



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
DEMOLITION OF TWO ADJOINING TENNIS COURTS AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW SWIMMING POOL WITH ASSOCIATED SITE
IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDING LANDSCAPING, CABANAS AND TWO
ACCESSORY STRUCTURES (WET PAVILION AND FOOD AND BEVERAGE
PAVILION)
1401 S. OAK KNOLL AVE. (LANGHAM HUNTINGTON HOTEL)

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

Environmental Determination

Find that the proposed project is exempt from environmental review pursuant to the guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code §21080(b)(9); Administrative Code, Title 14, Chapter 3, §15311, Class 11, Accessory Structures, and that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class; therefore, there are no unusual circumstances. This exemption applies to projects involving the construction of accessory structures, such as the proposed swimming pool, and appurtenant buildings, to the existing hotel.

Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance

Acknowledge that there are no protected trees on the project 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 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation; and

2. Based on these findings, approve the application for Concept Design Review subject to the conditions in Attachment A, to be further reviewed during Final Design Review, which shall be conducted by staff and may be appealed to or called for review by the Design Commission.

BACKGROUND:

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: Low Commercial (1-1.0 FAR)
- Zoning: PD-15 (Planned Development 15, Huntington Hotel). The PD regulations require design review by the Design Commission for all new freestanding buildings on the site, regardless of size. The PD regulations also state that all design review approvals shall comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.
- Historic Designation: Huntington Hotel Historic District (eligible, non-designated)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- Site: The improvements proposed are located at the southwestern portion of the Langham Hotel property, located on the west side of South Oak Knoll Avenue between Wentworth Avenue and Huntington Garden Drive. Huntington Circle is an access road that partially encircles the property, and runs along the west side of the area proposed for the new swimming pool, where two adjacent tennis courts currently sit, sunken into the surrounding terrain. The hotel property is within the boundaries of the Huntington Hotel Historic District, which is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, but has not been officially listed. The tennis courts proposed for demolition were constructed in 1990, concurrent with the hotel's reconstruction. Surrounding the tennis courts are site walls, hardscape, and planting areas.
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties consist of single-family residential buildings ranging between one and two stories in height. These buildings, primarily located across Huntington Circle, were the original detached cottages of the hotel property, which were later subdivided and sold as private residences. They are constructed in various architectural styles, and most are contributing structures to the eligible historic district. Additional structures on the hotel property that are contributing to the historic district include a pergola north of the tennis courts, the Royce Manor building, a cluster of four detached cottages located near the southwestern portion of the hotel site called the Garden View, Oakcrest, Magnolia, and Highland Manor cottages, and the Japanese and Horseshoe hotel gardens. To the immediate south of the tennis courts is a single tennis court that is proposed to remain in place. The main hotel building itself is non-contributing due to the demolition of the original structure, and subsequent reconstruction shortly after the district was surveyed in 1986. Nearby designated historic resources located outside of the historic district boundaries include:

- Tanner Hall at 1375 S. Oak Knoll Avenue (1926, Roland Coate),
- The Ledyard House at 1361 Ridge Way (1909, William F. Thompson for Milwaukee Building Company),
- The Elmer Grey House at 1372 S. El Molino Avenue (1912, Elmer Grey),
- The William Ward Spinks House at 1344 Hillcrest Avenue (1906, Greene & Greene) the Freeman/Allen House at 1330 Hillcrest Avenue (1913, Heineman & Heineman) and
- The William D. Murphy House at 1299 Hillcrest Avenue (1910, Arthur Roland Kelly)

All of these designated resources are single-family residences north of the project site. The eligible, undesignated Oak Knoll Historic District and Madison Heights Landmark District are also north of the site and the eligible, undesignated Kenmore Road Landmark District is located east of the site.

- Project Description: The applicant proposes to demolish the two adjoining tennis courts and construct a new pool with associated accessory structures. The proposed pool would consist of an in-ground, organically shaped swimming pool surrounded by a paved pool deck, new landscaping, and site walls and fences. Proposed new accessory structures include four new cabanas at the north end of the pool area and, at the southeast corner of the pool area, a new food and beverage pavilion and a wet pavilion with towel kiosk and pool mechanical room. Additional features include outdoor shower rinse areas and outdoor furnishings. The historic pergola, detached garages, and adjacent historic cottages are not a part of the project, and are proposed to be protected in place. A total of 10 existing site trees are proposed for removal, none of which are protected by size or species.
- Site Design: The proposed new resort pool area will encompass approximately the same footprint of the existing sunken tennis courts with new perimeter retaining walls and fencing, new landscaping, and new circulation points of entry. The new pool is proposed to be centrally located within the area of construction, surrounded by a patterned concrete deck, perimeter fencing, site walls and landscaping. Organically-shaped landscape islands are proposed to surround the swimming pool at various points. Points of entry include a centrally-located terrace of steps at the north end that will descend down from the pergola into the pool area and an at-grade walkway at the southeast corner near the proposed food and beverage pavilion.
- Architectural Style: Traditional Vernacular
- Developer: Pacific Huntington Hotel, Corp
- Architects: Page Sutherland Page, Inc.
- Landscape Architect: BrightView Design Group

ANALYSIS:

Design Commission Comments from Preliminary Consultation

On August 24, 2021, 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 incorporated into the set of plans in Attachment C.

Commissioner Comments, August 24, 2021	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>1. The massing, scale and roof form of the building are compatible with nearby contributing cottages within the eligible Huntington Hotel Historic District and the location of the structure provides adequate space between it and the historic structures nearby. Continue to study the materiality and detailing of the building to ensure compatibility with the contributing structures near the project and throughout the eligible historic district and further consider the ways in which the design of the structure relates to the creation of a cohesive sensibility for the resort pool environment within the overall historical/classic hotel campus including the swimming pool itself, surrounding paving and amenities provided.</p>	<p>“The proposed structures at the proposed resort pool (wet pavilion, food and beverage Kiosk, and Cabanas) have been redesigned to respond directly to the existing cottages, located to the east, emphasizing the cottage garden experience that is indicative of this area of the Langham Huntington. The materiality revisions to these acknowledge the historic character of the adjacent cottages include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stucco finish • Wood trim, eave and post detail elements referencing a similar proportion and style • Composition roof material • Coloration of proposed finishes are consistent with existing cottage style. <p>In considering the context of these structures and proposed resort pool area, the style is intended to acknowledge the landscape significance found throughout the property. The design intent is to develop a pool within this garden environment, complementing the organic forms and landscape qualities found throughout the property. The proposed structures further acknowledge this landscape character through directly incorporating vine / landscape</p>	<p><i>These comments can be satisfactorily addressed through recommended conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>The proposed accessory structures have been redesigned to incorporate architectural vernacular found on the nearby historic cottages. Gable roofing, simple building forms and contextual materiality have been incorporated into the design of the wet pavilion and the food and beverage pavilion. Also proposed are open eaves, and simple fascia boards. Special features on the wet pavilion include an attached wood pergola that will tie into wood trim at the cross-gable end, and wood ventilation louvers at the rear elevation. The pergola is an integral part of the project’s compatibility as a contextual architectural element to a heavily landscaped resort property with gardens and meandering outdoor circulation paths. The food and beverage pavilion incorporates wooden shutters and decorative tile below the order windows. Both buildings are proposed to have vernacular material including cement plaster finishes, wood trim boards and composition shingle roofing. Overall, the designs of the individual elements are responsive to the contextual nature of the resort property through the organic pool, landscaped deck area, and non-orthogonal arrangement of building footprints.</p> <p>While the revisions are responsive to the Commission’s comments, as</p>

Commissioner Comments, August 24, 2021	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
	trellis applications as part of details.”	currently designed, the gable-end pediments appear to be floating and disengaged from the structure which is atypical of common construction and design idioms. Staff recommends a condition of approval requiring the revision of the wood pediment at the gable ends of the pavilions to fully engage with the gable framing through support posts or appropriately-styled brackets. Alternatively, the pediment at the wet pavilion could be tied into the attached pergola structure as an extension of the trellis.
<p>2. Consider how the proposed wet pavilion structure relates to the historical pergola along the northerly edge of the proposed new resort pool facility, including the possibility of rotating the building to create a parallel relationship between the two structures. In addition, consider how the entry to the facility enhances the pergola backdrop and creates a sense of arrival, including the landscape interface and access steps.</p>	<p>“With consideration of the revisions outlined in Comment 1, the proposed wet pavilion and associated food and beverage kiosk is reoriented to directly relate to the cottages to the east. This response was driven by the desire to connect to the garden cottage aesthetic and the associated materiality presented by these existing cottages, which provide precedence for the building’s orientation and styling. Recognizing the pergola is a contributing element and requires acknowledgment, the north access steps are enlarged and formalized to provide a stronger relationship between the pergola walk and the pool area. This area is additionally reinforced by the landscape experience continuing the ornamental tree allee and shrub plantings that aligns to the existing pergola and reinforce the landscape character of this location.”</p>	<p><i>These comments have satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The orientation of the wet pavilion building has been revised to directly relate to the nearby historical cottage building and is aligned in conjunction with that building’s footprint. The food and beverage pavilion is also aligned on this axis, thus creating a loose, but visually defined hospitality programmatic zone. Additionally, the proposed alignment of the pavilions allows for the opportunity to create an allee of trees between the historic Garden View Cottage and the proposed pavilion buildings that will provide dappled shade and seasonal interest along the new walkway between the two zones. Furthermore, the proposed site plan indicates a grand terrace-like staircase leading directly from the historic pergola structure at the north end of the project site down into the pool area, providing axial alignments, clear lines of sight, and direct connection to the historical site structure.</p>

Commissioner Comments, August 24, 2021	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>3. A Tree Protection Plan that is prepared by a Certified Arborist and incorporates the City's Tree Protection Guidelines will be required to be provided in conjunction with Design Review and building plan check. This plan is required to ensure that appropriate measures remain in place during construction for the protected tree (tree #75 as shown on sheet L0.003).</p>	<p>"A tree protection plan will be prepared by a Certified Arborist that incorporates the applicable City's Tree Protection Guidelines will be provided as part of the Final Design Review and Building Plan Check submittals."</p>	<p><i>This comment can be satisfactorily addressed through recommended conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>The applicant proposes to remove 10 trees that are not protected by their size, and they are proposing to retain the remaining trees on site, including protected trees identified as tree numbers 40-43, and tree number 75. A tree protection plan was not provided with the application, however, as a recommended condition of approval, a tree protection plan, to be prepared by a Certified Arborist, and incorporates the City's Tree Protection Guidelines shall be required for inclusion in construction drawings submitted for Building Permit Plan Check.</p>

Programming and Circulation

The project consists of a programmatic insert within the existing space of two adjoining tennis courts that are proposed to be demolished. The new use will consist of a pool and associated accessory structures including new landscaping and new circulation access points. In its entirety, the project proposes an organically-shaped, 2,900 square-foot swimming pool, a 577 square-foot wet pavilion, a 180 square-foot food and beverage pavilion, and four cabanas at 180 square feet each. The new pool is proposed to be centrally located within the sunken project site with a patterned concrete pool deck surrounding it. Two cabanas are proposed for each corner at the northeast and northwest of the project site, while the food and beverage pavilion and wet pavilion are proposed to be sited at the project site's southeast corner. The entry points to the new pool area include a grand terrace-like staircase at the north end, leading directly from the historic pergola structure into the sunken project area. The other point of entry is an at-grade walkway proposed near the southeast corner adjacent to the proposed food and beverage pavilion, across from the historic Garden View Cottage. Overall, the programming and circulation are compatible with the proposed use, the existing context, and resort property.

Orientation

The proposed new pool is generally on a north-south axis, in alignment with the proposed staircase and historic pergola at the north end of the project site. The proposed cabanas are skewed from any axial arrangement, but they are relatively symmetrical as they sit at the north end of the project site, flanking the staircase. The proposed wet pavilion and food and beverage pavilion are aligned with the axial alignment of the adjacent Garden View Cottage at the project site's southeast corner. A proposed new wall and fence surrounds the project area and follows the axial alignments and forms of adjacent existing context such as the curvature layout of the detached garages, and the linear arrangement of the historic pergola. The orientation of the project and its individual components is reflective of the organic nature of the

resort site, and its non-orthogonal arrangement of buildings and site structures which are nestled in the site to take advantage of view and natural topographic conditions.

Height, Massing and Modulation

The proposed heights of the structures are appropriate to their respective program and association as appurtenant structures. As the tallest of the proposed buildings, the wet pavilion is proposed to have a maximum height of 14'-7" while the smaller food and beverage pavilion is proposed to have a maximum height of 11'-6." The cabanas are proposed to have a maximum height of approximately 14 feet.

The wet pavilion is designed after cottage-style vernacular with a simple rectangular form, cross gable roof, and wood trim adornments. An attached pergola structure provides additional vernacular typology, while providing a shading amenity.

The food and beverage pavilion is similar in style to the wet pavilion, and utilizes a simple rectangular form with a gable roof to encapsulate the interior space. The shade cabanas are also rectangular in shape, with a high-pitched fabric hip-style roof and ventilation cone. The fabric roofs also have scalloped valances. The cabanas are framed in wood with vented, wood slatted walls at the sides and rear, and a wood-framed fabric panel wall at the front, flanking the central opening.

The height, massing, and modulation are appropriate to the scale and type of proposed accessory structures, and utilize contextual typology that is appropriate to the hotel complex and the new pool area.

Architectural Style and Detailing

The proposed accessory structures incorporate detailing that is contextual to their respective architectural typology. The wet pavilion proposes to utilize exposed wood trim at the building corners, wood siding at the gable ends, and a wood pergola that attaches to the front of the structure to shade the towel bar area. A wood gable pediment is proposed at the cross gable of the structure, and is currently designed separately from the trellis, with no supporting columns or brackets, and no tie-in to the pergola structure. As noted previously, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring this feature to be revised to either engage with the gable roof framing or fully tie into the attached pergola structure as an extension of the trellis, instead of the current floating design, which appears to be disengaged from the overall building. Additional features of this building include a tiled accent wall at the towel bar, and slatted wood ventilation panels at the rear elevation.

The food and beverage pavilion features similar finishes and detailing to the wet pavilion including wood trim at the corners, accented tile as a wainscot at the front elevation and along half of the south elevation beneath the window opening, and wooden shutters at the front window openings. This building also has the proposed gable pediments and cement plaster as the predominate wall finish, similar to the wet pavilion; the recommended condition noted above would also apply to this structure. Staff also recommends a condition of approval requiring the wood shutters to be paired for each window opening along the front façade and sized to appear functional, or to be eliminated.

The proposed cabanas will utilize a hybrid enclosure system of vented slatted wood walls, and fabric panels at the front with a hipped gable roof composed of fabric, with a ventilation cone at the top. The roofing fabric will also feature a scalloped valance surround, and will be different in color to the fabric proposed for the wall panels.

Compatibility

The proposed new buildings are compatible with their immediate surroundings. The pavilions utilize contextual vernacular from the existing historical cottages of the hotel property through form and materials, while the cabanas utilize traditional vernacular that is appropriate to the site, and to the proposed use of the resort pool area. Though the organically-shaped, freeform edge pool is generally inconsistent with the traditional building styles of the resort, the sunken location, proposed curvilinear planting and fencing border, and location at the southwest section of the resort property, provides an opportunity for a new formal expression to take place. The location of the improvements on the project site creates an opportunity to provide a unique outdoor setting and amenity space for the resort guests.

Conceptual Landscape Design

The project site is proposed to be enclosed through new fencing and retaining walls that sit within vegetated landscape zones of screening plants and accented perennial planting beds. An ale of King Palm trees (*Archontophoenix romansoffianum*) is proposed to flank the stairs leading down from the pergola at the north end, and the site is mostly proposed to be bordered by a double row of Brisbane Box Trees (*Lophostemon confertus*) for screening. Additional King Palms are proposed for planter islands that are shown to surround the new pool at various points. A substantial area of the project site is proposed to be stamped concrete as part of the pool deck, to accommodate chaise lounges and other programmatic furnishings. Understory plantings contain a mixture of subtropical and Mediterranean plants including Aloe, Boxwood, Bird of Paradise, and Spider Plants.

Staff finds the overall planting palette to be compatible for a water recreation area, providing a varied interest of color, texture and scale. Staff recommends a condition of approval requiring appropriately-sized shade trees to be planted within the boxwood hedge located between the Garden View Cottage and the proposed pavilion buildings to provide added height, dappled shade, and add seasonal interest along the new linear walkway between these two zones. The landscaping will be subject to a standard condition of Final Design Review requiring compliance with MWELo water efficiency standards prior to the issuance of a building permit. As a matter of course, the patterning, color, and finish of the concrete pool deck will be subject to review and approval during Final Design Review as well as specifications of the site furnishings, a landscape lighting plan and light fixture specifications.

Protected Tree Removal

The applicant has identified 10 trees that are proposed for removal. These consist of undersized Crape Myrtles (*Lagerstroemia indicas*) and Carrotwoods (*Cupaniopsis anacardioides*), none of which are large enough to meet the criteria as a protected tree, and therefore do not require submittal of an application for Private Tree Removal. The remaining trees on the site are proposed to be protected in place, and staff recommends a condition of

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approval requiring inclusion of a tree protection plan in the construction drawings submitted for plan check.

COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS:

The proposed project was routed to the Department of Public Works and the Current Planning Section for review. Public Works provided conditions of approval, including tree protection requirements and a construction staging and traffic management plan for review and approval prior to the start of construction, which have been incorporated in Attachment A of this staff report. The Current Planning Section conducted a review of the project for compliance with the Zoning Code. A condition requiring compliance with the maximum height for walls and fences has also been included in the recommended conditions of approval.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This project has been determined to be exempt from environmental review pursuant to the guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §21080(b)(9); Administrative Code, Title 14, Chapter 3, §15311, Class 11, Accessory Structures). There are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class; therefore, there are no unusual circumstances. This exemption applies to projects involving the construction of accessory structures, such as the proposed swimming pool, and appurtenant buildings, to the existing hotel.

CONCLUSION:

The project has evolved to satisfactorily address the Commission's comments provided during the Preliminary Consultation review, and staff finds it to be consistent with the applicable design guidelines including the Secretary of the Interior Standards. Staff recommends approval of the application for Concept Design Review, subject to the recommended conditions of approval for advancement to Final Design Review. Given the relatively small scale of the project, staff recommends, pursuant to PMC Section 17.61.030.F.2, that Final Design Review be conducted by staff.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Reviewed by:



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Attachments:

- A. Recommended Conditions of Approval
- B. Tree Inventory
- C. Applicant Response to Preliminary Consultation Comments
- D. Proposed Plans, Elevations, Renderings, and Landscape Plans