



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: AUGUST 22, 2023

TO: DESIGN COMMISSION

FROM: JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW (DHP2022-00231)
NEW SIX-STORY, 139,241 SQUARE-FOOT, MIXED-USE PROJECT
CONSISTING OF 134 RESIDENTIAL DWELLING UNITS AND 3,954 SQUARE
FEET OF COMMERCIAL SPACE ABOVE SUBTERRANEAN PARKING
141 SOUTH LAKE AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

Environmental Determination

1. Find that the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan designation, with the General Plan goals and policies for the site, and with the applicable zoning designation and regulations; and that the project site has no value as habitat for endangered or threatened species, and can be served by utilities and public services;
2. Find that approval of the project will not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, water quality or cultural resources; and
3. Conclude, therefore, that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under §15332, (Class 32) "in-fill development projects" and that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances.

Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance

1. Acknowledge that a tree inventory (Attachment B) identifies removal of one private protected specimen tree (no. 11), an American Sweetgum Tree (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) with a diameter at breast height (DBH) of 21 inches. This tree is located within the proposed building footprint;

2. Find that the removal of tree no. 11 meets finding no. 6 of the Tree Protection Ordinance (PMC Section 8.52.075.A): “the project, as defined in Section 17.80.020, includes a landscape design plan that emphasizes a tree canopy that is sustainable over the long term by adhering to the replacement matrix adopted by resolution of the city council and included in the associated administrative guidelines”; and, therefore

Approve the removal of one protected tree.

Findings for the Approval of Height Limit Exception through Height Averaging

1. Find that the height limits documented in the height averaging exhibit for the western portion of the site comply with the regulatory provisions in the Zoning Code (§17.30.050). These provisions limit an increase in height (to 65 feet in this case) over a maximum of 30% of the building footprint if the additional height is counterbalanced by lower heights elsewhere on a development site such that the average height does not exceed the otherwise required maximum building height (50 feet in this case).
2. Find that the request for additional height complies with the following findings for height averaging:
 - a. The additional height allows for preservation of vistas and view corridors, and/or provides for a more interesting skyline;
 - b. The additional height will not be injurious to adjacent properties or uses, or detrimental to environmental quality, quality of life, or the health, safety, and welfare of the public;
 - c. The additional height will promote a superior design solution that enhances the property and its surroundings, without detrimental impacts on views and sight lines; and
 - d. The additional height is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Central District Specific Plan and the General Plan; and

Based on these findings, approve the request for height averaging.

Findings for Concept Design Approval

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, Central District Specific Plan Private Realm Design Guidelines and Central District Sub-District Design Guidelines (Lake Avenue Design Guidelines); and

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: CD-5 (Central District 5, Lake Avenue subdistrict)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Central District Private Realm Design Guidelines and the Central District Sub-District Design Guidelines (Lake Avenue Design Guidelines).
- Site: The project site is located within the South Lake Shopping Area precinct of the Central District Specific Plan and is comprised of two adjoining lots totaling 55,406 square feet (1.27 acres) with frontage on S. Lake Avenue and S. Hudson Avenue. The site is currently developed with a two-story office building and surface parking lot. All existing features are proposed to be demolished. A tree inventory provided with the application identifies 13 trees on site, one of which is a protected specimen tree, as well as two street trees.
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties include commercial, institutional and multi-family residential uses and structures ranging between one and seven stories in height. The properties to the north, south and east are part of the South Lake Shopping Area precinct of the Central District Specific Plan and are primarily commercial or mixed-use in nature, while the properties to the west are located in the Playhouse South/Green Street precinct and are primarily office and multi-family residential. The property to the north at 123 South Lake Avenue was identified in the city's survey of Cultural Resources of the Recent Past as being eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Historically known as the First City Bank Building, this two-story commercial building was designed by Ladd & Kelsey and constructed in 1960 by the Mandubreh Co. and is currently occupied by Fidelity Investments.
- Project Description: The project involves construction of a new six-story, 139,241 square-foot mixed-use building consisting of 3,954 square feet of ground floor commercial space (currently proposed as a restaurant) and 134 residential units (six of which are proposed to be affordable) above a subterranean parking garage. One protected specimen tree, as well as 12 non-protected trees, are proposed to be removed to accommodate the project. Parking would be provided in two and one-half subterranean levels with access from Hudson Avenue.
- Site Design: The proposed mixed-use building will be sited on a through lot that fronts S. Lake Avenue and S. Hudson Avenue. The building footprint extends to all property lines for the S. Lake Avenue portion of the project. The building that faces S. Hudson Avenue has 10-foot front and side setbacks with subterranean parking that extends below the entire building. Pedestrian access onto the site will be provided from both streets, although vehicular access is limited to Hudson Avenue. A restaurant tenant space with an outdoor dining patio that adjoins the sidewalk is proposed along S. Lake Avenue with a separate entry from the same street. The residential units are inward-facing and are arranged around

two central courtyards that are programmed for various outdoor activities. A third communal outdoor space is a roof terrace located on the fifth floor.

- Architectural Style: Contemporary
- Developer: DC Lake Holdings, LLC
- Architects: LCRA Architects
- Landscape Architect: Korn Randolph

ANALYSIS:

Design Commission Comments from Preliminary Consultation

On June 12, 2018, 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 responses are incorporated into the set of plans in Attachment C.

<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 1</p>
<p>The current design does not clearly or distinctly respond to the surrounding context and appears to be a generic design that can be found in many different contexts. The design should reflect a more Pasadena specific identity. Consider taking more inspiration from the curtain wall (of glass or concrete) design of early Modern design. The proposed design should also take into consideration the Modern historic resources in the general vicinity of the project site, including the National Register eligible historic resource directly to the north, at 123 South Lake Avenue. There should be a more harmonious transition between the scale, massing, and materials of the proposed building and eligible historic resource at 123 South Lake Avenue. On the east elevation facing South Lake Avenue, provide a clear pattern of building openings; fenestration should unify a building’s street wall and add considerably to a facade’s three-dimensional quality paying particular attention to regulating lines on the east elevation to promote contextual harmony, solidify the relationship between new and old buildings, and lead the eye down the street.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>
<p>“We have studied the architectural style of the building and considered the existing influences including the eligible historic resource at 123 South Lake Avenue. We have revised the elevations to take cues from Modern architecture prevalent on Lake Avenue and specifically the adjacent structure at 123 South Lake Avenue. We developed the 2-story base form to relate in height and architectural treatment to the adjacent building. The ground floor is recessed to provide opportunity for outdoor dining. Slender metal columns continue to the second floor creating a vocabulary that is reminiscent of the adjacent building but interpreted in a more contemporary manner. The upper stories are pushed back to creating a secondary simple form that is punctuated with larger recessed openings that are then articulated with an organized pattern of windows and color blocking. This higher form serves as a backdrop to the base and creates a visual relationship to the existing commercial buildings in height and simple treatment.”</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended conditions of approval nos. 2-5.</i></p>
<p>The revised design continues to be a contemporary building, but its organization and overall treatment have been greatly improved from the previous iteration. The S. Lake Avenue façade has layered volumes with different forms highlighting various components of the building. For example, there is a horizontal two-story base that is closest to the street edge with a commercial aesthetic, followed by a narrow three-story vertical form that identifies and frames the entry and finally a taller and wider volume that extends across the width of the lot that becomes the background for this elevation. The treatment of each form is both similar and different, although the two-story base is the most distinct in terms of its glazing and fenestration set within a thin metal frame. In general, this façade expresses greater transparency, lightness and modernity that are compatible with the nearby contemporary and/or modern buildings within the immediate context such as the Fidelity Investments, the modern building at 123 S. Lake Avenue, and the newer four-story commercial building located south of the project site.</p>

Although the interface between the top of the two-story base and the third floor behind it appears unresolved due to the appearance of truncated door/window openings in the elevation drawings, this appearance is unlikely to be perceived from the pedestrian/ground level. The composition of the two-story differentiated framed base references the Fidelity Investments building at 123 S. Lake Avenue and appears to be an appropriate and sensitive design approach. The alignment of the thin metal posts/frames, particularly those that extend to the ground and become columns should achieve better alignment with the openings and/or walls above it. However, the applicant should restudy and achieve an improved interface between the metal framing of the two-story commercial base with the residential entry/lobby. The secondary ingress/egress in the southern most portion of the ground floor also needs additional design consideration due to its prominent location on S. Lake Avenue. Finally, additional detail illustrating the design and features of the exterior stairs on the northern edge of the building should be provided and consideration of the line of security should be considered. Staff recommends conditions of approval 2- 5 to address these concerns.

Preliminary Consultation Comment 2

Significant and pedestrian friendly entries and lobbies on both the Lake Avenue and Hudson Avenue elevations should be included in the overall design. There is no residential entrance or lobby on the west elevation facing Hudson Avenue, and one should be provided. Main building entrances should be prominent in terms of size, articulation, and use of materials. The primary easterly residential lobby appears to be submerged behind the projecting second story office and its relationship to the rest of the primary elevation should be further studied and refined. Consider differentiating/emphasizing this space architecturally from the remainder of the building.

Applicant Response

"We have revised the Lake Avenue elevation to celebrate the residential Lobby. The Lobby entry is captured in a 3-story form clad in brick, a different material than the commercial portion of the building which wraps around the corner where exterior stairs lead to the courtyard above. The doors to the Lobby are held back in a covered loggia creating some separation from the sidewalk traffic. The Hudson elevation has also been studied and revised to introduce a large opening serving as a portal to the residences beyond. This portal provides easy access from the street to the courtyard and units. The elevation was reorganized to create more emphasis on the courtyard entry and units while allowing the garage entry to step back and become a secondary form."

Staff Analysis: *Comment to be addressed through recommended conditions of approval nos. 7, 8 and 11.*

The different designs of the residential entries depicted on the east and west elevations take cues from the commercial and residential context these elevations face and appear appropriate for each frontage. The S. Lake Avenue residential entry is sensitively designed within a recessed loggia to provide relief the pedestrian realm. The three-story frame surrounding this volume is described to be clad in brick although the color elevation does not show this material and appears to be a stucco finish. Staff finds that this material should be reconsidered as recommended by condition no. 11 in lieu of a material that exists within the context of this project or complementary to the overall material palette. The pedestrian entry portal proposed along Hudson Avenue is also appropriate, but the applicant should consider its height and proportion, particularly its relationship to the levels directly above it as a composition with consideration to the human scale as recommended by condition no. 8, which also notes that, if security fencing or gates are proposed, the applicant should identify their locations and show their designs. Similar to the pedestrian entry portal, the height and proportion of the garage entry should also be reconsidered, including the appropriateness of the design of the infill screen proposed above the pedestrian and garage gate as recommended by condition no. 7.

Preliminary Consultation Comment 3

Provide more detailed information about bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular circulation to and from as well as within the site and clarify how residents will access the building from both Hudson Avenue and Lake Avenue as well as access and engage with the split-level courtyard. Clarify how the different commercial users will access the commercial spaces from the parking areas. Clarify if there will be any short term vs. long term bicycle parking. The internal circulation and ground floor relationships, including a lack of pedestrian access to Hudson Avenue, is currently misguided.

Applicant Response

"We have studied and revised the project to create a pedestrian friendly environment allowing a porous connection to the neighborhood. From Lake Avenue, visitors can access the commercial spaces via the sidewalk or the commercial parking area adjacent to the rear of the spaces. A direct access from the parking garage makes it easy to reach the commercial spaces. Residents and visitors alike can enter the main ground floor Lobby through the covered entry and then access the courtyard and upper units via the elevators. Alternately, residents can use the exterior stairs which arrives at a small 2nd floor courtyard providing access to the units as well as the Upper Courtyard. Open landscaped steps lead from the Upper Courtyard to the Lower Courtyard through a tall opening which connects the two outdoor areas. Residents can access Hudson Avenue and the neighborhood beyond by exiting through the large, gated portal. Commercial and residential vehicles enter via Hudson Avenue.

<p>Commercial and guest parking is accessed first on P-1 Level and residential parking continues beyond a secure gate and below on Levels P-2 and P-3. Bicycle parking for commercial has been provided in the form of open racks along Lake Avenue and 1 secure space within the parking structure in close proximity to the commercial space. Residential parking is provided on P-1 level in close proximity to the Hudson Avenue elevator.”</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended condition of approval no. 9.</i></p>
<p>Due to the sloping topography that spans between the two street frontages, pedestrian and vehicular access into the site and circulation within the site requires unique design solutions. All vehicular access for both residential and commercial uses will be from Hudson Avenue located at the southern edge of the building, which allows the S. Lake Avenue frontage to be uninterrupted. Pedestrian access onto the site and all units can be achieved along both frontages, although the more direct entry is from Hudson Avenue through an entry portal that is connected to a central courtyard. Residential access from S. Lake Avenue can be achieved through an exterior stair or an elevator in the lobby. Interior access between the split central courtyards located on the 1st floor (from Hudson Avenue shown on Sheet A-1.3) and 2nd floor (from S. Lake Avenue on Sheet A-1.4) is through a set of stairs or a lift that link the two central courtyards. From the submitted drawings, the design of the stairs and the transition and integration between these two outdoor spaces is unclear. For this reason, interior elevations and views from a pedestrian level should be provided from the lower and upper courtyards at this connection point for review during Final Design Review as recommended by condition no. 9.</p>
<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 4</p>
<p>Consider further differentiating, or more clearly explaining how the architectural character of the residential portion of the project is distinguished from the commercial portions, particularly as viewed from South Lake Avenue and refine the treatment of style and materials for each use. The ground floor commercial uses should be visually distinct from the residential space above; residential entrances should read differently from entrances to ground floor commercial uses. The residential portions should have more consistency in design, currently there appear to be too many competing patterns. It would also be appropriate to treat the Hudson facing elevation differently, as it is distinct from Lake Avenue and not visually connected.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>
<p>“The commercial portion of the project has been redesigned to tie into the Modern architecture found along Lake Avenue especially the adjacent eligible historic resource at 123 South Lake Avenue. Metal and glass treated in a modernist manner highlight the elevation of the commercial portion of the project. The form is light and open in comparison to the more solid residential portion of the project. The residential buildings use a vocabulary of simple larger openings enhanced with window and color blocking to create a finer grain detail more in keeping with residential architecture. Additional materials such as brick are used to add texture and ground the building. This same vocabulary is used along Hudson and the remaining elevations to create a unified design.”</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended condition of approval no. 10.</i></p>
<p>As mentioned, the design along S. Lake Avenue and Hudson Avenue frontages are uniquely different based on the commercial and residential contexts that exist along these two streets. The proposed designs respond to these elevations and are sensitive and appropriate to each context. The east (S. Lake Ave.) elevation reflects a commercial design along the first two levels for the entirety of the façade, with the exception of the residential entrance/lobby, through the use of a storefront window/door system coupled with its rhythm and high levels of fenestration. The recessed area that is enclosed within a framed three-story volume identifies the residential entry. Beyond the first and second floors, the design shifts to appear more residential consistent with its contemporary design and urban setting. The design of the west (Hudson Ave.) elevation takes on an entirely residential appearance that is informed by the existing and nearby residential buildings located along the same street, such as its adjoining neighbor to the south. The form, design features/treatments, proportions and fenestration of this façade, including the entry portal are consistent with the character of this street while also referencing the design of the upper residential levels on the east façade.</p> <p>However, the side north and south elevations of the eastern portion of the building shown on Sheet A-2.1 take on different design approaches visually bisecting the building midway through the site. The Hudson Avenue (west) elevation and its associated design treatments are extended consistently onto the side elevations to achieve a cohesive design throughout. On the other hand, the design treatments of the S. Lake Avenue (east) elevation are not extended to the side elevations and introduces a different design concept resulting in unresolved mass, scale and solid-to-void ratio, especially on the south elevation. Although there are existing one- and four-story buildings adjoining the site along the south side, this elevation will be visible as it will be taller. There is also a greater separation between the site and the existing historic building to the north, which will make the north elevation highly visible. As such, the design treatment given to both north and south side elevations should be consistent with the S. Lake Avenue façade or similar to the treatment of the Hudson Avenue façades to achieve an attractive and cohesive design throughout and similar to the interior courtyard elevations as recommended by condition no. 10.</p>

Preliminary Consultation Comment 5
Provide interior elevations that better explain the relationship of units to the proposed courtyards. Ensure that the communal open spaces for the project include amenities that will allow for their active use by the residents of the project.
Applicant Response
"Interior courtyard elevations have been included on Sheet A-2.5 to show the relationship of the units to the courtyards. Landscape lining the perimeter of the courtyards serves as a buffer to most units facing the communal spaces. Active and passive actives are programed within the center of the courtyards providing privacy for the units. Gathering and BBQing areas are provided in the main courtyards and lounging and game areas are provided on the roof terrace."
Staff Analysis: <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended condition of approval no. 12.</i>
Interior elevations are provided that show the residential units facing south, east and west. For Final Design Review, the application should provide interior elevations of all facades facing both courtyards as recommended by condition no. 12, which should demonstrate their treatment as primary facades. As illustrated on Sheets A-1.3, A-1.4 and A-1.7, all common outdoor spaces within the courtyards and roof terrace will be fully programed to accommodate a variety of uses and activities.
Preliminary Consultation Comment 6
The lightly supported mass of the second story office space and the balcony above appears to inappropriately dominate the primary elevation rather than enhance or compliment other significant building features. Explore ways to better integrate this feature into the overall design concept of the building. The use of recessed windows that create shadow lines and suggest solidity is strongly encouraged. Reconsider what users will have access to the large balcony above the second story projected mass of the office space. The current scheme of limiting it for the private use of only a few units is not appropriate, as this significant and prominent open space and should be programed for common use. In addition, the visual transition between this space, the balcony of Plan 4A, and the residential lobby volume should also be further studied to ensure a more harmonious transition in materials and function.
Applicant Response
The lower commercial form has been redesigned as a single 2-story form articulated in metal framework and glass. The ground floor is recessed but captured within the framework. The glass above is recess within the framework allowing a play of shadows as the day progresses. This form continues the strong street wall along Lake Avenue and relates to the adjacent eligible historic resource in height and architecture. The redesign of the elevation has allowed the opportunity to simplify the transitions from the commercial to the residential including the balconies.
Staff Analysis: <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i>
The commercial component fronting S. Lake Avenue has been redesigned since the Preliminary Consultation review. As depicted on Sheet A-1.2, the ground floor is envisioned as a restaurant space with an outdoor patio that adjoins the sidewalk. This patio is created by way of a recessed ground floor and covered by the cantilevered upper floors.
Preliminary Consultation Comment 7
Study ways to better engage the outdoor dining and the projecting mass of the second floor office space on the east elevation with the rest of the building design and further explain how the outdoor dining relates to the adjacent properties and the street continuity in the immediate context. The outdoor dining component should incorporate additional features to make the space more human scaled and inviting as it does not appear to be fully integrated with the overall architectural design of the building and the large unadorned support columns should relate better to the upper portions of the building. In general, the elements of verticality on the east elevation need further refinement and the solid-to-void proportions of the larger articulated tower element at the northeast corner of the building appears to be imbalanced.
Applicant Response
The ground floor outdoor dining area has been redesigned to be contained within the new framework of the 2-story form. This allows the area to be open to the street but feel part of the 2-story form. The metal frames extend to the second floor where they engage the building and create openings for recessed glass panels. Landscape and paving will enhance this dining area. The overall composition of the Lake Avenue elevation has been redesigned to create hierarchy of elements. The forward 2-story Commercial form is the principal form creating the street wall and aligning with the adjacent buildings. The Residential entry form introduces residential materials and highlights

<p>the entry to the units. The third form serves as a backdrop utilizing an organized arrangement of openings and materials. The simplified composition highlights the commercial uses while creating a balance of unified forms.</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p>
<p>The proposed outdoor dining patio will be created by pulling the ground floor façade away from the street edge and allowing the upper floors to cantilever over it. Additionally, the metal frames that surround the two upper levels extend to the ground to frame the dining patio in a similar way. This space spans across the entire façade with exception of the residential entry lobby and exterior stairs that lead to the courtyard on the second level and appears more integrated with the building. Similar outdoor dining patios exist for other restaurants/cafes located along S. Lake Avenue.</p>
<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 8</p>
<p>If height averaging continues to be proposed, additional details will be necessary to fully evaluate the request. The initial drawings appear to show the design disproportionately skews the height of the interior, non-publicly visible volumes, and a request to approve this design will be difficult to grant as there will be no public perception of the difference in heights.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>
<p>Height averaging is proposed for the Hudson Avenue portion of the site. See Height Exhibit on Sheet A-4.0. Height averaging is used to minimize the height impact along Hudson. The taller portion of the building is pushed back toward the center of the project far from the view of pedestrians along Hudson. A lower form is introduced on the Hudson elevation to minimize the garage entry form and help break up the corner of the building.</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p>
<p>As a result of the proposed height averaging, a stepped roofline can be seen along the side elevation of the building closest to Hudson Avenue. However, because the stepped roofline is located far from the front elevation, it will not be experienced from Hudson Avenue. The features that are visible from Hudson Avenue are the stair and elevator enclosures, which are located in and around the northwest corner of the building. A full evaluation of the project's compliance with height averaging requirements is provided below.</p>
<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 9</p>
<p>Further resolve the architectural detailing on all elevations and ensure the same level of quality and detailing is reflected on all visible portions of the building. When there is vertical circulation inside the building, this should be expressed on the exterior elevations. There also appear to be too many unnecessary two-story framed elements that do not reflect the function and programming of interior spaces.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>
<p>The elevations have been studied and redesigned in order to develop a more articulated and cohesive design. Wherever possible we have introduced openings to activate the elevations and reflect the uses beyond. The south elevation along with the plan was redesigned to allow a 10' setback along the Hudson portion of the site. This provided for a large green buffer as well as the opportunity for windows and balconies. The elevations are consistent throughout and blank walls were minimized.</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended condition of approval no. 10.</i></p>
<p>Additional design considerations have been given to the exterior treatment of the building. The vertical stair/circulation elements located along the periphery of the building appear more articulated and their forms are better expressed and solid surfaces have been relieved with punched openings. As previously identified, portions of the north and south elevations closest to S. Lake Avenue need additional design consideration to address the blank appearance of these elevations since they will be visible from the public right-of-way. Similar design consideration should also be given to both side elevations in general so that the treatment of these façades achieve the same level of care and reflect a cohesive design throughout the project similar to the street elevations as recommended by condition no. 10.</p>
<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 10</p>
<p>Reconsider the connection between the internal circulation within the building and the exterior elevations, especially the north and south elevations. Explore ways to provide daylight to the internal corridors, via nodes by elevators or at the end of the corridors or other means as appropriate which would provide additional openings to the exterior.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>
<p>The exterior elevations and plans have been redesigned to allow openings into corridors thus bringing natural light into the corridors as well as activating the exterior elevations. This is visible along the northern and southern elevations of the Lake Avenue portion of the project. Window openings have been maximized per allowable code requirements and have been enhanced by recesses and articulation to maximize their impact on the elevations.</p>

<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended condition of approval no. 10.</i></p> <p>While some improvements have been made, additional opportunities exist and should be further explored to achieve an improved design that is consistent with the Preliminary Consultation comment. Although the south elevation on Sheet A-2.1 illustrates the outline of the two one- and four-story buildings located south of the project site, a significant portion of this façade will be visible from S. Lake Avenue since the building is only one-story high. Staff recommends condition no. 10 requiring the applicant to further study the north and south elevations and consider pulling the walls away from the property lines so that openings can be created and similarly, create openings above the upper levels on the south elevation since these areas will not be impacted by the adjoining one-story building. Or, reconsider the location of the corridor and whether or not it should be single- or double-loaded in order to achieve an elevated and cohesive design throughout the project.</p>
<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 11</p> <p>The design of the north elevation is unresolved and should be further studied and refined to include a full array of architectural features and detailing that appropriately responds to the adjacent eligible historic resource. Further study the composition of significant architectural elements of the primary elevation facing South Lake Avenue, such as the entryway, ground floor restaurant storefront, fenestration and mullion patterns, covered dining patio, cantilevered second floor office space, large glass balcony, and the tower like feature at the northeast corner of the building and, further refine the arrangement of these elements in a more harmonious composition with a clearly established hierarchy of significance with a base, middle and top. The use of exterior cladding materials should also follow a clearly established and logical hierarchy of significance. In addition, the predominant use of stucco is problematic; the material choices should be of a higher quality.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>The north elevation has been redesigned to be cohesive with the rest of the building’s design and articulation. The blank walls have been minimized. The northern corner at Lake Avenue has been designed to be open and inviting. We have revised the plan and flipped the entry to the Residential Lobby to this corner as well as introducing an exterior grand stair to the Upper Courtyard. This redirects pedestrian traffic to this corner, activating the location. An entry courtyard is located at the top of the stairs allowing for a landscaped gathering area and views onto the adjacent eligible historic building as well as Lake Avenue beyond. The brick material from the front residential entry form wraps the corner leading up to the upper entry courtyard.</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended condition of approval no. 10.</i></p> <p>This north elevation has been revised and reflects a significant improvement from the preliminary consultation submittal. However, the design remains divergent between the S. Lake Avenue and S. Hudson Avenue sides of the north elevation as illustrated on Sheet A-2.1 and creates a design that lacks unity and cohesiveness within the same building. The applicant should consider the successful design of the S. Hudson Avenue side of the building and employ the same or similar treatments on the S. Lake Avenue portion of the building, such as location, size, and design of glazing, the fenestration, proportion, and application and placement of materials and colors...etc. as recommended in condition no. 10.</p>
<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 12</p> <p>Further study the design and location of the access to the parking garage off of South Hudson Avenue to ensure it is well integrated into the project design and will avoid the appearance of a large open tunnel from the street. Further study the scale of the parking entrance to determine if it can better relate to the scale of other openings along the street, including the large Parking entrance directly to the south of the property.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>“The Hudson elevation has been redesigned to emphasize the residential building. The courtyard entry is enhanced in order to create a hierarchy in the elevation components. A secondary, subordinate mass, on the right side, houses the garage entry. The scale of the garage entry is further reduced by the use of screens/railings picking up on the vocabulary established in the rest of the building.”</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended condition of approval nos. 7 and 14.</i></p> <p>The entry into the garage is located at the southern most edge of the Hudson Avenue (west) elevation and is slightly recessed from the primary façade to create relief. As such, its appearance and presence along the street is minimized. The design of the garage entry gate should be carefully considered to complement the overall design of the building and the location of the gate should be pulled in and away from the façade as much as possible. The use of metal screens/railings to infill the opening above the garage opening/gate and pedestrian gate appears inappropriate as the use and application of metal screens/railings doesn’t occur anywhere else on the building even though the design is similar to the railings employed at the balconies. Staff recommends condition no. 7 requiring study of an alternative design solution to treating the openings above the garage gate and pedestrian gate that is sensitive to and consistent with the building design and condition of approval no. 14 requiring careful consideration of the design and placement of the garage entry gate.</p>

Preliminary Consultation Comment 13
Further study the grade difference between the sidewalk and the unit entryways along South Hudson Avenue to ensure an appropriate and gradual transition. Sunken entryways are strongly discouraged. The combination of above and below street access is not desirable. Above grade access is preferable to sunken entries.
Applicant Response
“The plan has been redesigned to better relate with the existing slope along Hudson. The main entry portal, towards the center of the site, aligns with the sidewalk grade providing an easy transition into the courtyard.”
Staff Analysis: <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended condition of approval no. 15.</i>
The grade difference along Hudson Avenue and its association with the entry has been addressed. The entry portal and pathway that connects to the sidewalk are now on the same elevation resulting in level pathway through the development. All entries into the units are provided internally from the courtyards or from single- and double-loaded corridors on the upper levels. The original proposal reviewed under Preliminary Consultation included units that front and have direct access from Hudson Avenue. This design approach should continue to be explored since this configuration exists in the immediate neighborhood as recommended by condition no. 15.
Preliminary Consultation Comment 14
The provided elevations should show the actual elevations of adjacent building, not just shadows in order to provide additional context and allow the Design Commission to better understand how the proposed building relates to the surrounding environment.
Applicant Response
“The elevations of the adjacent existing buildings along Lake Avenue and Hudson Avenue have been included in the elevations for reference.”
Staff Analysis: <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i>
The actual elevations of the adjoining buildings have been added to provide greater clarity of the proposed project and its relationship to its neighboring buildings and are shown on Sheet A-2.0.

Programming and Circulation

The building footprint will generally extend to all property lines for the S. Lake Avenue portion of the project, while 10-foot front and side setbacks are provided for the S. Hudson Avenue portion. The building provides pedestrian access from both streets while vehicular access is only provided from S. Hudson Avenue.

The ground floor fronting S. Lake Avenue features a restaurant space with a direct entry from the street. Two separate entrances to the upper-level residential units are also provided on this elevation through a lobby and an exterior stair located along the side of the north elevation. Vehicle access to subterranean parking for residents and commercial tenant will be provided on S. Hudson Avenue, leading to two and one-half subterranean parking levels. Although it is unspecified on the site plan, there is an existing curb-cut and driveway apron along the southern edge of the property along Hudson Avenue. As recommended by condition no. 16, the applicant shall identify and specify if the existing driveway apron will be retained to accommodate the new project. A residential entry portal is also provided on this façade that leads directly to the lower courtyard and ground floor residential units. The residential units are arranged around two central courtyards and are accessible either through single- or double loaded corridors. Vertical circulation between the ground floor, upper residential levels and subterranean garage is provided by three stairs and two elevators that are located in close proximity to the street frontages. Another stair is located north of the residential entry along S. Lake Avenue which provides access to the entry court, upper courtyard and residential units on the second floor.

The residents will have access to three programmed common outdoor spaces with a variety of amenities that are located in the lower and upper courtyards and are connected by a set of stairs and designed as a split level due to the changing grade between the two street frontages. The third outdoor space is a roof terrace located on the fifth floor that faces north and west

towards Hudson Avenue. Outside of the common open spaces, minimal ground-level landscaping is provided within the 10-foot setback along Hudson Avenue and within a planter along the driveway ramp.

Additionally, two trash collection areas for the commercial tenant and residents are located in the first subterranean parking level as well as two bicycle racks that can accommodate 24 bicycles while a third rack is located along the south property line next to the commercial tenant space on S. Lake Avenue.

The proposed programming and circulation for the proposed project account for both frontages and permits residential access from both streets while limiting access to the commercial space to S. Lake Avenue, which helps retain the commercial character of this street. Additionally, creating vehicular access from S. Hudson Avenue is also sensitive as it eliminates disruption to the pedestrian flow along S. Lake Avenue, which is a busy corridor. All points of entry are internally connected to the uses and spaces within the building through pathways and vertical circulation and that facilitate navigation throughout the project site consistent with the design guidelines.

Orientation

The proposed building will be constructed on a double frontage lot and is designed to orient towards S. Lake Avenue and S. Hudson Avenue. Along each street façade, direct access into the building will be provided for both residents and the commercial tenant. However, access to the subterranean parking garage will be limited to the Hudson Avenue elevation to minimize impact to the pedestrian flow along S. Lake Avenue. The site planning, building orientation, and access points along both streets create a strong connection to the existing streets and pedestrian realm.

The building design is also consistent with its orientation to the public spaces in achieving a sensitive human scale and rhythm that are similar to adjoining buildings. The facades are transparent and make a friendly gesture to the public realm. The site two frontages exhibit differing characters that is commercially focused on S. Lake Avenue and residentially focused along S. Hudson Avenue and the building responds appropriately along both frontages. The commercial tenant space features an outdoor dining patio that will be located along the sidewalk, while the residential units will have access to three common outdoor spaces in two central courtyards and a roof terrace on the fifth floor that can be accessed by the residential internally.

Height, Massing and Modulation

The height limit at this location is 75 feet for the portion of the building fronting S. Lake Avenue and 50 feet for the building facing S. Hudson Avenue or 90' and 65' with height averaging, respectively. The elevation drawings submitted for this review show compliance with both height limits; height averaging compliance for the westerly portion of the building is discussed further below. In general, the height proposed is compatible with existing and proposed development surrounding the site which ranges from one to 5 stories along Hudson Avenue and 1 to 10 stories along S. Lake Avenue.

The elevation drawings illustrate the appropriateness of the building massing that is achieved through articulated wall planes along all façades, layered forms, and a varied roofline. In general, the project's sensitive massing is also supported by clear and organized fenestration that helps the building achieve a transparent appearance along the street front. As noted above, the side elevations of the S. Lake Avenue portion of the building requires attention consideration to address the solid-to-void ratio and achieve complementary fenestration achieved on the street-facing elevations as recommended by condition no. 10.

Height Averaging

A height averaging exhibit has been provided on sheet A-4.0 of the submitted drawings, which depicts varying-height volumes on the building. The project site is located within two height limit zones within the Central District Specific Plan. As depicted on Sheet A-4.0, only the western portion of the site is proposing height averaging. The eastern portion complies with the maximum height limit. All appurtenances, such as the stair and elevator enclosures, are permitted by right to exceed the height limits by 15 feet, are in compliance with this requirement, and are not included within the height averaging calculations. The provisions of height averaging in §17.30.050.B of the Zoning Code, along with staff's analysis of the project's compliance, are as follows:

Extent of height averaging allowed:

- a. Additional building height is permitted over no more than 30 percent of the building footprint on a development parcel, provided that the average height over the entire footprint does not exceed the otherwise required maximum building height.

The portion of the building that is proposed to exceed the 50' height limit is 3,950 total square feet of the 21,089 square-foot overall building footprint, which is approximately 18.78% of the footprint area. The height averaging exhibit submitted demonstrates that the average height of the buildings on the development site will be 48.85 feet and staff has verified this calculation to be accurate.

- b. Height averaging shall not be applied to parking and/or accessory structures.

The project is not proposing to use height averaging for separate parking or accessory structures.

- c. The additional height allowed by this Subsection B. through height averaging shall require Design Commission approval.

This review constitutes the required Design Commission review.

Required findings:

- a. The additional height allows for preservation of vistas and view corridors, and/or a more sensitive transition to an adjacent historic structure, and/or provides for a more interesting skyline;

The additional height at the eastern end of the height limit zone where height averaging is proposed allows for provision of housing in a manner that creates a more sensitive transition to surrounding buildings and creates a varied roofline for the development to improve the overall design quality of the project. The additional height is consistent with nearby buildings that are 4- and 5-stories high and located on S. Hudson Avenue. Together, the proposed height for the project and existing height of surrounding buildings will create an articulated and more visually interesting skyline within the vicinity.

- b. The additional height will not be injurious to adjacent properties or uses, or detrimental to environmental quality, quality of life, or the health, safety, and welfare of the public;

As noted above, the additional height is designed in a manner that ensures it is set back from the street edges and surrounding lower-height buildings, thereby avoiding negative impacts on quality of life or health, safety and welfare of the public.

- c. The additional height will promote a superior design solution that enhances the property and its surroundings, without detrimental impacts on views and sight lines; and

As proposed, the additional height will improve the roofline variation of the overall project and will not create detrimental impacts on views and sight lines.

- d. The additional height is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Central District Specific Plan and the General Plan.

The proposed additional height allows for the development of new housing in the Central District and in close proximity to transit, as encouraged in the Central District Specific Plan and General Plan, while ensuring that the design is not detrimental to surrounding buildings and is consistent with the existing context of the South Lake Avenue District.

Architectural Style and Detailing

The proposed building is designed in a contemporary style as reflected in its overall rectilinear form and articulated walls that are supported by a modern material and color palette and is consistent with existing commercial and mixed-use buildings of similar design located within the

surrounding context. The design features a flat roof that is stepped between the eastern and western portions of the building and features projections that accommodate elevator and stair enclosures. The elevations feature clear arrangements of window and door openings to achieve an appropriate fenestration pattern that supports the contemporary style building and is especially successful on the S. Hudson Avenue side of the building. The S. Lake Avenue or east elevation depicts a clear organization of various forms to create a layered appearance that responds to the commercial storefront on the ground floor and residential units on the upper floors. Both street-facing elevations through their design, engage the adjoining streets. However, the side elevations of the S. Lake Avenue building need further development to achieve similar design treatment and fenestration that are consistent with the S. Hudson Avenue portion of the building in order to achieve a cohesive design throughout the project. Staff has included recommended condition no. 10 to address these concerns. In addition, the location of the elevator enclosure along the S. Hudson Avenue elevation detracts from the simple and effective organization of this façade, including the roofline due to its visual prominence. Additional consideration should be given to its location further away from S. Hudson Avenue, or adjoining the stair tower at the north edge, to minimize its appearance. Condition of approval no. 13 is recommended to reconsider an alternative location of the elevator. The solid-to-void ratio of the recessed upper levels above the garage entry appear imbalanced and should also be reconsidered to achieve similar fenestration throughout this façade as recommended by condition no. 6.

Compatibility

The proposed building by way of its contemporary design, mass/scale, finishes and proposed uses is compatible with the existing buildings that are located on S. Lake and S. Hudson Avenues. The mid-rise mixed-use building projects a commercial aesthetic on the ground floor and a six-story high façade along the east elevation to achieve consistency with the rhythm of the South Lake Avenue Shopping District, while the west façade reflects a stronger residential character with its four-story high façade and ground floor residential units. The design approaches employed by the applicant achieve a building that is compatible with the existing context that responds positively with the surrounding buildings.

Conceptual Landscape Design

The landscape plans identify three primary common outdoor spaces within two central courtyards that are linked by a set of stairs and a roof terrace on the fifth floor that serve the residential units. These spaces will be programmed to accommodate both active and passive uses. As conceptually depicted, a variety of seating configurations will be provided around landscape features or fire pits as well as outdoor cooking and dining facilities, and activity areas, such as a bocce ball court and outdoor movie screening. The outdoor spaces, as programmed, will accommodate various interests and encourage different uses throughout the year.

At the ground floor, landscape will be provided within the 10-foot front setback along S. Hudson Avenue and within a planter adjoining the driveway along the south property line. The landscape plans do not show any landscaping along the S. Lake Avenue façade or within the outdoor dining patio. Staff recommends condition no. 18 requiring the plans submitted for Final Design Review to identify proposed landscaping along the S. Lake Avenue frontage and indicate whether it will be in integrated planters or portable pots/planters.

Protected Tree Removal

The proposed project necessitates the removal of one protected specimen tree: tree #11 (an American Sweetgum, DBH 21"). As noted in the arborist's report, this tree is experiencing epicormic growth due to multiple pruning events, but is observed to be in good health with an above average structure. The tree is located in a planter along the south property line. The tree is located within the building footprint and needs to be removed in order to accommodate the proposed project. The removal can be approved under finding #6 of the Tree Protection Ordinance, which states, "the project, as defined in Section 17.80.020, 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."

According to the Tree Replacement Matrix, eight, 24-inch box or four, 36-inch box trees from either the protected specimen or native tree lists are required to be planted. The Conceptual Landscape Plan identifies four, 36-inch Forest Pansy Redbud Trees to be planted within the lower courtyard and complies with the tree replacement matrix. Staff recommends condition no. 17 requiring the project arborist to submit a report demonstrating that the proposed location and method of planting of the replacement trees is appropriate to promote proper health and growth for the selected size and species.

It should also be noted that in addition to new trees to be planted, seven public street trees, including three Holly Oak, two Chinese Pistache, and two London Plane Trees, will be retained. The construction of the project may impact the root zones and canopy of street trees located along S. Lake Avenue and S. Hudson Avenue. For this reason, recommended condition no. 17 also requires the applicant and/or arborist to consult with staff in Urban Forestry to demonstrate how the root zones or tree canopies will be protected during construction.

COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS:

Staff routed the project for comment to several City departments, as well as other divisions of the Planning & Community Development Department, including the Public Works, Transportation, Fire and Housing Departments and the Building, Current Planning and Cultural Affairs Divisions of the Planning & Community Development Department. The Building Division and Fire Department provided standard comments related to Building and Fire Code compliance. Cultural Affairs staff indicated that the project is subject to the public art requirement and the applicant has indicated that they intend to pay the in-lieu fee to satisfy this requirement. Recommended conditions from all reviewing City Departments are included in Attachment A.

The Current Planning Section determined that the project qualifies for and will be utilizing a 20% density bonus and is eligible for a concession and waivers as afforded by State Density Bonus Law. The development will include a total of 134 residential units, including six affordable housing units. The applicant requested and qualifies for the following:

Concession: To allow housing to occupy more than 50 percent of the floor area on the Lake Avenue frontage, where the maximum permitted is less than 50 percent pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.30.030.C, Figure 3-4.

Waiver: To allow the project to have a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 2.51, where the maximum permitted is 2.0 along the Lake Avenue frontage and 1.75 along the Hudson Avenue frontage pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.30.040 Figure 3-9.

Waiver: To allow residential uses on the ground floor on the secondary Hudson Avenue frontage, where a commercial use is required for a mixed-use building pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.50.160.

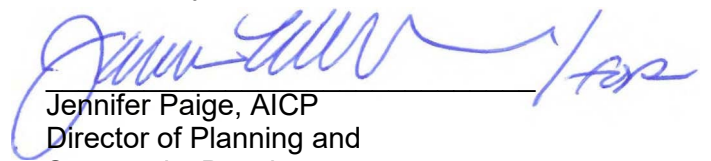
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The project will be constructed on a previously developed site in an urbanized area and is consistent with the General Plan, Central District Specific Plan and the Zoning designation that apply to the property. Staff engaged Michael Baker International, 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 (see Attachment E), including a traffic impact analysis prepared by the Department of Transportation, the project would not result in impacts related to air quality, traffic, noise, water quality or cultural resources and, based on this analysis, staff recommends that the Commission determine that the project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA.

CONCLUSION:

The project design has satisfactorily addressed the comments provided during Preliminary Consultation and is consistent with the Design-Related Goals and Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, Central District Private Realm Design Guidelines and the Central District Sub-District Design Guidelines (Lake Avenue Design Guidelines). Staff recommends approval of the application for Concept Design Review for the project with the conditions of approval described above and included in Attachment A, which will be reviewed during Final Design Review.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jennifer Paige, AICP
Director of Planning and
Community Development

Prepared by:



Rathar Duong
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



Kevin Johnson
Principal Planner

Attachments:

- A. Recommended Conditions of Approval
- B. Tree Inventory and Exhibit; Private Tree Removal Application
- C. Current Plans & Elevations
- D. Responses to Preliminary Consultation Comments
- E. Environmental Documentation