



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 THREE-TO-FOUR-STORY, 88,295 SQUARE-FOOT, 86-UNIT
RESIDENTIAL PROJECT
350 CORDOVA STREET

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

Environmental Determination

Find that the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) does not apply to projects which are disapproved, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15270; projects that are disapproved.

Findings for Concept Design Disapproval

1. Find that the project does not comply with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts; and
2. Based on these findings, disapprove the application for Concept Design Review.

BACKGROUND:

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: High Density Residential (0-48 units per acre)
- Zoning: Rm-48-HL-40(45) (Multi-Family Residential, 48 units per acre, Height Limit 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 Central District Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts.
- Site: The site is comprised of a single 1.3-acre lot at the southwest corner of Cordova Street and S. Euclid Avenue. It is rectangular in shape and is currently developed with a non-historic complex of one-story medical office buildings built in 1977, interspersed with mature trees, landscaping, including a number of large boulders and a water feature, and surface parking. A tree inventory provided with the application identifies 58 trees on site, nine of which are protected native trees and 11 of which are protected specimen trees, as well as five street trees and 17 off-site trees in close proximity to the project site (one of which is a protected native tree and one of which is a protected mature tree).
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties include several multi-story office and multi-family residential buildings and a hotel between 6 and 13 stories in height as well as lower-scaled commercial and residential buildings and surface parking lots. Directly across Euclid Avenue from the site, a multi-family residential development is under construction along the outer edges and at the top of an existing parking structure. There are a number of designated and eligible historic resources in close proximity to the project site, including:
 - Pasadena Masonic Temple (1926, Bennett & Haskell), 200 S. Euclid Avenue (immediately north of proposed parking structure additions)
 - Miss Orton's School for Girls (1898, Frederick C. Roehrig), 154 S. Euclid Avenue
 - Las Flores Apartments (1937), 130 S. Euclid Avenue
 - Pasadena Civic Auditorium (1933, Bergstrom, Bennet & Haskell), 300 E. Green Street,
 - Foss Design & Building Company office (1926, Robert Foss), 175 S. Los Robles Avenue
 - Apartment Building at 157 S. Los Robles Avenue (1916, Peoples & Cheney)
 - Stanley Apartments and Livingstone Hotel Buildings (Myron Hunt, 1925 & 1927, respectively), 149 and 139 S. Los Robles Avenue, respectively
 - Ernest Smith House (1911, Greene & Greene), 272 S. Los Robles Avenue
 - Throop Memorial Universalist Church (1922, Frederick Kennedy, Jr.), 300 S. Los Robles Avenue
 - Residence at 324 S. Euclid Avenue (1886).
- Project Description: The project involves construction of a three-to-four-story, 86-unit residential project in four buildings over one level of subterranean parking. One protected native tree, three protected specimen trees and 36 non-protected trees are proposed to be removed to accommodate the project. Six protected specimen trees and two non-protected trees are proposed to remain, as are all street trees. It should also be noted that, due to poor health conditions, a total of ten protected trees have been approved for removal, separately from the design review process for the proposed project.
- Site Design: The four proposed buildings are arranged in two rows running north-to-south with an open courtyard between them. The buildings that have frontage along Euclid Avenue are set back approximately 15 feet from the east property line and those with frontage along Cordova Street are set back approximately 20 feet from the north property line. The westerly buildings are set back from the west interior side property line by approximately 6 ½ feet and an approximate 11' setback is maintained from the south

property line. The facades are articulated with full-height step-backs, with balconies filling the step-back areas and aligning with the forward facades. An ancillary garden space between the north and south buildings along Euclid Avenue connects to the central main garden and provides an additional pedestrian access point to the site, in combination with the main garden entry opening along Cordova Street. Vehicular access to the subterranean parking structure is provided at the southeast corner of the site along Euclid Avenue.

- Architectural Style: Contemporary
- Developer: Euclid Cordova Associates
- Architects: ONYX Architects
- Landscape Architect: Armstrong and Walker Landscape Architecture

ANALYSIS:

Design Commission Comments from Preliminary Consultation

On December 22, 2020, 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 in Attachment C, along with a graphic presentation of the project. As described in detail below, staff finds that the revised design is unresponsive to the Commission’s comments and the design guidelines on which they are based.

Commissioner Comments, December 22, 2020	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>1. Further study the parking layout and site design and consider pursuing reductions in required parking to allow for preservation of more of the site’s significant protected tree canopy within the site interior. In future submittals, ensure that the DBH of multi-trunk trees is calculated as required in the Tree Protection Ordinance (based on the combined areas of the trunks) to ensure accurate accounting of protected trees. Ensure that the analysis and reasoning for the proposed tree removals is made clear in</p>	<p>“The parking layout has been rearranged to protect existing perimeter trees along the north and east setbacks of the site. The main garden includes three distinct tree wells that extend down to the parking lot. These wells protect existing trees located towards the center of the site, while serving as an area to plant additional new trees within the garden. Regarding the Tree protection plan, refer to sheet AG-101 and the arborist report for more information. The revised tree protection plan protects (3) Olive trees at the center of the site, and (5) trees at</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The applicant has studied the parking layout and modified it to preserve within tree wells three additional trees in the interior main garden area toward the northern end of the site. The parking structure is also set back a minimum of 16’ from the east property line, 11’ from the south property line and 10’ from the north property line to allow for preservation of perimeter protected trees.</p>

Commissioner Comments, December 22, 2020	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
future applications.	the perimeter, and proposes to remove (4) protected olive trees and (1) protected white alder due to poor health, poor structural conditions, with infeasible proximity to proposed new construction.”	
<p>2. Further study the massing of the buildings to create a clear hierarchy, harmonious proportions and a differentiated base, middle and top. Along the long Euclid Avenue and courtyard elevations, explore further articulation of the massing, and possible further separation of buildings, to create distinct building forms to form a streetscape. Consider alternative means of organizing the proposed residential units on the site including arranging them around multiple courtyards and/or incorporating units that have a north-south orientation rather than all units being oriented east-west. Explore ways to impart some playfulness into the design, such as angular shifts to create differentiated massing.</p>	<p>“The project is composed of four distinct building masses on site. The building maintains a 3-story height along Cordova St. and on the west side of the site where the building is adjacent neighboring condominiums. The building mass along Euclid Ave. is 4 stories high which faces a 6-story development across the street. Within its composition and proportions, the building establishes its base with the terraced landscaped podium that includes towers which extrude vertically through the horizontal floor and roof lines. The third floor marks the top of the middle proportion of the building mass hierarchy upon which the vertical grey towers also serve as transitional and entry privacy elements along the open courtyard walkways rather than fully enclosing them. Lastly, the continuous roof line wraps around the top of the building mass to articulate the building horizontality and define the apex of the hierarchal organization of the building's proportions.”</p>	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>Although the design team has made efforts to address this comment, staff finds that it has not been adequately addressed. In particular, rather than creating more distinct building forms as recommended in the design guidelines, the massing and articulation of the buildings appear more unified and the massing more simplified rather than being further articulated. Further, the base, middle and top conditions of the building do not appear to be strongly articulated.</p>
<p>3. Further study the fenestration to create more balanced solid-to-void proportions, a clear pattern of openings and avoid short, rectangular</p>	<p>“The building fenestration is now more balanced due to the use of similar window types that slightly vary in shape and proportion. These windows are placed in</p>	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>Over a substantial portion of the project, the revised fenestration is more balanced and creates a clear</p>

Commissioner Comments, December 22, 2020	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>windows along the street façade.</p>	<p>balance with the building storefronts to establish a clear language and expression along the vertically standing elements of the building. Continuous horizontal datums are provided at 18" above the finish floor, 42" above the finish floor which matches the guard rail heights, and 96" above the floor which aligns with the door headers."</p>	<p>pattern, while also including interesting variation that responds well to the contemporary design of the project. However, staff finds that there are prominent blank wall conditions and unbalanced proportions that do not fully address this comment or the associated design guidelines, such as at the stairwell at the southern end of the lobby space along Euclid Avenue and the westerly volume along Cordova Street.</p>
<p>4. Explore ways to create a stronger, more expressive roofline to the buildings.</p>	<p>"The building uses the floor plates and roof line to create strong horizontal planes which are interrupted by vertical towers or columns. The roof line along the 4 story portions of the project is continuous and uninterrupted to create a strong visual top for the project. The floor plates create datum lines that are further strengthened through the use of balcony and walkway railings. At the 3-story portion of the project, the vertical walls are used to divide the horizontal roof line while maintaining strong visual top with a similar architectural language of the 4-story section of the project."</p>	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>While a strong, expressive roofline has been created by incorporating a deep, continuous overhanging canopy feature at the top of the building, staff is concerned that its lack of articulation, in combination with the relatively unarticulated massing, contributes to an overall sense of massiveness to the buildings.</p>
<p>5. Further study the stoops along Euclid Avenue to ensure they are usable spaces and integrated into the design of the building. Consider providing a cover at the entrances to further differentiate the base of the building, create a transitional element from the exterior to the interior and provide shelter from</p>	<p>"The walkup entry stoops along Euclid were modified so that the private patios are covered by balconies overhead and are fully integrated into the architecture. No balconies extend beyond the side yard setback as required by the zoning code. The terraced landscaping helps provide a subtle transition from the street through a series of</p>	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>While entry stoops have been created, many are elevated substantially above street grade, creating a disconnect between the project and the public realm.</p>

Commissioner Comments, December 22, 2020	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
the elements.	stepped raised planters and disjointed stoops. Note that landscaping along the Euclid side yard will include plantings that extend down to natural grade.”	
6. Reconsider the extensive walkways and bridges within and along the main garden to avoid creation of physical and visual barriers to the main garden from the street and adjoining residential units. These features should be buried within the building as much as possible.	“The circulation around the central courtyard was simplified by the elimination of one of the three elevators previously proposed. The circulation around the courtyard also engages the building with building mass elements extending down to grade with the walkways concealed behind a series of vertical towers.”	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The project overall reads as a series of unbroken walkways and bridges along the exterior, particularly along the main garden where the walkways are continuous along the entire perimeter but screened with repeating thin solid walls. The balconies along the street edges have a similar character but are broken up by enclosed building volume; however, the repetition of balcony areas and building volumes creates a repeating and monotonous character along the long Euclid Avenue façade in particular. The courtyard walkways also wrap to the Cordova Street façade, further emphasizing them and bridges remain within the main garden.</p>
7. The pedestrian path of travel from the parking structure to the residential units should engage the courtyard rather than bypassing it. The elevators that extend from the parking structure to the main garden area should terminate at the ground level.	<p>(RESPONSE TO COMMENTS 7-9)</p> <p>“The design of the long linear central garden has been further broken down into three gardens with two of the ancillary gardens at main entry points into the project and adjacent to protected trees. The ancillary garden facing Cordova is designed a semi-public space the includes an outdoor amphitheater open to neighborhood and will be the probable location for the public art installation.</p> <p>Four discreet outdoor staircases are provided in the courtyard to allow residents easy access the</p>	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The vertical circulation from the parking structure continues through all floors of the building and, although users may stop to access the courtyard, it is likely that users would bypass the courtyard to access the residential units above. As recommended earlier, the building should be further broken up, which would allow for the creation of individual circulation modes within each building that could be accessed from the central courtyard.</p>

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	<p>garden without the use of the elevator. These staircases also provide moments for termination and architectural design features in the courtyard. The central courtyard also includes special amenities with appropriate adjacencies to the common use areas, such as a BBQ area, children’s play yard, bocce ball court, fire pits, seating and lawn areas. The oblique angled walkways provide for accessible vertical transitions without the use of ramps and handrails, and provide a sense of playfulness into the landscape design.”</p>	
<p>8. The stairs and elevators within the main garden should be designed as terminating and transitional elements that are architecturally compatible to and of similar quality as the buildings and should be integrated into the residential buildings themselves. If these features are removed or relocated, consider additional means of providing terminating and transitional elements within the main garden.</p>	<p>[See response to comment 7 above]</p>	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The open stairs within the courtyard lack a defined character to define them as transitional or terminating elements of the building. An elevation of the stair terminating the southern view at the rear of the main garden is not provided.</p>
<p>9. The long central courtyard should be designed to include discreet areas and appropriately proportioned outdoor rooms that provide a variety of uses and amenities to ensure usability of the project’s</p>	<p>[See response to comment 7 above]</p>	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The long central courtyard includes several different uses including a barbeque, a bocce ball court, an amphitheater and small seat wall areas integrated within planter areas set within pedestrian pathways. The landscape plan is unclear as to how</p>

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<p>open spaces, while ensuring that the spaces are not over-programmed. Carefully study the design of the open spaces to include such features as outdoor cooking/eating space, water and/or fire features, site furniture, focal elements, etc. Specialty paving should be used to soften the walkways and gathering spaces. Restudy the oblique angles in the landscape design to ensure that the open spaces created are useful, meaningful spaces.</p>		<p>these differentiated areas are designed to create clear, well-proportioned use zones, focal points and sufficient seating areas to ensure usability consistent with the number of residential units proposed.</p>
<p>10. Further study the articulation of the proposed architectural style to develop a clear hierarchy, unify the design overall and avoid creation of a single building with multiple, disconnected styles. In addition, further study the project's response to Pasadena's architectural heritage, including historically significant modern designs in the vicinity. For Concept Design Review, explain why the chosen style is appropriate and provides real benefits to the City.</p>	<p>"The architectural style and language proposed is modern with a contemporary twist. The core value of the design ethos continues to embody strong horizontal planes intercepted by vertical mass elements. To further study the architectural style of the project and respond to Pasadena's architectural heritage, we reflected upon a few case studies in Pasadena. The two particular buildings that provided a modern design influence were Lionel V. Mayell's Whispering Waters (1961) and Regency Del Mar Complex (1966), Both buildings incorporate architectural elements that reflect the traditional values of modern architecture. Specifically, the form of the buildings is defined by the structural components which are clearly expressed with</p>	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>While the revised design is more unified than the previous design, staff finds that it has become oversimplified, repetitive and monotonous. The reference to Whispering Waters may be appropriate for a building of this size; however, that project incorporates more significant articulation in both massing and height than is evident in the proposed design. The building as designed has more in common with the Regency Del Mar building, which staff finds to be an inappropriate reference point for projects seeking to be consistent with the applicable design guidelines. The building is a long, unbroken and unarticulated building volume with a repetitive character that should not be considered appropriate for development in Pasadena.</p>

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	<p>refined detail. In each case, the design of each building strategically uses mass and articulation of the horizontal floor and roof plates to add character to the building facade without straying away from the modern architecture style they have established. The proposed housing development at Cordova and Euclid will continue the architectural legacy of the modern style for multi-family housing in Pasadena with a refined design that reflects the current demographics and design practices found today.”</p>	
<p>11. Further study how the landscape design and the building design can be more integrated and interconnected and address the design issues with both aspects of the design, as outlined in these comments.</p>	<p>“The overall landscape design was simplified to be more cohesive with the architectural design. Alternative landscape designs were explored, but ultimately the straightforward modern and rectilinear design of the architecture felt most appropriate for the landscape design concept as well.”</p>	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>It is unclear how the landscape and building designs work together to create a clear composition and address the overall comments provided by the Commission.</p>
<p>12. Explore ways to celebrate the main entry along Euclid Avenue, particularly in response to the proposed preservation of protected trees at that location.</p>	<p>“The main entry point located along both Cordova and Euclid create celebrated entries while remaining mindful about the mature trees located at each respective location site. The courtyard garden along Cordova maximizes the width between buildings to incorporate a large garden space that can function as an outdoor amphitheater to host public events and gatherings. This semi-public ancillary garden is enclosed by a series of exterior walkways supported by columns which allows the</p>	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The main entry points are not articulated in a manner that identifies them as entries. Rather, they are designed as continuations of the continuous outdoor walkway character evident throughout the project. In addition, providing a leftover space as canvas for public art is inconsistent with the intent of the public art process and should not be a consideration in the design review process.</p>

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	<p>architecture to further engage amphitheater and provide a canvas for the public art installation. The entry courtyard along Euclid was relocated to better align with the protected tree. Common use program spaces such as the community multi-purpose room and gym were also relocated adjacent to the garden in order to better activate the space and provide a more appropriate side entry and transitional experience into the site.”</p>	
<p>13. Consider relocating bicycle storage from the basement.</p>	<p>“Bicycle storage has been relocated to the ground floor and now has its own room located on the south side of site. Users no longer have to access the semi-subterranean garage to store their bikes but rather now circulate through the main garden space to do so.”</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>A bicycle storage space has been provided at grade level as recommended.</p>
<p>14. Ensure that future drawings submitted are clear and legible.</p>	<p>“Use of labels and color hatches will add clarity.”</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>In general, the drawings are clear and legible; however, the grade changes between the sidewalk and the buildings are not clearly demonstrated in the elevations and are difficult to fully understand in the sections.</p>
<p>15. Consider whether isolating the community use at the corner is creating limitations and restrictions on the design.</p>	<p>“The community spaces have been relocated adjacent to the Euclid Garden entry and within the glazed building volume found on the immediate corner of Euclid and Cordova. The community spaces adjacent to the Euclid entry are intended to be informal, such as multi-purpose room and gym, whereas the community</p>	<p><i>Comment not satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>While community spaces have been relocated to other areas of the building, this effort did not result in any changes to the design, which was the intent of the recommendation.</p>

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	uses at the corner are intended for more formal uses such as the manager's office, leasing office, conference room, meeting rooms, and mailroom, with a resident's lounge at the third floor and roof deck which provides the best views of the city. The location of these spaces engages the all aspects of the Main Garden spaces including both ancillary gardens."	

Programming and Circulation

The project proposes siting of the proposed new buildings in two rows at the east and west sides of the site with a courtyard between, as previously described above. The ground floor is programmed with residential units except for common amenity spaces, including a main lobby, conference room, business center, and offices at the northeast corner as well as a multipurpose space and gym flanking the ancillary garden space near the southern end of the Euclid Avenue frontage. Similarly, the second through fourth floors are programmed with residential units except for a multipurpose room at the northeast corner on the second floor, a resident's lounge at the third floor and a small enclosed space and roof deck at the fourth floor.

Vehicular access to the subterranean parking structure is provided at the southeast corner of the site along Euclid Avenue. Two vertical circulation cores for pedestrians are provided from the basement to the top of the building; one at the southern end of the site at the southern terminus of the main garden and one at the northern end integrated into the southern end of the lobby/amenity volume at the northeast corner. Additional stairs from the ground level to the fourth floor are provided in three locations at the west building and one at the east building, all oriented toward the main garden and providing access to a continuous outdoor corridor at each level along the main garden perimeter with bridges crossing the main garden at the north and south ends and wrapping to a portion of the north elevation facing Cordova Street.

Overall, staff finds that the programming and circulation of the building and site are inconsistent with the applicable design guidelines, which are provided in Attachment A and unresponsive to the Commission's Preliminary Consultation comments as outlined in the table above. In particular, the programming and circulation proposed cause the buildings to appear massive and unarticulated with continuous, repeating character that does not respond to Pasadena's architectural legacy. The courtyard design appears unrelated to the architecture and programming of the buildings and the pedestrian circulation does not fully embrace or engage the courtyard.

Orientation

The proposed new buildings have windows and balconies arranged in a clear pattern on all sides, although some blank walls or disproportionate solid-to-void relationships should be further studied as previously described. The amenity spaces at the northeast corner create the most successful building composition, appropriate to the corner location. The interior orientation toward the main garden requires extensive additional study to break up the monotonous, continuous outdoor circulation along the entire garden perimeter. While an attempt has been made to screen them with solid floating wall areas, the walkways inhibit a meaningful building orientation toward this important communal open space area within the project interior.

Height, Massing and Modulation

The height limit at this location is 40', measured from the lowest point of existing grade, with 45' allowed using height averaging, and a limitation of three stories overall. The drawings submitted show the maximum height to be slightly over 51' from the lowest point of existing grade, with the buildings along Euclid Avenue, and the volume at the northwest corner, being four stories. The applicant is requesting a modification of the building height Zoning Code requirement in exchange for preservation of protected trees, as authorized in PMC Section 17.44.090 – see analysis of this request below. It should also be noted that the section drawings depict some areas of the site having a substantial grade change between the sidewalk and the base of the building with extensive stairs and stepped planters.

The elevation drawings depict the building masses along Euclid Avenue being modulated by vertical recesses at linear, stacked balconies. The height is uniform along Euclid Avenue, which is accentuated by a projecting roofline canopy that has a continuous depth and character along the entire façade. Overall, staff finds that the massing and modulation depicted in the elevation drawings needs substantial restudy to be appropriate and responsive to the design guidelines and previous comments from the Commission.

Height Modification

Pursuant to PMC Section 8.52.060.A, the applicant is requesting a height modification for the project to allow it to exceed the maximum allowable height of 40' (45' with height averaging) and the maximum allowable three stories to assist in the preservation of protected trees on the site. The east building is proposed to reach a maximum height of slightly over 51' from the lowest point of existing grade and to be four stories where a maximum of three stories are allowed. As noted above, the project site includes 20 protected trees, 10 of which have been previously approved for removal due to poor health. Of the remaining 10 protected trees, the applicant is requesting to remove four and to preserve six in conjunction with the proposed project, in addition to preserving two non-protected trees. The following findings are required to be made to allow modification of development standards in conjunction with the retention of protected trees:

1. Applicant investigated alternative site designs and building footprints using existing development standards;

The applicant has studied multiple property configurations that would allow for the development of the site with the number of residential units proposed in compliance with

the three-story limitation, as shown in Attachment C. Each studied configuration results in designs that do not comply with other development standards or result in undesirable design characteristics.

2. Tree/s to be preserved is/are in good health and condition (taking into account species and longevity) as determined by a certified arborist;

Most of the trees proposed for preservation are shown to be in good health with health and structure grades of B, C or C-. One tree at the southeast corner of the site is indicated as having health and structure grades of D; however, this tree is not in a location that affects the placement of the buildings and is within an unbuildable easement area at the south of the site.

3. Project includes a well integrated and thoughtful design solution that enhances the property and its surroundings;

As outlined in this report, staff does not find that the project as currently designed meets this finding.

4. Project is not injurious to adjacent properties or uses, or detrimental to environmental quality, quality of life, or the health, safety, and welfare of the public; and

As outlined in this report, staff does not find that the project as currently designed meets this finding.

5. Project is consistent with the objectives and policies of the applicable design guidelines and the citywide design principles in the general plan.

As outlined in this report, staff finds that the project is not consistent with many of the applicable design guidelines.

Based on the analysis above, staff recommends that the Commission disapprove the applicant's request for four-story development.

Architectural Style and Detailing

The proposed new buildings are of a contemporary design with flat roofs, repeating, alternating building forms and extensive exterior walkways and balcony railings. The applicant has indicated that Lionel Mayell project Whispering Waters (1000 Cordova Street) and Regency Del Mar (601 E. Del Mar Boulevard) are the primary inspiration designs for the proposed project. The building appears to largely respond to the Regency Del Mar building, which has an unbroken, long building massing with recessed balconies and a continuous roofline. The Whispering Waters building is a designated landmark and incorporates more extensive massing and height articulation that, if used as a model for this project, could result in a more successful design. Staff finds that the building has a massive, unbroken and overwhelming appearance that is inconsistent with the design guidelines. See Attachment A for a list of the guidelines staff has identified with which this project is inconsistent.

Compatibility

Staff finds that the proposed new buildings are incompatible with their immediate surroundings, particularly recently completed and anticipated future development, in terms of massing, building articulation and architectural design. In addition, the overall design is not consistent with Pasadena’s architectural legacy and with many of the design guidelines that apply to the project, as shown in Attachment A.

Conceptual Landscape Design

The landscape plans provided outline an extensive program of landscaping for the site, including amenities such as seat walls, outdoor cooking space, an amphitheater and a bocce ball court. As noted previously, the interface between the landscape design and the building architecture is not demonstrated or clear in the plans and the usability of the outdoor amenities is questionable. Design guidelines of concern related to the landscape design are included in Attachment A.

Protected Tree Removals

The application includes a tree inventory that identifies removal of one protected native tree and three protected specimen trees, as follows:

Tree Number	Tree Species (Common Name)	Tree Type	Diameter at Breast Height (Inches)	Tree Height (Feet)	Tree Canopy Spread (Feet)	Location
15	Alnus rhombifolius	Protected Native	12	38	11	West Side Yard
29	Olea europea	Protected Specimen	16	20	28	Central Courtyard
32	Olea europea	Protected Specimen	17	20	27	Central Courtyard
53	Pinus radiata	Protected Specimen	21	60	35	East Side Yard

The application states that the four trees proposed for removal would be impacted by the project and are not good candidates for relocation due to relatively poor health (ratings from C to D in health and structure are noted for all four trees). The applications do not specify which Tree Protection Ordinance (TPO) finding is proposed by the applicant; however, they do indicate that

replacement of the trees would be appropriate. As such, finding #6 would be the most appropriate finding that would apply to the request. This finding states, “the project, as defined in Section 17.12.020, includes a landscape design plan that emphasizes a tree canopy that is sustainable over the long term by adhering to the replacement matrix prepared by the city manager and included in the associated administrative guidelines.” The table below outlines the tree replacement requirements for the trees proposed to be removed based on the adopted tree replacement matrix:

Tree #	Type	Size	15-gal replacement	24” box replacement	36” box replacement	Replacement Species
15	Non-palm; native	12”	6	3	N/A	Native list
29	Non-palm; specimen	16”	8	4	2	Specimen or Native lists
32	Non-palm; specimen	17”	8	4	2	Specimen or Native lists
53	Non-palm; specimen	21”	N/A	8	4	Specimen or Native lists

A landscape plan is provided and included in the plans in Attachment D; however, while it notes the species of trees proposed, provides locations, and depicts a large number of new trees to be planted, the specific quantities and sizes of the proposed new trees are not provided. Many of the species proposed to be planted are on the specimen tree list and none are on the native tree list. It appears that there is sufficient space within natural soil within setback areas to accommodate the number of new trees proposed to be planted on the site; however, full compliance with the Tree Replacement Matrix should be demonstrated, if the project was to move forward, prior to Final Design Review to ensure that compliance will be feasible.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

As staff is recommending disapproval of this application, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15270, CEQA does not apply. However, should the Commission approve the project at this or any future time, environmental documentation has been prepared. The project will be constructed on a previously developed site in an urbanized area and is consistent with the General Plan and Zoning designations that apply to the property. Staff engaged CDM Smith, an environmental consulting firm, to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the project and determine whether it would meet the required findings for a Categorical Exemption under class 32, “infill development projects.” Based on the documentation prepared and included in Attachment E, the project would not have the potential to result in significant impacts related to air quality, traffic, noise, water quality or cultural resources and, based on this analysis, staff recommends that, if it approves the project, the Commission determine that it is Categorically Exempt from CEQA.

CONCLUSION:

The project design has not satisfactorily addressed the comments provided during Preliminary Consultation and is not consistent with the design guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan or the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial & Multi-Family Residential Districts. As such, staff recommends disapproval of the application for Concept Design Review.

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. Applicable design guidelines of concern
- B. Tree inventory and exhibits; Private Tree Removal applications
- C. Responses to Preliminary Consultation comments & graphic set
- D. Technical set of plans & elevations
- E. Class 32 CEQA exemption documentation