loaded corridor, and this continues to the fourth floor with the exception of a recreational room and outdoor terrace along the far eastern end of the building. Vehicular access is gained through a widened drive access at the west end of the Arlington Drive frontage and connects to an existing round-about at the north building, provides a drop-off zone to the new building, and connects to the drive ramp at the north end of the building to access the one-level subterranean garage.

As described above, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring provision of enhanced and accented entries at the main lobby and ground floor amenity spaces as they open onto the exterior to provide clear and distinctive circulation zones and points of entry. Another recommended condition requires the alignment of the main lobby entry to the courtyard garden space to provide a clear line of sight between the two zones. It is unclear how the proposed building fully connects and interacts to the existing building to the north, and a recommended condition of approval requires for additional plan and elevation information to be provided that detail this connection point, and to consider a “hyphen” of transparency or modular form to provide a visual break between the different architectural styles of the two buildings. It is recommended that this critical juncture serve as an enhanced amenity zone such as a double-height lobby space, or garden atrium and clear connecting paths of circulation and interconnectivity between the two buildings and respective abutting programming. Finally, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring accented formal massing and façade activation through entry points, windows or other means, at the ground floor along South Fair Oaks Avenue, possibly through the repositioning of amenity programming to promote interconnectivity and transparency along this prominent urban street edge.

## **Orientation**

The project responds to the street edges of Arlington Drive and Fair Oaks Avenue through the location of building volume along these peripheries. Setbacks are slightly larger than the minimum required to provide a contextual relationship to existing residential buildings, and provide additional clearances for existing and mature street trees. Along the south elevation overlooking Arlington Drive are appropriately-scaled windows reflective of interior programming,

along with balconies and awnings to further activate the façade. This fenestration and façade patterning continues along the west elevation, and the elevations overlooking the courtyard. The east elevation facing Fair Oaks Avenue contains a less dynamic façade with a higher ratio of solid walls to openings. However, the top level contains an amenity space that is reflective through its large windows, and outdoor terrace with glass balcony railing that overlooks Fair Oaks Avenue. The ground floor of the building contains storefronts reflective of interior amenity spaces that are located along the west elevation and interior courtyard facades. The façade along South Fair Oaks Avenue currently lacks a street presence and is not oriented to this urban street edge. A recommended condition of approval, as detailed above, calls for architectural gestures along South Fair Oaks Avenue to promote interconnectivity and transparency.

### **Height, Massing and Modulation**

As part of the modification to the Conditional Use Permit, the project received a height maximum of 59'-5". Though the plans do not clearly indicate compliance with the approved height, a recommended condition of approval shall require for the project to demonstrate compliance with the maximum height per the comments issued by Zoning staff. Within the height envelope, the project proposes five stories of amenity spaces and residential units. The massing is composed of a largely unified "L" shape configuration with consistent heights and vertical forms. The composition of the building massing results in the building almost appearing to read as individual abutting buildings at the upper floors. The façade is modulated through a rhythmic pattern of windows and storefronts, partially inset balconies, material transitions, horizontal datum lines, and cornice treatments.

Recommended conditions of approval ask for further studying of breaks in the façade massing such as providing rhythmic patterning of vertical breaks in the cornice at all balcony insets, similar to the western portion of the south façade. This will reduce the visual massing of the project, and make the building visually appear as separate, abutting buildings similar to traditional urban streetscape development patterns. Additional conditions call for added hierarchy of massing, material patterning, and overall accentuation at the building corners, particularly the southeast street corner to anchor the project and respond to the urban context.

### **Architectural Style and Detailing**

The proposed building is designed in a contemporary style with a logical rhythm of façade patterning of windows, doors, balconies, and canopies. Expressed datum lines occur at the ground plane with an inset base material of wood, then stucco cladding at floor levels two through four. A protruding trim piece separates the fifth floor from the lower floors, which is also clad in stucco, with the exception of the southeast corner, which is clad in wood. The parapet of the building receives a strong cornice treatment at most façade conditions, while the balconies of the residential units provide further horizontal datum lines.

Recommended conditions of approval ask for a solid base material other than siding to reflect traditional building patterns of heavier materials at the bottom and lighter materials at the top such as a tripartite layout. Additionally, staff recommends a condition requiring the base be pushed outward instead of being recessed behind the upper floor planes to further establish a visual grounding of the project. Finally, staff recommends a condition requiring a clear rationale

to the façade colors which should be carried through the entirety of the façade plane where there are no changes in material or breaks in form.

### **Compatibility**

The proposed new building is generally compatible with the immediate surroundings which consists of a transitional block of residential and non-residential uses along Arlington Drive, and a stylistically varied urban context along South Fair Oaks Avenue. Though the project is stylistically different from the previously constructed Phase I and Phase II designs, the applicant has provided a clear rationale to the project's contemporary design, as an evolution from the more traditional designs of the earlier buildings. Though contemporary in style, the proposed final building of the development utilizes forms and detailing that are consistent with traditional architecture, and is not out of scale with the other two buildings or other adjacencies.

### **Conceptual Landscape Design**

The preliminary landscape plans indicate a multi-use ground-level courtyard providing a swimming pool, outdoor dining, putting green, fire pit, and vegetated planting beds. The larger setbacks along the two street frontages provide an opportunity for additional landscape zones, with a vegetable garden, dog run, and new shade trees along Arlington Drive, additional plantings and screening trees at the existing parking lot to the west, and additional accent trees north of the garage drive aisle entry. Proposed trees include Deodar Cedar, Western Redbud, Camphors, Crape Myrtles, California Sycamores, and Engelmann Oaks. As the project evolves and proceeds to Final Design Review, the landscape plan will be further analyzed for planting and material palette, furnishings, and programming.

### **Protected Tree Removal**

The application includes a tree inventory and matrix that identifies the removal of approximately 44 trees that are not protected by size or species. The applicant is proposing to retain several large trees on site, and the protected street trees. The applicant is proposing to enhance the tree plantings of the existing surface parking, and provide additional trees in the building courtyard and vegetated setback along Arlington Drive.

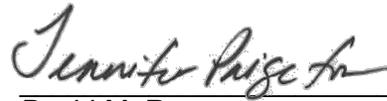
### **COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS:**

The project was subject to inter-department review through the entitlement process for the Modification to the Conditional Use Permit. Conditions of approval were issued with that entitlement and the project shall continue to comply with those conditions through the design and construction process.

**CONCLUSION:**

With the recommended conditions of approval, the project will satisfactorily address the comments provided during the Preliminary Consultation and will be consistent with the applicable design guidelines. Staff recommends approval of the application for Concept Design Review subject to the recommended conditions of approval in Attachment A.

Respectfully Submitted,



David M. Reyes  
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Community Development

Prepared by:



Edwar Sissi  
Planner

Reviewed by:



Kevin Johnson  
Principal Planner

Attachments:

- A. Recommended Conditions of Approval for Concept Design Review
- B. Tree Inventory & Existing Tree Survey
- C. Applicant Response to Preliminary Consultation Comments
- D. Architectural Plans, Elevations, Renderings, Photos & Landscape Plans