



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** MAY 10, 2022  
**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION  
**FROM:** DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
**SUBJECT:** ADVISORY REVIEW – PROPOSED PLANNED DEVELOPMENT #40  
206-UNIT RESIDENTIAL PROJECT  
444 N. FAIR OAKS AVENUE & 425 N. RAYMOND AVENUE

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### **Background:**

The purpose of this review, pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.61.030.1.5.b, is to provide recommendations to the Planning Commission and Council on aesthetic and urban design issues related to architecture, landscaping, site plan, and related aesthetic issues, as well as historic preservation related to a proposed Planned Development. In addition, because the project is proposing an increase in residential density over what is allowed by the General Plan Land Use Diagram for the Raymond Avenue portion of the site, Zoning Code Section 17.26.020.C.3.d(1)(a) requires the Design Commission to review the project prior to its consideration by the Planning Commission to advise the Commission as to whether the architectural design of the proposed PD is contextual and of a high-quality.

The proposal is for the construction of a new two-to-five-story, approximately 213,826-square-foot, 206-unit residential project at 444 N. Fair Oaks Avenue and 425 N. Raymond Avenue. The site is at the southeast corner of N. Fair Oaks Avenue and E. Villa Street, with a portion extending easterly to N. Raymond Avenue, approximately mid-block between E. Villa Street and E. Maple Street. The project area is approximately 2.09 acres in size.

The Fair Oaks Avenue portion of the project site is currently zoned FGSP-C-3B (Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan - Limited Commercial District 3, Subdistrict "B") and the Raymond Avenue portion of the project site is zoned RM-12 (Multi-Family Residential, 2 units per lot). The applicant is proposing a zone change to create a Planned Development (PD) District for the site to accommodate the proposed project. The Fair Oaks Avenue portion of the site is currently developed with Throop Lumber and the Raymond Avenue portion is developed with a seven-unit multi-family project.

Surrounding properties include commercial, industrial and office buildings ranging between one and three stories in height along Fair Oaks Avenue and residential buildings between one and two stories in height along Raymond Avenue, with the exception of the four-story Villa Raymond building at the southwest corner of E. Villa Street and N. Raymond Avenue. A one-and-one-half-story church building with corner tower element sits at the northwest corner of E. Villa Street and N. Raymond Avenue. Nearby designated historic resources include the Raymond-

Summit Historic District immediately east of the project site. The Raymond Villa building has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

A Preliminary Consultation was conducted for the project on November 12, 2019. The Commission subsequently conducted an advisory review of the proposed PD on March 8, 2022 and provided the comments listed below. Since that time, the project has been substantially redesigned. Changes include placement of floor area over the driveway ramp along Villa Street, increase in interior courtyard space, separation of the Fair Oaks portion of the project into two buildings, roofline articulation of building volumes along Fair Oaks Avenue, introduction of a commercial component along Fair Oaks Avenue, reduction of setbacks and elevated berms along Fair Oaks Avenue, repositioning of building volumes and architectural treatments, and redesign of the Raymond Avenue portion to a rowhouse-style design with a larger adjoining open space to the south. The revised plans, including before and after imagery, narrative responses to Preliminary Consultation comments and context and architectural style reference exhibits, are in Attachment A. The staff report from the previous review is in Attachment B.

The buildings along Fair Oaks Avenue are designed in a contemporary interpretation of the Main Street Commercial style with flat roofs, elevated ground floors, some with storefront-type glazing, a regular, repeating pattern of fenestration, punched openings, recessed and projecting balconies, and projecting frame elements. The buildings along Raymond Avenue are designed in a restrained contemporary style intended to respond primarily to the nearby Herkimer Arms building and incorporate other features of the Raymond Avenue residential context, including flat roofs, large, multi-light openings, walled and projecting front porches and shallowly articulated repeating volumes with alternating materiality along the side and courtyard elevations.

**Applicable Design Guidelines:**

- Design-Related Goals and Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan
- Design Guidelines in the Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan
- Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial & Multi-Family Residential Districts

**Residential Density:**

The Planned Development is proposed with a total of 206 new multi-family residential units on two adjacent parcels: 444 N. Fair Oaks Ave (Parcel A) and 425 N. Raymond Ave (Parcel B). Parcel A is 80,972 square feet (1.86 acres) in size and a total of 199 new units are proposed on this portion of the site. As proposed, Parcel A would have a residential density of 107 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) and would be over the 87 du/ac maximum density established in the General Plan Land Use Diagram for the Medium Mixed Use category. Parcel B is a 9,916 square-foot parcel currently improved with seven residential units that would be demolished and replaced with seven new residential units; maintaining the existing density on the parcel.

Staff is supportive of the establishment of a Planned Development at this location that would provide opportunities for multi-family housing and maintaining the existing density on Parcel B. However, staff is not in support of the proposed density of 107 du/acre on Parcel A.

As the density is prescribed as part of the PD plan, staff will be recommending to the Planning Commission and City Council that the number of residential units on Parcel A be reduced to a maximum density of 87 du/acre (162 units) as this is consistent with the maximum residential density allowed in the General Plan Land Use Diagram for the Medium Mixed Use category. Although the applicant is also proposing to exceed the maximum density permitted for Parcel B, the project does not propose any additional density beyond what is there today and staff is supportive of this request. Table 1 provides a summary of the proposed density and the density allowed in the General Plan for both parcels that comprise the site:

**Table 1: Density Summary**

	Density Proposed	General Plan Land Use Designation	General Plan Maximum DU/AC
<b>Parcel A</b>	107 du/ac (199 units)	Medium Mixed Use	87 du/ac (162 units)
<b>Parcel B</b>	32 du/ac (7 units)	Low-Medium Density Residential	2 units

If after review by the Planning Commission and City Council a Planned Development is approved with a reduced number of units changes to the design of the project may occur. Depending on the changes, the project may have to return to the Design Commission for additional consideration.

**Analysis:**

**Commission Comments from March 8, 2022 Advisory Review:**

On March 8, 2022, the Design Commission conducted an advisory review for this project. The Commission continued the review to give the applicant an opportunity to respond to the comments detailed in the chart below, which also includes the architect’s response and the staff’s comments. Imagery provided in conjunction with the design team’s responses are in Attachment A.

Commission Comment, March 8, 2022	Architect’s Response	Staff Comments
1. ...Further study the site design to reduce the larger setback areas along Fair Oaks Avenue, provide entry stoops to the proposed ground-level residences, and eliminate the need for the proposed grade change and ramp along the street edge to better engage with the public realm. The setbacks proposed should be consistent with the	“The proposed building massing along Fair Oaks has been pulled forward closer to the back of sidewalk and brought down to existing sidewalk grade to better activate the pedestrian realm along Fair Oaks and to create opportunity for more appropriate "Residential Flex / Future Commercial" uses along this frontage.”	<i>Comment has been largely addressed; advisory review comment recommended to fully address.</i>  While the proposed Fair Oaks Avenue setbacks are not dimensioned in the plans, the previously proposed deep setback and elevated berm at the central portion of the frontage has been substantially reduced by the introduction of a non-residential component, which may be commercial or additional amenity space, immediately south of the leasing office space at the northwest corner of the site. The building volume immediately south of this

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<p>recommendations in the draft Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan (maximum 10' over 75% of the building frontage) and should be sufficient to balance the building height and incorporate landscaping and mature trees into the setback areas.</p>		<p>space retains ground-floor residential units, as well as a deeper setback and shallow accessibility ramp, designed with a slope that would avoid the need for handrails. While the modifications made are a strong improvement to the project design, staff recommends that a comment be forwarded to the Planning Commission and City Council that, to ensure a high quality and contextual design, the third building volume from the north along the Fair Oaks Avenue frontage be further studied to be lowered closer to sidewalk grade and moved closer to the street to be more consistent with the remainder of the frontage on the project site and within the surrounding context.</p>
<p>2. Building heights should more closely correspond to the recommendations in the draft Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan by incorporating substantial upper-story step-backs where the buildings exceed 51' in height.</p>	<p>"In collaboration with staff, the project has been updated to provide more variation in building massing and height by shifting residential dwellings where appropriate. The new flex / commercial space has been pulled forward towards Fair Oaks creating a step back to the residential above at the 2nd floor, while creating a more pedestrian scaled massing at the sidewalk. The entire 5th floor at this building massing element was also removed to provide for a significant contrast in both material, color, and building height. The southern portion of the Fair Oaks building was re-worked to provide an improved composition of various building massing and materials. As a part of this update, the southern section of the building provides a stepback at the 5th floor as recommend in the draft FGSP to break-up the massing and help create an</p>	<p><i>Comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>While the portions of the project at the north and south ends of the Fair Oaks Avenue frontage remain above the 51' height recommendation in the draft Specific Plan, the central portions have been either lowered, or an upper-floor step-back has been incorporated into the design to provide greater height variation along the street. The new commercial component also reads as a separate one-story element along the streetscape. In addition, the new building volume along Villa Street steps down in height from the rest of the building along that frontage providing a compatible height transition to the adjacent Villa Raymond building. Staff finds that these variations in height are a strong improvement and that the taller portions at the north and south ends are appropriate to accentuate these important nodes on the project site.</p>

Commission Comment, March 8, 2022	Architect's Response	Staff Comments
	organically-developed aesthetic."	
<p>3. Refine and integrate the differentiated storefront treatment at the ground-level amenity spaces along Fair Oaks Avenue and Villa Street to provide a more cohesive ground-level expression to the respective buildings. Alternatively, consider additional massing articulation to create cohesive building forms at the storefront locations. Consider incorporating a ground-level commercial component to the project, or ground-level flexible amenity spaces that could be converted to commercial use in the future.</p>	<p>"In order to achieve a cohesive ground floor language, all of the structural bays and storefront modules at the ground floor have been kept consistent within each massing block and alternating window typologies have been consolidated. The helps to create a unified and repeated pattern that aligns with the visual goals of the Main Street Commercial style. The Flex Commercial space along Fair Oaks has also been pulled forward to create massing articulation and to assist in identifying the Flex space as it's own massing component."</p>	<p><i>Comment has been largely addressed; advisory review comment recommended to fully address.</i></p> <p>As noted in the applicant's response, the massing, fenestration and building articulation have been modified to create a cohesive ground-floor expression within each building volume, which also extends to the upper floors to give the appearance of a series of individual and varied, yet cohesive buildings along the Fair Oaks Avenue and Villa Streetscapes. The building volumes at the north and south ends of the site have a double-height base, portions of which are reduced to one-story by projecting canopy elements or second-floor balconies. Staff finds that those that remain with a two-story appearance are over-scaled in comparison to the context and recommends forwarding a comment to the Planning Commission and City Council recommending that design features be implemented in these locations to create a more human-scaled one-story ground-floor experience along the streetscape, similar to the central building volumes along Fair Oaks Avenue.</p>
<p>4. Further develop the architectural expression of the Fair Oaks Avenue buildings to achieve a residential character that is more consistent with the Main Street Commercial style inspiration. As designed, some of the elevations have an institutional or office building character that should be softened for the</p>	<p>"Careful consideration has been paid to the creation of differentiated building forms and the architectural style of each component. The Fair Oaks building massing elements provide additional height variation, massing setback, as well as color and materiality that help to develop a pleasing, evolved-over-time composition. In order to more fully achieve the Main Street Commercial style, revisions have been made to storefront modules, residential window types and</p>	<p><i>Comment has been largely addressed; advisory review comment recommended to fully address.</i></p> <p>The design has been revised to create more cohesive building volumes and break down the scale of the project to develop a logical rhythm that relates to Pasadena traditions of commercial and mixed-use buildings and to better reflect the traditional Main Street Commercial style language proposed. The buildings have a rhythm of residentially scaled window openings and balconies that more clearly represent a residential character,</p>

Commission Comment, March 8, 2022	Architect’s Response	Staff Comments
<p>proposed residential use. Ensure that the design is reflective of the proposed design inspiration, or identify a different design inspiration that more closely reflects the proposed design, while ensuring an appropriate contextual response.</p>	<p>clustering, brick detailing, and balcony details. The collective revisions create a more residential feel to the project and better align with the stylistic guidelines of Main Street Commercial.”</p>	<p>with a commercial or communal expression at the ground floor. As noted above, design features should be implemented to reduce double-height base expressions to one-story in scale. In addition, while most of the ground-level residential units have patios and doors facing the street or courtyard, they don’t appear to provide for direct pedestrian access to those spaces. Staff recommends that the Commission forward a comment to the Design Commission and City Council recommending further study to provide direct pedestrian access to the street or courtyard from ground-level residential units adjoining them.</p>
<p>5. Explore the possibility of eliminating bridges across the central pedestrian entry point along Fair Oaks Avenue to maintain an open view corridor to the open space area in the interior of the site.</p>	<p>“Per Design Commission recommendation, the bridges connecting the North and South sections of the Fair Oaks building have been removed.”</p>	<p><i>Comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The elimination of the bridge at the center of the project provides a visual break in the streetscape with a view corridor to the courtyard behind. This condition also reinforces the residential character of the project.</p>
<p>6. The courtyard at the Raymond Avenue portion of the site should be designed to provide usable outdoor space and amenities for the residents of those buildings, in addition to continuing to provide pedestrian access to the proposed units and retaining the proposed barbeque area toward the rear. Explore massing strategies that would allow for this to be created within the courtyard, with a minimum 20’ dimension in both</p>	<p>“In an effort to improve the quality of light and openness of the Raymond courtyard, the building configuration has been altered into a single, more traditional rowhome structure on the North side with a linear south courtyard that opens up onto Raymond.”</p>	<p><i>Comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The reconfiguration of the Raymond Avenue building to a single rowhouse-style design with a wider side courtyard improves the building’s relationship to the immediate context of Raymond Avenue and provides sufficient space for both circulation and outdoor amenity space. The specific design and amenities provided will be reviewed during the design review process.</p>

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directions.		
7. Although some minor massing articulation has been incorporated into the Raymond Avenue buildings, further explore ways to relieve the long, relatively unbroken side and courtyard-facing facades and ensure that courtyard-facing entries are articulated with frontage elements.	“With the new plan configuration, the courtyard-facing elevation will have an opportunity to provide more daylighting as well as making it able to accommodate more openings on the South side.”	<p><i>Comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The design appears to include more significant massing articulation on the south courtyard side, as well as on the street-facing east façade, consistent with the surrounding context. In both plan and elevation, the north side of the building also appears to incorporate sufficient articulation to break down the long building wall facing a single-family residence to the north.</p>
8. Further study the three-story elevation at the westerly terminus of the Raymond Avenue courtyard to incorporate human-scaled elements and ensure an attractive and inviting termination of the view from Raymond Avenue.	“With the updated townhome configuration, the 7th unit is now integrated into the single building allowing for a broader opening with the terminus now being East side of the Fair Oaks podium building.”	<p><i>Comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>As noted in the applicant's response, the view terminating the courtyard is of the east side of the Fair Oaks Avenue portion of the project, which is appropriately treated as a primary elevation with a logical patterning of fenestration and balconies similar to the street-facing facades. A pedestrian pathway extends from the Raymond Avenue courtyard to the main central amenity courtyard of the Fair Oaks Avenue portion of the project, providing interconnectivity between the two portions of the project.</p>
9. Consider whether the Herkimer Arms building is an appropriate design inspiration for the Raymond Avenue buildings, given that it is starkly different in character from the rest of the block, and was not originally in this location. A sloping roof form with a projecting one-story front porch and without street-facing	“The design inspiration at the Raymond building has been further studied to focus on pulling from a collection of design features from the various architecture examples on the street rather than weighting the design character primarily on the Herkimer Arms building. This provides for a revised architecture that relates to its context in a more meaningful way.”	<p><i>Comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The Raymond Avenue building facades have been organized to have pleasing and harmonious proportions that better relate to the existing buildings on the street, in addition to ensuring equal design treatment on the visible side elevations.</p>

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<p>balconies may be a more appropriate expression in response to these features that appear in multiple buildings within the context on the block. If a flat-roofed design is maintained as proposed, further study the proportions of the massing and of solids-to-voids to ensure they are simple and harmonious.</p>		
<p>10. High-quality materials should be utilized in the design. On the Fair Oaks Avenue buildings, a high-quality and durable base material that creates texture at the pedestrian level should be employed.</p>	<p>“High-quality materials are being used throughout the project design with an emphasis on brick massing elements that engage at the pedestrian level.”</p>	<p><i>Comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>On the Fair Oaks portion of the project, brick is used extensively on along the streetscape, with recessed volumes being coated in plaster. Metal and glass balcony railings are proposed as well as metal panel spandrels set vertically between windows. A combination of brick and plaster also appears to be proposed for the Raymond Avenue building. As shown, the materials palette proposed is high-quality and durable; precise specifications and details will be reviewed during Final Design Review.</p>
<p>11. Reduce the depth of the subterranean garage ramp and incorporate it into building volume rather than being open to the sky.</p>	<p>“Per Design Commission recommendation, the ramp has been steepened in order to reduce the cutout of the courtyard above, allowing for a net increase in usable open space for the residential outdoor amenity uses and the relocation of residential units above the ramp.”</p>	<p><i>Comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The garage ramp is now incorporated into building volume which not only improves the project's street presence, but allows for additional courtyard space, both strong improvements to the design.</p>

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<p>12. Provide diagrams and renderings depicting how the proposed materials will be applied to the buildings.</p>	<p>“Updated elevations have been provided with material call-outs to depict how the proposed materials will be applied. Close-up vignettes of key areas have also been added to depict the material textures will be read at a human scale.”</p>	<p><i>Comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The materiality of the buildings is clear in the submitted materials and, as noted previously, staff finds the palette to be high-quality and durable.</p>
<p>13. Explore further massing and height articulation, as well as building separation, to the Fair Oaks Avenue buildings to better relate to the surrounding context and avoid the appearance of a uniform, symmetrical character along the streetscape. Redistribute the massing to create buildings that are more distinctive from one another. Consider stepping the podium heights to allow for height variation and better street engagement. Look to the nearby Lincoln Properties/Parsons project for ways to successfully achieve this desired character.</p>	<p>“As noted in response to comment #3, the project has been updated to provide more variation in building massing and height by shifting residential dwellings where appropriate. The new flex / commercial space has been pulled forward towards Fair Oaks creating a step back to the residential above at the 2nd floor, while creating a more pedestrian scaled massing at the sidewalk. The entire 5th floor at this building massing element was also removed to provide for a significant contrast in both material, color, and building height. In order to reduce the sense of symmetry or matching "book-ends" to the architecture at the North and South, the southern portion of the Fair Oaks building was updated to its own specific brick and window types that contrast those of the Villa corner. This helps to ensure that it feels visually independent.”</p>	<p><i>Comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>As previously noted, staff finds the revised massing and height articulation to be a strong improvement to the design.</p>
<p>14. Employ strategies to highlight the entrances to the buildings and project overall. Clarify how visitors will engage with the project, particularly the leasing office.</p>	<p>“In order to improve the pedestrian experience and provide more clarity on points of building entry, special attention has been paid to detail architectural entry elements at both the leasing lobby and Flex Commercial spaces with differentiated storefronts,</p>	<p><i>Comment has been satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>Overhead projecting shading elements have been incorporated into the building entrances, successfully highlighting their locations and better engaging with the streetscape. Canopy-mounted signage and lighting shown in the</p>

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	steel awnings, and signage that promote an active street edge.”	renderings will further enhance these important locations.

**Summary of Staff-Recommended Advisory Comments on Proposed PD:**

As outlined above, staff recommends that the Design Commission forward the following comments to the Planning Commission and City Council for consideration in their review of the PD and in furtherance of the requirement that the proposed Planned Development be contextual and of high quality:

- The third building volume from the north along the Fair Oaks Avenue frontage should be further studied to be lowered closer to sidewalk grade and moved closer to the street to be more consistent with the remainder of the frontage on the project site and within the surrounding context.
- Design features should be implemented to reduce double-height base elements to a more human scaled ground-floor along the Fair Oaks and Villa Streetscapes.
- Ground-level residential units adjoining the street or courtyard should have direct pedestrian access to those spaces.

**Project Scheduling/Sequencing:**

- Zoning Entitlements (Planned Development) review by the Planning Commission and City Council
- Concept and Final Design Review by the Design Commission
- Building Permits

**Conclusion:**

The revisions that have been made to the project in response to the staff and Commission comments have resulted in a superior design solution. Staff recommends that the Design Commission forward a recommendation of approval of the proposed Planned Development to the Planning Commission and City Council, noting, in addition, that the design presented is contextual and of high-quality, subject to further review of the comments noted above during the design review process. If the

Respectfully Submitted,



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**Attachments:**

- A. Applicant submittal package
- B. March 8, 2022 advisory review staff report (without attachments)