



**PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

**STAFF REPORT**

**DATE:** MAY 10, 2022

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

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

**SUBJECT:** APPLICATION FOR MAJOR CHANGES TO AN APPROVED FINAL DESIGN REVIEW  
NEW 58-UNIT AFFORDABLE SINGLE-ROOM OCCUPANCY PROJECT WITH SEMI-SUBTERRANEAN PARKING  
231 N. HILL AVENUE

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

The staff recommends that the Commission:

**Environmental Determination**

**Find** that the application for Changes to an Approved Project was subject to environmental review in the Class 32 (In-fill Developments) Categorical Exemption adopted by the Design Commission for Concept Design Review of the project on February 25, 2020, and that there are no changed circumstances or new information which would require further environmental review.

**Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance**

**Acknowledge** that there are no protected trees proposed to be removed in conjunction with this project.

### **Findings for Major Changes to an Approved Final Design Review**

1. There are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the modification of the original Final Design Review approval, specifically, a Zoning Code change allowing the ability to increase the maximum size of each Single-Room Occupancy SRO dwelling unit, for improved livability up to 375 square feet.
2. The proposed major changes are consistent with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts; and
3. Based on these findings, **approve** the application for Major Changes to an Approved Project subject to the conditions of approval in Attachment A, which shall be subject to staff review and approval prior to issuance of a building permit.

### **BACKGROUND:**

On May 25, 2021, the Design Commission approved an application for Final Design Review for a new, 58-unit affordable Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) development with semi-subterranean parking located at 231 N. Hill Avenue. At the time the project was approved, it was subject to a maximum SRO unit size of 220 square feet, and a total Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 19,123 square feet. Recent Zoning Code changes allow a maximum SRO unit size of up to 375 square feet. The proposed project, increases the size of the units to 375 square feet. The increase in unit square footage has resulted in other modifications to the approved building design. An overview of the proposed project changes include the following:

- Increase in maximum unit size from 220 square feet, up to 375 square feet through the full or partial enclosure of individual unit exterior balcony space to increase total living area. This change also results in an FAR increase of 19,123 square feet to 23,614 square feet. The overall footprint of the buildings remains unchanged.
- Change of construction type from Type V construction, to Type III construction, allowing for the removal of a layer of gypsum wall board (GWB) from exterior walls, demising walls, and hallway walls.
- Removal of rigid insulation from exterior walls.
- The alignment of formerly-jogged wall surfaces to reduce on framing costs.
- Units that were not stacked have been designed to be vertically aligned, allowing for efficiency of design and construction including plumbing and framing.
- Revisions to fenestrations due to changes of egress requirements with the change in the type of construction.
- The removal of decorative metal screens from the north façade of the west building where recessed windows were slightly enlarged for egress purposes.

**ANALYSIS:**

Pursuant to PMC Section 17.64.050(C), changes to an approved project may be approved if they meet certain findings. For Major Changes, the application shall only be approved if it is found to comply with the same findings for Design Review, pursuant to PMC Section 17.61.030(K)(1)(a), that the project is consistent with all applicable provisions of the Zoning Code; and (b), the project is consistent with the applicable design guidelines, with the additional finding that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the modification of the original approval.

The proposed changes are justified, they are consistent with the provisions of the Zoning Code, will not change the circumstances of the environmental determination, and will maintain consistency with the applicable guidelines. The proposed changes will improve the livability of the residents through increased unit sizes while maintaining the overall composition, form, and style of the previously-approved project. Additionally, the change in construction type will have minimal impact to the overall character of the project, and will actually require for the project to have larger fenestrations for egress purposes, which improves the project's overall proportion of solid wall to openings on the exterior. Finally, the removal of the metal screens at the north elevation of the west building will improve the consistency of detailing through visual continuity of the project, as the east building was approved without metal screens at its north elevation. With the proposed changes, the findings necessary for approval can still be made, and the original conditions of approval provided at Final Design Review, aside from unit size, still apply to the project.

**CONCLUSION:**

The applicant has presented information to support a finding that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the proposed changes. Staff finds that the changes are also consistent with the applicable design guidelines and recommends that the Commission approve the changes as submitted. The original findings of Final Design Review and all original conditions of approval, including construction inspections, will continue to apply.

Respectfully submitted,



David M. Reyes  
Director of Planning & Community Development  
Department

Reviewed by:

Prepared by:



Edwar Sissi, Planner



Kevin Johnson, Principal Planner

Attachments:

- A. Recommended Conditions of Approval
- B. Justification and Summary of Proposed Changes
- C. Project Narrative
- D. Revised Project Plans, Elevations, Details, and Landscape Plans
- E. Photos