



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

DATE: AUGUST 23, 2022
TO: DESIGN COMMISSION
FROM: JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, ACTING DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION – PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF AN EXISTING ONE-STORY COMMERCIAL BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW FOUR-STORY MIXED-USE BUILDING WITH 16 RESIDENTIAL UNITS, 7,245 S.F. OF GROUND-FLOOR COMMERCIAL SPACE, AND 40 SUBTERRANEAN PARKING SPACES
100 S. MENTOR AVENUE

Project Description:

The project proposes the demolition of an existing 4,432 single-story commercial building with a rear surface parking lot, and the construction of a four-story, 25,872 square-foot mixed-use building. The new building is proposed to have 16 residential units, and 7,245 square feet of ground-floor commercial space, along with 40 subterranean parking spaces. The site consists of one parcel, 13,200 square feet in size, and is located on the east side of South Mentor Avenue, one parcel south of East Green Street. The existing building on the site was constructed in 1941, and pursuant to PMC Section 17.62.080, a Historic Resource Evaluation was recently conducted and determined that the property does not meet any criteria for eligibility as a historical resource.

Density Bonus and Concessions

The applicant proposes a for-sale (ownership) housing project and is subject to the Inclusionary Housing Requirements (IHR). Three moderate-income units are proposed to comply with the IHR. The maximum number of base units allowed is 14. However, by providing the three affordable units, the project is eligible for a density bonus for two additional units; resulting in 16 units. By complying with the IHR and utilizing a density bonus, the project is eligible to utilize up to two concessions from the Affordable Housing Concession Menu of the Zoning Code. The project will use one concession to increase the floor area ratio from 1.5 (19,800 square feet) to 1.96 (25,872 square feet). A second concession will be used to allow an increase in the maximum allowable building height by up to 11 feet, from 35 feet to 46 feet, over no more than 60% of the building footprint.

Neighborhood Context:

The project site is located within a developed neighborhood that consists of multi-story multi-family residential and commercial buildings. Additional contextual land uses include surface parking lots and multi-story garage parking for nearby commercial businesses of South Lake

Avenue and East Green Street. Immediate adjacencies consist of the Thatcher Medical Building to the north, listed as a contributor to the Green Street Village Landmark District, a surface parking lot for the Thatcher Medical Building to the east (Design Review for a new three-story multi-family residential project was approved in 2020), and a multi-story office building to the south. To the west, and across the street are single-to-multi-story office buildings and associated surface parking lots. Additional surface parking can be found southwest of the project site to serve businesses of South Lake Avenue and Shoppers Lane. The project sits near the intersection of South Mentor Avenue, and Shoppers Lane.

Architectural Design:

The applicant is proposing a four-story, vernacular, rectangular building based on subtractive massing to accommodate building programming. Additionally, the subtractive design provides a rhythm of façade undulations and voids for open space. The overriding stylistic theme is contemporary with design inspiration taken from the historic brick Thatcher Medical Building to the immediate north. The project is composed of four, above-ground, stories and two subterranean parking levels accessed via a driveway that runs along the south perimeter of the property.

The ground-floor spaces are proposed to accommodate commercial uses, with the upper three floors reserved for residential use. The project is divided into two buildings, connected by a circulation spine and central courtyard. Terraces are located atop the third-floor at the front and rear, with penthouse units located at the fourth-floor. Brick, stucco, and metal cladding are the proposed preliminary building materials.

Trees and Landscaping:

There are no protected trees on the project site. The proposed project provides setbacks and a courtyard that have the potential to be vegetated. Conceptual and final landscape design will be reviewed during the design review process and will be expected to respond to the unique conditions of the site, provide naturalistic amenities, and soften the project. The central courtyard should be designed as a communal open space for the residents to actively and passively use. Amenities should be provided to support those uses and continue to the proposed rooftop terraces.

Applicable Design Guidelines:

- Design-Related Goals and Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan
- Private Realm Design Guidelines of the Central District Specific Plan

Previous/Existing Entitlements:

- Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR). A PPR comment letter was provided to the applicant on September 9, 2021.

Approvals Needed/Project Scheduling:

1. Concept Design Review (Design Commission)
2. Final Design Review (Design Commission)
3. Building Permits

CEQA Clearance:

This is preliminary consultation regarding design review and is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Staff Observations:

Applicable Design Guidelines:

The following design guidelines are applicable to the project and should guide further development and study of the project as it moves forward in the design review process:

Design-Related Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan:

- 4.10: **Architecture that Enhances.** Locate and design buildings to relate to and frame major public streets, open spaces, and cityscape. New development at intersections should consider any number of corner treatments, and should balance safety and accessibility concerns with the vision of the area and the need for buildings to engage the street and create a distinct urban edge.
- 4.11: **Development that is Compatible.** Require that development demonstrates a contextual relationship with neighboring structures and sites addressing such elements as building scale, massing, orientation, setbacks, buffering, the arrangement of shared and private open spaces, visibility, privacy, automobile and truck access, impacts of noise and lighting, landscape quality, infrastructure, and aesthetics.
- 5.2: **Pedestrian-Oriented Development.** Require buildings in the Central District, Transit Villages, Neighborhood Villages, and along corridors specified by the adopted specific plans to be located along the street/sidewalk and designed to promote pedestrian activity. This can be accomplished by incorporating transparent facades, small plazas, and dining areas; while locating parking to the rear or underground and placing primary entries on the street.
- 5.7: **Pedestrian Connections.** Support and enhance the pedestrian experience along public and private pedestrian passages, pathways, courtyards, paseos, alleys, and public walkways with increased connectivity and infrastructure, as well as businesses located along these pedestrian corridors.
- 6.2: **Established Neighborhoods.** Preserve, protect, and enhance established residential neighborhoods by providing appropriate transitions between these and adjoining areas. Require new development to complement and respond to the existing physical characteristics that contribute to the overall character and livability of the neighborhood.

- 7.1: Architectural Quality. Design each building as a high-quality, long term addition to the City's urban fabric; exterior design and buildings material shall exhibit permanence and quality, minimize maintenance concerns, and extend the life of the building.

Central District Specific Plan:

The subject property is located in the Lake Avenue Sub-district of the Central District Specific Plan. This sub-district is intended to support Lake Avenue as a pedestrian-oriented high-end commercial street, including regional office space and local shopping.

Section 9 – Private Realm Design Guidelines:

- SP 1.4: Establish clear pedestrian connections on-site that are well-marked and gracious; direct pedestrians from surface or structured parking to buildings, streets, and public spaces.
- SP 2.3: Encourage recessed main building or shop entrances consistent with a traditional "main street" design that is inviting and does not interrupt street and/or retail continuity.
- SP 3.1: Encourage the presence of well-defined outdoor space, such as on-site plazas, interior courtyards, patios, terraces, and gardens.
- SP 3.3: Site outdoor spaces to establish a comfortable transition between the exterior and interior of a building.
- SP 4.1: Make plazas and courtyards comfortable for human activity and social interaction – standing, sitting, talking, and eating.
- SP 4.6: Encourage the presence of uses that will activate outdoor space and complement street activity; consider locating retail businesses, outdoor cafes, and vendors within a plaza or around its perimeter.
- SP 7.2: Locate service, loading, and storage areas away from public streets and public spaces, as far as feasible.
- BD 1.1: Design visually attractive buildings that add richness and variety to the Downtown environment, including creative contemporary architectural solutions.
- BD 1.2: Integrate new development with its surroundings, emphasizing functional and visual continuity while admitting individual expression.
- BD 1.3: Establish a harmonious transition between newer and older buildings; compatible design should respect the scale, massing, and materials of adjacent buildings and landscape.
- BD 1.4: Complement the architectural character of an adjacent historic building or area; however, imitation of historical styles is discouraged.

- BD 1.5: Avoid mimicry of historical architectural styles; new buildings should not appear to have been constructed during a past era, and references to period architecture should be interpreted in a contemporary manner.
- BD 2.2: Rely on building massing and orientation to place strong visual emphasis on the street and other important civic spaces.
- BD 2.4: Employ simple, yet varied masses, and emphasize deep openings that create shadow lines and provide visual relief; discourage monolithic vertical extrusions of a maximum building footprint.
- BD 2.6: Vary three-dimensional character as a building rises skyward; in general, differentiate between the base, middle and top levels of a building.
- BD 3.1: Establish a building's overall appearance on a clear and pleasing set of proportions; a building should exhibit a sense of order.
- BD 3.2: Establish a building's overall appearance on a clear and pleasing set of proportions; a building should exhibit a sense of order.
- BD 3.7: Encourage the use of recessed windows that create shadow lines and suggest solidity.
- BD 5.1: Provide well-marked, articulated building entrances oriented to streets and public space.
- BD 5.2: Orient main building entrances to directly face the street.
- BD 5.4: Accentuate the entrances to a building's main lobby or interior office space; these main building entrances should be prominent in terms of size, articulation, and use of materials.
- BD 5.6: Differentiate a main building entrance from storefront entrances into street level businesses.
- BD 6.1: Consider each building as a high-quality, long-term addition to downtown; exterior design and building materials should exhibit permanence and quality appropriate to an urban setting.
- BD 6.2: Use materials, colors, and details to unify a building's appearance; buildings and structures should be built of compatible materials on all sides.
- BD 6.4: Employ especially durable and high-quality materials at the street-level, encouraging those materials that show permanence and quality, minimize maintenance concerns, and extend the life of the building.
- BD 7.3: Use design elements such as separate storefronts, display windows, shop entrances, exterior light fixtures, awnings and overhangs to add interest and give a human dimension to street-level building facades.

- BD 7.7: Size exterior light fixtures, canopies and awnings to the scale of the building and sidewalk.
- BD 8.4: Use a strong, attractively detailed cornice or parapet in conjunction with a flat roof.
- UR 2.5: Make ground floor commercial uses visually distinct from the residential space above; residential entrances should read differently from entrances to ground floor commercial uses.
- UR 3.7: Encourage ground level pedestrian passages and common spaces with a strong visual connection to the street.
- UR 5.2: Create a simple, pleasing composition that uses a common vocabulary of forms, architectural elements, and materials, continue design elements, detailing, and materials around the entire structure.

Section 10 – Subdistrict (Lake Avenue) Design Guidelines:

- G1: Promote Visual Harmony. Visual harmony and a sense of place may be achieved by emphasizing the simplicity and clarity that is characteristic of many buildings along Lake Avenue. New construction should focus on these qualities.

Recommendation 1: Encourage contemporary design solutions; building facades should have a simple, uncluttered and harmonious appearance.

Recommendation 2: Employ, simple, bold massing and emphasize rectangular forms.

Recommendation 3: Use horizontal regulating lines to establish a visual relationship between adjacent buildings, including buildings that differ in scale.

Recommendation 4: Incorporate high-quality materials and detailing; excessive ornamentation is discouraged and the number of materials should be limited.

Potential Design Issues:

1. As the design is further developed, consider the interplay of form and volumes as the project ascends in height, to reduce the current blocky character.
2. Consider the relationship of solids to voids, and the possibility of shifting the floor plates at each level in a manner that is consistent with the architectural style proposed for the project. Carefully analyze the window sizes and patterning which should convey a sense of the residential programming on the interior and be cohesive to the overall design.
3. Study further the development of a clear design concept based on cohesive and complimentary architectural idioms of massing, circulation, programming, subtractive forms, and open space.

4. The front façade appears to be symmetrical, with the exception of a subtractive void at the southwest corner that continues at the south façade along the ground-level. Develop a compatible design solution that will accommodate rational façade patterning, and purposeful volumes to accommodate necessary programs and circulation. The cantilevering of the upper floor volumes over the garage ramp entry is not consistent with the guidelines. Consider fully framing and enclosing the drive entry and formulating the massing and façade planes in response.
5. Provide visual distinction between ground-floor commercial and upper-floor residential units through form, mass, materiality, and clear demarcation and accentuation of entrances and individual units
6. The project site sits at the confluence of multiple land uses including a designated landmark district, the commercial core of Lake Avenue and Green Streets, a multi-story office building immediately to the south, a historic multi-story medical office building immediately to the north, and a surface parking lot immediately to the east. The buildings within the vicinity vary in development periods, architectural style, and size. With the exception of the parking lots, these buildings all meld together to become a holistic archetype of pedestrian-friendly urban fabric. The proposed project should continue this urban paradigm through careful consideration of the street and building interface, particularly at the ground-floor commercial spaces, the use of contextual horizontal regulating lines, the sequence of pedestrian and vehicular circulation, and the front-facing residential units located above.
7. A respectful approach to the eligible historic resource directly to the north of the project should be explored through compatible relationships of massing, scale, setbacks, volumetric proportions, architectural idioms, and general patterning of materials and fenestrations.
8. Design the central courtyard and upper-floor terraces as communal open spaces for the residents to actively and passively use. Amenities should be provided to support those uses such as an open recreational space, shade, seating, fountains, barbeques, vegetation, etc.
9. The individual residential units should fully engage with the courtyard through the use of circulation, balconies, terraces, and façade openings. Carefully consider the proposed design of the project and its interactive relationship with the open spaces.
10. Materials should be authentic, and not thin appliques. Brick applications should be detailed as masonry bearing walls with struck mortar joints.
11. Consider how the materials will be applied within context to the building form, transitions in plane, overall rhythm and composition. Carefully study the selected materials and their application, providing a clear rationale to their use, detailing, and location.

Project Scheduling/Sequencing:

- Concept and Final Design Review by the Design Commission
- Building Permits

Respectfully Submitted,



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Department

Prepared by:



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Reviewed by:



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Attachments:

- A. Project Plans and Photographs
- B. Project Narrative and Design Evolution
- C. Current Planning (Zoning) Compliance Matrix