



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** APRIL 12, 2018

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

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

**SUBJECT:** APPLICATION FOR CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW  
NEW ONE-TO-FOUR-STORY, 100,285-SQUARE-FOOT MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING  
758-766 S. FAIR OAKS AVENUE

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#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

#### **Environmental Determination**

Find that the application for Concept Design Review was subject to environmental review in the Categorical Exemption adopted by the City Council for Conditional Use Permit #6918 on February 7, 2022, 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 there are no protected trees on the project site.

#### **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 Avenue 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 conditions in Attachment A, which shall be further reviewed during Final Design Review.

## **BACKGROUND:**

### **Project Overview**

- General Plan Designation: High Mixed Use (0 – 3.00 FAR; 0-87 du/acre)
- Zoning: IG-SP-2, (Industrial General, South Fair Oaks Specific Plan)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the South Fair Oaks Avenue Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts.
- Site: The site is comprised of two adjoining lots totaling approximately one acre at the southeast corner of N. Fair Oaks Avenue and Fillmore Street. It is rectangular in shape and is currently developed with a one-story commercial building and surface parking. A tree inventory provided with the application indicates that there are no trees on the site and eight street trees along the property's frontages.
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties include surface parking lots, older non-historic, one-story commercial buildings and newer three-to-four story medical office buildings, including the Huntington ambulatory surgery center, the HMRI building, and the Shriners for Children Medical Center. The Metro light rail line Fillmore Station is also located approximately two blocks to the east of the project site. There are no historic resources within a four-block radius of the project site. However, there are other historic resources found within the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan area, including the former Southern California Cooperative Wind Tunnel at 950 South Raymond, the Glenarm Power Plant at 72 East Glenarm Street, and the former Pacific Electric Railroad Substation at 1154 S. Fair Oaks Avenue.
- Project Description: The project involves demolition of the existing building and surface parking lot and construction of a one-to-four-story, 100,285-square-foot medical office building with three levels of subterranean parking. There are no trees on the project site; however, eight public street trees are proposed to be removed.
- Site Design: The building is proposed to be sited covering the majority of the site with the exception of an open courtyard at the northwest corner. Vehicular access is proposed to be taken from Fillmore Street 50 feet east of the intersection of Fair Oaks Avenue (entrance only) and from Edmondson Alley 10 feet south of the intersection of Fillmore Street (entrance and exit). The subterranean garage ramp is proposed at the northeast corner of the building near the Edmondson Alley access point. A ground-level service yard is proposed at the southeast corner of the site along Edmondson Alley.
- Architectural Style: Contemporary
- Developer: Huntington Memorial Hospital
- Architects: Mascari Warner Dinh Architects

- Landscape Architect: Weiland Design Group

**ANALYSIS:**

**Design Commission Comments from Preliminary Consultation**

On April 27, 2021, the Design Commission reviewed an application for Preliminary Consultation for this project. The Commission’s comments from that meeting, with the design team’s responses, and staff’s comments, are detailed in the chart below. The current plans and elevations are in Attachment B.

Commissioner Comments, April 27, 2021	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>1. The vehicular access, passenger loading zone, and commitment to the building form continue to inappropriately dictate the site plan and massing of the site and all of these project features should be reconsidered, as they are not consistent with other recent development in the general context or the Huntington Hospital main campus and Master Plan area. The proposed site plan and massing, even with the proposed revisions, is not successful in meeting the existing and future Specific Plan guidelines or development standards. The site planning should be resolved first, with the massing developed after.</p>	<p>“The proposed project has taken all design commission comments seriously and has reorganized the site plan as illustrated. Vehicular access has been relocated eliminating the pedestrian island along South Fair Oaks. Building program and massing now engages South Fair Oaks continuing the urban edge fabric along the street frontage. The patient drop-off is now located along Fillmore Street providing clear vehicular access from the north and south directions. A large public node/plaza at the northwest corner contributes to an enhanced pedestrian link between the Fillmore Street Metro Link and Huntington Hospital. The landscape buffers provide a safe public outdoor space with seating areas to promote the active use of the space. Vehicular circulation, pedestrian, and patient access have been rearranged providing safer interaction, wayfinding and overall experience. Building scale (human scale) along South Fair Oaks and Fillmore Street has been reorganized creating place, openness, building mass articulation creating better</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The vehicular access and patron drop-off zone have been relocated to the north side of the building facing Fillmore Street. The vehicular progression now includes an entrance-only driveway approximately 50 feet east of the intersection of Fair Oaks Avenue and Fillmore Street and a second entrance and exit from Edmondson Alley, approximately 10 feet south of Fillmore Street. This configuration substantially reduces the number of driveway curb-cuts from Fillmore Street, thereby ensuring a safer pedestrian environment on this important street leading to a light-rail station to the east. The proposed pedestrian plaza at the northwest corner of the site provides a clear and separate path of pedestrian travel from the public realm to the building entrances. In addition, a one-story building volume has been extruded from the primary building massing to engage with South Fair Oaks Avenue, including a covered arcade at the street edge. The previously proposed curving façade of the primary building massing remains proposed as the design team’s concept for the building, unrelated to the site circulation.</p>

Commissioner Comments, April 27, 2021	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
	<p>transition within the surrounding area context. Building massing along Fillmore Street is open at the Ground Level; this allows patients and visitors to visually see the drop-off and lobby main entry. The main entry is identified by an open canopy that leads one into the building from both Fillmore Street and South Fair Oaks. The lobby has been pulled out further to better identify the front door and entry into the building.”</p>	
<p>2. The vehicular access should be separated from the pedestrian access. Consider re-locating the passenger drop-off area from at-grade to subterranean, and provide a feasible option that better incorporates and considers the alleyway as a drop off location.</p>	<p>“Patient drop-off along Edmondson Alley was studied but does not meet the functional requirements. The main entry and drop-off has been relocated to Fillmore Street. This provides optimum functional use for staff and patients, there is clear visibility to the drop-off. The single one way in access drive is not a full width drive but narrow only 12 feet. Building entrance and patient drop-off along Edmondson Alley creates an unsafe environment and conflict between back of house activities such as trash collection and shipping/receiving along the alley way. Patient focused wayfinding is fundamental for this occupancy type and therefore the front door needs to be visible and located along a main road. Following the drop-off, the vehicular circulation allows one to either enter into the below grade parking or exit onto Edmondson Alley. A new entry and exit have</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>As noted above, a one-way vehicular access driveway and drop-off is now provided from Fillmore Street, with an additional vehicular entrance and exit provided from Edmondson Alley. This allows for functional use of the alley as an access point for the building, directly integrated with the subterranean garage access ramp.</p>

Commissioner Comments, April 27, 2021	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
	<p>been provided at the Northeast corner off Edmondson Alley; this allow access in and out of the parking below grade.</p>	
<p>3. Reconsider and further study the design depicted on page 32 of the Design Review Submittal, which utilizes the adjacent alley as an access point for a sheltered passenger drop-off area. Although this design appears to have been dismissed as part of the design evolution process, it more successfully engages the corner and de-emphasizes the vehicular access to the site, as seen from Fair Oaks Avenue and Fillmore Street.</p>	<p>[See response to comment #2, above.]</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>Although the previous design concept to use the alley as a drop-off zone was dismissed by the design team, the proposed new configuration successfully reduces the number of vehicular access points to the site and provides a separated pedestrian path to the entrance from the northeast corner plaza.</p>
<p>4. An updated Preliminary Consultation is recommended prior to moving forward to Concept Design Review. Future submittals should reflect more consideration into the context, and include a clear discussion of how the project relates to the Huntington Hospital Master Plan. Future submittal shall also include feasible options that have vehicular drop offs not only from Fair Oaks Avenue and Fillmore Street, but subterranean and from the alley, showing building massing for each option that follows the site planning.</p>	<p>[See response to comment #2, above.]</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>As noted, staff finds that the previous major circulation and site design issues have been satisfactorily addressed. See staff's analysis below regarding other Concept Design Review issues such as massing, orientation and compatibility.</p>

## **Programming and Circulation**

The site design and vehicular and pedestrian circulation to the building are described earlier in this report. The ground floor of the building is programmed with a lobby space and communicating stair to the second floor, as well as a stair and elevator core at the north end, roughly centered along the façade, with the majority of the remainder of the ground floor south and west of the lobby being used as a large flex space. The eastern end of the ground floor contains service/utility spaces and two stairs to the two roof decks are provided at the west-central and southern ends. The second floor is designed as open future tenant space with circulation cores and service spaces in roughly the center of the floor plate. Two outdoor roof terraces are proposed along the west end of the building. The second and third floors both extend northward over the ground-level drop-off zone, with a roof terrace at the fourth floor. The programming of the third and fourth floors are largely future office tenant space with circulation cores and services aligned with the floors below.

Staff finds that the revised vehicular and pedestrian circulation satisfactorily addresses the Commission's previous comments and is consistent with the applicable design guidelines. The addition of programmed space within a building volume that adjoins the Fair Oaks Avenue street frontage, with active building entries along the façade, is also a strong improvement that ensures the project better relates to the public realm. To further ensure and enhance the pedestrian character of the building, staff recommends that a condition of approval require at least one building or tenant space entrance to be maintained along the Fair Oaks Avenue frontage in conjunction with future tenant improvements to the interior space and that all glazing along the frontage be maintained as vision glazing allowing for views into active spaces that are not back-of-house functions. In addition, staff finds that the newly introduced double-height pergola feature extending from Fair Oaks Avenue to the main lobby entrance should be further studied to provide a more inviting, human-scaled element for pedestrian engagement that is better integrated into the design of the building, as well as studying the possibility of incorporating a similar shading device at the roof deck to ensure the usability of the space year-round. With these conditions implemented, the project's programming and circulation will be consistent with the applicable design guidelines.

## **Orientation**

The proposed new building has windows, entrances, terraces and pedestrian-shading devices arranged in a clear pattern on all sides, but clearly oriented toward both Fair Oaks Avenue and Fillmore Street. The main lobby, while being set back from the street behind a vehicular drop-off zone along Fillmore Street, has a street presence due to overhanging building massing above and the newly added pergola feature extending west to Fair Oaks Avenue, with a west-facing entrance. However, when viewed from Fair Oaks Avenue within the proposed double-height pergola, the lobby entrance node appears to blend with the rest of the building rather than being accentuated as the main entry. The recommended condition of approval outlined above regarding the scale and integration of the pergola, as well as a recommended condition to architecturally accentuate the entry when viewed from Fair Oaks Avenue, will further ensure and enhance the project's public realm pedestrian orientation, consistent with the applicable design guidelines. In addition, the previously sunken pedestrian plaza has been raised to align with the street elevations to provide a seamless pedestrian connection that enhances the project's pedestrian orientation.

## **Height, Massing and Modulation**

The height limit at this location is 56', measured from the lowest point of existing grade and the drawings submitted depict compliance with this requirement. The height proposed is compatible with existing and proposed development surrounding the site which ranges from one to five stories.

The elevation drawings depict the building masses being modulated by the creation of articulated sub-volumes, including a one-story volume extending to Fair Oaks Avenue from the main four-story curving building massing above and an elevated two-story volume along the north façade above the vehicular drop-off zone. These massing articulations are also further accentuated by the use of differentiated materials creating rectilinear and more solid bookends to the curving all-glass main façade. Staff finds the height and massing articulation to be well-resolved, appropriate to the high-tech medical corridor envisioned within this area of the South Fair Oaks Avenue Specific Plan and responsive to the creation of a seamless pedestrian interaction with the public realm.

## **Architectural Style and Detailing**

The proposed new building is of a contemporary design with a flat roof, curving and articulated massing, extensive curtain wall glazing juxtaposed against solid framing volumes, and a strong, projecting roofline with extended canopies. Conceptual materials include Alucobond metal panels for the main solid wall surfaces on the four-story volumes; an architectural terracotta rainscreen material on the one-story volumes; vision and spandrel glazing in curtain-wall, storefront, punched and strip applications and projecting metal sunscreens in both 24-inch and 36-inch depths. A large pergola feature framed in steel and with an architectural glass canopy is proposed along the northwest portion of the façade.

The architectural design of the proposed building is consistent with the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan's goal of encouraging "bold, creative and highly imaginative design treatments." It incorporates traditional design features of a clearly defined base, middle and top, established hierarchy of fenestration and integration with the public realm in a creative and contemporary way. The conceptual materials palette is high-quality and durable and, subject to further review during Final Design Review, will ensure that the building reflects a sense of permanence. As previously noted, staff recommends that the design of the entry pergola feature be further studied to provide a more human scale to the pedestrian entry progression and to better integrate it with the design of the building. In addition, as noted above, the exterior design of the main lobby space should be architecturally accentuated in the design to reflect its prominence, particularly when viewed from Fair Oaks Avenue, which could be achieved in conjunction with the recommended redesign of the pergola.

## **Compatibility**

The proposed new building is compatible with its immediate surroundings, particularly recently completed and anticipated future development, in terms of height, massing, setbacks and architectural design. The revised design submitted for this review relates better to the public realm than the design reviewed during Preliminary Consultation and creates a more appropriate vehicular circulation pattern focused on Fillmore Street and Edmondson Alley with more limited

vehicular access points from Fillmore Street, a pedestrian linkage to the light rail station to the east.

### **Conceptual Landscape Design**

The landscape plans provided outline a program of ground-level landscaping that is consistent with an urban medical office use, including a paved entry courtyard at the northwest corner of the site with three specimen trees, a row of trees along Fillmore Street creating an allee with proposed new street trees flanking the public sidewalk, and a raised planter creating a separation between Fillmore Street and the vehicular drop-off zone at the north end of the site. The plaza would also provide seating in both benches and planter seat walls.

The conditions of approval of the project's Conditional Use Permit require the tree plantings in the plaza to be in tree wells, the intent of which is to ensure that the trees will be able to grow to maturity and provide a substantial canopy. The applicant has provided a section drawing of the plaza area on sheet L-120 showing how this would be achieved. This drawing indicates that each of the trees along Fillmore Street (proposed to be Camphor trees to match the approved street tree) would be set within a well that is 4'6" deep and 5' square; the specimen tree at the corner, the species of which is specified differently on different sheets in the drawings, would be set within a well that is 5'4" minimum depth (with 20" above grade) and 10' square and the remaining two plaza trees would be set within wells that are 3' minimum depth (2' above grade; length and width not specified). The proposed planting design may or may not be consistent with a "tree well" approach, depending on the final species selection. While it may be possible to provide large sunken wells to support mature growth of certain tree species, the information currently provided is not sufficient to definitively make that determination at this time. The drawings also indicate that sizes of the specimen tree would be 24" or 36" box sizes, which may be undersized for this application as a highlight specimen at the prominent street corner location. Staff recommends a condition that would ensure these issues are addressed during Final Design Review, including providing definitive species and size specifications of the trees and lengths, widths and depths of the tree wells that relate to the intended design concept of providing a large specimen tree at the northwest corner, an allee of trees flanking the sidewalk, and accent trees elsewhere in the plaza, as well as documentation from a certified Arborist that the tree well designs proposed will ensure adequate space for the specified trees to grow to mature size and thrive over time.

The submitted plans also provide landscape and amenity designs for the second and fourth level roof decks which include self-watering fiberglass raised planters planted with small trees and shrubs, rooftop paver systems, and patio furniture. The details of these features will be reviewed during Final Design Review; however, as previously noted, staff recommends that the applicant study the possibility of providing a shade structure at the second-floor terrace to ensure its year-round usability. With that condition implemented, the landscape design of the project will be consistent with the applicable design guidelines.

It should be noted that the project proposes removal and replacement of all existing street trees along both street frontages. This proposal has not yet been reviewed by the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee; therefore, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring this review to be conducted before Final Design Review and, if any changes to the design are necessary due to the outcome of that review, an application for Changes to an Approved Project may be required prior to Final Design Review.

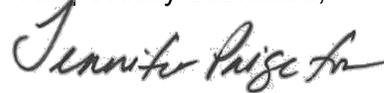
**COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS & ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

Interdepartmental review and environmental analysis were conducted during the Conditional Use Permit process and all resulting conditions of approval are included with the decision that was made at that time. Staff of the Current Planning Section has verified that the plans submitted for this review are consistent with those submitted for the Conditional Use Permit. As such, no additional conditions of approval or environmental review is required in conjunction with this application.

**CONCLUSION:**

The project design has satisfactorily addressed the comments provided during Preliminary Consultation and, upon implementation of the recommended conditions of approval, will be consistent with the design guidelines in the South Fair Oaks Avenue Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial & Multi-Family Residential Districts. Staff recommends approval of the application for Concept Design Review for the project with conditions outlined in Attachment A.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Community Development

Prepared by:



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Kevin Johnson  
Principal Planner

Reviewed by:



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Luis Rocha  
Planning Manager

Attachments:

- A. Recommended conditions of approval
- B. Current plans & elevations