



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 12, 2023

TO: DESIGN COMMISSION

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

ADDRESS: 170 NORTH HALSTEAD STREET

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR CONSOLIDATED DESIGN REVIEW (DHP2023-00221)
NEW SIX-STORY, 47,784 SQUARE-FOOT, 48-UNIT MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL PROJECT

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 (CEQA) 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

Acknowledge that there are no protected trees on the project site.

Findings for Consolidated 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, the Design Guidelines in the East Pasadena Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts; and

Based on these findings, approve the application for Consolidated Design Review subject to the conditions in Attachment A, which shall be subject to staff review and approval prior to issuance of a building permit, unless otherwise stated.

BACKGROUND:

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: High Mixed Use (0.00-3.00 FAR; 0-87 du/acre)
- Zoning: EPSP-d2-CG-B (East Pasadena Specific Plan, Subarea d2, General Commercial District, Parcel B)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the East Pasadena Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts.
- Site: The project site is a vacant 12,537 square-foot lot located on the east side of N. Halstead Street, between E. Foothill Boulevard and the 210 Freeway. There are no structures of historic significance on the project site. There are no trees on the site and one street tree adjoins the site at the southwest corner.
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties include commercial, office, institutional and multi-family residential buildings ranging from one to ten stories in height and surface parking lots along E. Foothill Boulevard as well as a parking structure adjacent to the Sierra Madre Villa "A" Line Station. The northern edge of the site adjoins a Pasadena Department of Water & Power facility and Fire Station #37. Abutting the southern property line is a self-storage facility. The Design Commission recently approved a new mixed-use project consisting of three six-story residential buildings, with a total of 233 units, a new five-story parking structure with ground-floor commercial space and the renovation of the existing Panda Inn restaurant on a parcel immediately east of the project site. Nearby historic resources include Fire Station #37 (1952, Cecil Rhodes Curtis) at 3430 E. Foothill Boulevard and the Stuart Pharmaceuticals Building (1958, Edward Durell Stone) at 3360 E. Foothill Boulevard.
- Project Description: The project involves construction of a new six-story, 48-unit multi-family residential project on a vacant lot. Of the 48 units, 47 are affordable units and one is a manager's unit. The units provided range from studios to three-bedrooms. The project's onsite amenities include a lobby, a community room, and a children's play area on the ground floor. The project does not propose any on-site parking; please refer to pages 11-12 of this staff report, for additional information on parking, the density bonus and the use of concessions and incentives.

- Site Design: The proposed building is oriented west towards Halstead Street and its footprint is generally extended to all property lines with small setbacks along the east, north, and south façades that will provide opportunities for landscaping. Pedestrian access into the building lobby is provided directly from the street, through an entry that adjoins the sidewalk. There is no vehicular access since the proposal does not provide onsite parking.
- Architectural Style: Contemporary
- Developer: CPR Affordable Housing and Community Development
- Architects: Shelter Architects – Gladys M. Bowen
- Landscape Architect: SQLA Inc.

ANALYSIS:

Design Commission Comments from Preliminary Consultation

On June 13, 2023, 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 table below. The design team’s full responses are incorporated into the set of plans in Attachment C. At the conclusion of the June 13, 2023 meeting, a Design Commission Subcommittee was created to assist the applicant and provide guidance on ways to revise the design of the project to comply with the conditions of approval. The Subcommittee met three times on July 7, 13, and 27, 2023 to provide feedback on the revisions proposed by the applicant and cleared the project to move forward to the full Commission.

Preliminary Consultation Comment 1
Reconsider an overall simplification of the design that is supported by quality materials and treatment that is contextual and elegant while achieving the optimum number of units. Additional attention should be given to the organization of the plan, including the adjacency among all spaces, volumes, entry and circulation and how they are reflected and expressed in the elevations in order to strengthen and provide clarity to the design.
Applicant Response
"The overall design has been modified from a 7-story to a 6-story building. The parking garage has also been eliminated. This has allowed for the overall simplification of the building through the expression of the "Box". The common areas are only located on the ground level which allowed for the stacking of units above, creating a base that expresses the common areas uses at grade. We also further simplified the building by utilizing one window type for the units, creating interest through the use of two main building colors and one accent color and keeping the majority of the building to one building plane. We feel there is much greater clarity in the design through the simplification of the floor plan which is then reflected onto the elevations."
Staff Analysis: <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i>
The project design has been modified to achieve a simple design with clean lines and a rectangular mass that places emphasis on its fenestration of punched openings and is further supported by a simple material and color palette. The design changes also improve the pedestrian scale of the front entry, resulting in a seamless transition between the public and private realms. The organization and relationship between the common spaces on the ground floor, vertical circulation and access to all units has also been improved to facilitate movement within and use of the spaces. The design techniques employed on the exterior façades and interior spaces help strengthen and provide clarity to the architectural design concept.
Preliminary Consultation Comment 2
Study how the massing and architectural character of the development is consistent throughout the building and compatible with the surrounding context. The form, scale, massing, materials, solid-to-void relationships, the interplay of horizontal and vertical elements of the building as well as the modulation of the exterior walls facing

public streets and along the side elevations should aim to achieve cohesiveness among all elevations. The design should also achieve a fenestration pattern that reinforces the architectural concept. The overall building design should also take visual cues from nearby buildings to achieve similar massing.
Applicant Response
“The overall building form has been greatly simplified by reducing the number of wall planes, expressing the base on all four sides, and providing consistency on levels 2-6 by using standard window sizes, window types, window placement, and the simplification of materials and color. There is now commonality and greater consistency throughout all 4 elevations. The street-facing façade (west elevation) has a more appropriate human scale with the single-story common areas which are expressed by the storefront glazing and open courtyard. The use of control joints is being used to further enhance and accentuate the horizontal and vertical elements of the building. We feel the overall building design is compatible with the adjacent buildings which surround it, particularly the Metro Gateway Center and The Stuart Apartment Building.”
Staff Analysis: Comment satisfactorily addressed.
Through the design refinement process, the building achieves clean and simple massing that is rectilinear in form, consistently expressed throughout the project and further highlighted by a white stucco finish and additional colors (grey stucco and black and yellow sunshades) to accent openings and create a clear base. The treatment of the façades supports the form and is consistent throughout by providing a rhythm of windows at the ground and upper levels that are set in punched openings to achieve a clear fenestration pattern. The elimination of a floor, reducing the height from seven to six stories, also helps improve the overall massing of the building.
The resulting design is visually consistent and complementary to nearby buildings, such as the residential buildings to the west of the project site, including the Stuart and Bell of Pasadena apartment buildings, as well as the Gateway Metro Center building, while also expressing its own unique design.
Preliminary Consultation Comment 3
Although a contemporary building is consistent and complementary to the existing and surrounding site context, the overall design treatment should take visual cues from nearby buildings to achieve greater compatibility, so that the proposed building can begin to communicate visually with the surrounding buildings.
Applicant Response
“The building design is now much simpler and more elegant in its form. The design complements the adjacent Stuart Apartment Building and the Metro Gateway building and even the adjacent parking structure and single-story commercial building across the street.”
Staff Analysis: Comment satisfactorily addressed.
The changes to the design treatment, building form, mass, material and color palette and its connection to the street help the project attain a design that is visually consistent with the surrounding development and site context.
Preliminary Consultation Comment 4
Along the front elevation, the three-story high vertical piers framing the recessed base exaggerate the verticality and design differences between the lower and upper portions of the building and create a strong presence along the street. The strong visual disconnect in design and treatment creates a street-facing façade that is not sensitive to the human scale or connected to the pedestrian realm in a friendly or inviting manner. This design approach, while an interesting preliminary concept, does not lend to a cohesive and fully integrated design that is extended throughout the building. Careful consideration should be given to various design features and architecture treatments that are sensitive to and achieve an appropriate human scale at the ground plane and are inviting to the pedestrian experience by creating a sensitive transition between the public and private realms.
Applicant Response
“The front façade has been modified to reflect a single-story entryway that is much more appropriate to the human scale and creates a more inviting transition between the public and private realms.”
Staff Analysis: Comment satisfactorily addressed.
The front elevation has been significantly modified to address the pedestrian scale and transition to the public realm. The former two-story recessed entry framed by double height tall columns at the street edge has been replaced with a one-story façade highlighted by a recessed entry alcove with metal canopy and a storefront window system. On the northern side, decorative metal panel screens and a gate enclose the outdoor children’s play area. The entire width of the front façade is buffered by in-ground and metal planters on either side of the entry as illustrated on Sheet A-6. The design composition of the ground floor street-facing façade is friendly and inviting and is integrated into the overall building design.

Preliminary Consultation Comment 5
Additional consideration should be given to the location and size of all utilitarian functions, such as the transformer room, mechanical and electrical rooms by placing them at the rear of the site to improve overall internal site circulation and minimize interference to the size and quality of the common outdoor spaces and related amenities on the ground floor.
Applicant Response
"The utilitarian spaces (transformer, electrical, and trash rooms) have been placed on the southern side of the building for direct access from the shared driveway. All common areas circulate around the main entry lobby creating a hub of activity for the residents."
Staff Analysis: <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i>
As part of the reorganization of the common interior spaces at the front of the building, removal of at-grade parking and introduction of ground floor residential units, locations of the back-of-house features, such as the transformer, electrical, and trash room have been relocated. These features have been consolidated and are located further to the rear and along the southern edge of the building. The new location minimizes their appearance and design impacts to the public spaces, reduces noise impacts to the lobby/community room and improves internal circulation at the ground level.
Preliminary Consultation Comment 6
The location of the laundry room and computer room should be reconsidered. Consider swapping their location, by placing the computer room next to the administrative office where it will have a greater presence from the street since they are more similar in their uses. Both rooms can continue to be connected to the children's play area, if it is an important design consideration for this project.
Applicant Response
"The computer room has been eliminated from the project scope since the provided community room can meet the necessary space requirement. The Laundry Room has been relocated so that it does not face the street but still has good direct access and views to the children's play area, which is an important adjacency factor."
Staff Analysis: <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i>
The design changes resulted in the rearrangement of the common spaces at the ground level to achieve greater efficiency/usability and improve relationships and connectivity with the adjoining spaces. The new arrangement supports the building's overall programming, while highlighting the importance of these features along the street façade where they are most visible. Additionally, a separate computer room has been eliminated and will be combined with the community room and a leasing office is created that adjoins the lobby to achieve a more efficient use of the space.
Preliminary Consultation Comment 7
The exterior stairs that span across the west (front) elevation and serves the open loggia on the second floor is highly visible from the street and obscures much of the ground floor façade and impedes with creative design treatment, while also impacting the transparency, transition and connectivity to the public right-of-way. Consider an alternate orientation or location for the stairs, such as placing it internally or along the side, or eliminating them entirely, so that a high quality, pedestrian-oriented and engaging design can be achieved for the front elevation.
Applicant Response
"The stair element and 3-story volume have been eliminated and a more appropriate and inviting human-scale entry has been provided."
Staff Analysis: <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i>
As part of the redesign of the front elevation and layout of the common interior spaces, the exterior stairs have been removed, which resulted in added design flexibility to achieve an attractive and more usable space at the ground floor as well as a more inviting and pedestrian-oriented front elevation.
Preliminary Consultation Comment 8
Consider an alternative or more suitable location (and/or design) of the children's play area that provides access to sunlight, such as a courtyard configuration that opens to the sky. This alternative would require the building footprint and interior layout to be restudied and reconfigured.
Applicant Response
"Unfortunately, due to the limited size of the site, having a courtyard open to the sky would greatly minimize the number of units on the project, making it a non-viable option. The courtyard will be open on 2 sides, allowing for indirect sunlight and airflow along with direct viewing for supervision from the lobby and laundry room spaces."
Staff Analysis: <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i>
Due to the lot size, fixed unit count, and proposed amenities for the residents, an alternative location and design of the children's play area could not be achieved. Although covered, the outdoor play area will be an important

<p>feature for the children and families who will be occupying the building and will provide some access to natural light since it is open on two sides. Its location adjoining the sidewalk will help activate and enliven the streetscape and provide easy access to adjacent common spaces that are also located at the front of the building.</p>
<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 9</p>
<p>Carefully consider the interior layout and placement/configuration of units, amenities and common open spaces as they relate to the enhancement of the exterior building design and livability of the units and provide an efficient circulation into and around the building.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>
<p>“The building plans have been greatly simplified. All common areas are located at grade, facing the street, and units stack on levels 2-6. The circulation is simple and concise with a central stair/elevator on the southern end adjacent to the lobby and a secondary stair tower on the east end. Both are expressed through solid massing on the exterior façades.”</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p>
<p>The interior layout and placement of the units, common interior spaces, and back of house features have been carefully considered in tandem with the design revisions. The proposed layout and location of these features are sensible while achieving the best outcome for the project based on the requirements and programming of the building. All common spaces on the first and second floors are easily accessible by residents and all units are served by double-loaded corridors that are also connected to on-site amenities. The proposed layout improves the design and facilitates circulation throughout the building.</p>
<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 10</p>
<p>Balanced proportions of window/door openings and fenestration, the modulation and articulation of the building walls, the creation of shade and shadow, as well as access to natural light and air circulation will contribute to the attractiveness of the design and livability of the units. The east (rear) elevation appears most different from the front and side elevations created by a large blank wall that extends from the ground floor to the roofline and negatively impacts the mass of the building.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>
<p>“The windows have been enlarged and create a simple pattern/rhythm across all elevations. The use of color creates interest in each window with color accents on the window sunshades which are located along the east, south and western façades. The east façade has been revised to be consistent with the other elevations. We feel there is an overall greater balance in the proportions of solid to void planes and a much simpler building articulation.”</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended conditions of approval nos. 4-6.</i></p>
<p>The fenestration was carefully considered and revised with guidance from the Design Commission Subcommittee. The resulting pattern is simple with a clear and readable arrangement that complements the building’s contemporary design. Two window types are proposed: an aluminum storefront window system (in black/bronze frame) for the ground floor lobby and community room and white and black vinyl windows for the residential units. The ground floor residential units feature black vinyl sliding windows with transoms and will match the dark grey stucco color of the building base. The ground floor residential windows will be uniform in size, shape, and operation. The upper floor units have white vinyl windows without transoms. While vinyl windows are acceptable, they should be of high or premium quality and white vinyl is not generally considered premium quality. As such, staff recommends condition no. 4 requiring the white vinyl windows to be replaced with black or bronze vinyl to match the vinyl windows proposed for the ground floor units and to achieve consistent treatment throughout.</p>
<p>The solid-to-void ratio of the east (rear) elevation has been improved and appears similar to the front elevation. Although this elevation has a large solid, unbroken wall plane, it does not negatively impact the quality of the design and provides an area of visual respite. Additionally, metal window shades are proposed for all windows on the east, west and south elevations. Although perforated metal shades were considered, the applicant opted for solid metal panels with the underside painted a yellow accent color specified as Rayo de Sol (SM9020) by Sherwin Williams and the outside painted black. The Design Commission Subcommittee recommended that the applicant continue to explore alternative colors for the window shades. As recommended by condition of approval no. 5, staff recommends that the applicant provide mock-ups of alternative colors painted on the metal shades at the project site for review and approval by the Design Commission Subcommittee prior to full installation of the sunshades on the building.</p>
<p>The main entry is proposed to include a metal canopy above the door and a thin metal panel framing the opening. Its underside will also be painted the same yellow accent color. Staff recommends that the applicant continue to study the proportion/profile of the canopy as well as its width to achieve an appropriate scale and placement on the façade while framing the entry as specified by recommended condition no. 6.</p>

<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 11</p>
<p>Quality materials/finishes and color will be important to the success of the project. Although the project is still in the early stages of development, early consideration of the building materials and color palette should be studied to ensure the design incorporates a variety of high quality and durable materials along with an attractive color palette. Materials and colors should be carefully employed in areas of the façades that will strengthen the architectural concept and achieve a cohesive design throughout the building. Additionally, exterior finishes should not have reflective quality, and changes in materials and colors should not occur in-plane, but terminate at the interior corners or similar natural stopping points.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>
<p>“A cement plaster finish is being proposed to be consistent with the contemporary style of the building. A dark grey base and window accent has been added to create visual interest. A second and more vibrant color has been added to the underside/inside of each window sunshade and at the main entrance to the building. Black metal planters, black decorative metal fencing, and black storefront windows at grade level will help to accentuate the base of the building. Overall, the material/color palette has been greatly simplified to reflect the simplicity of the new building design.”</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: Comment to be addressed through condition of approval no. 7.</p>
<p>The building design is supported by a simple and high-quality material and color palette consisting primarily of white and grey smooth stucco with a 20/30 finish. Exterior wall surfaces will incorporate expansion joints to minimize cracking and create a pattern on the stucco surface that complements the fenestration pattern. Staff recommends condition no. 7 requiring the size of the reglets to be minimized to the greatest degree possible and be painted to match the adjoining stucco color. The lobby and ground floor community room features an aluminum storefront window system while the residential units will include black/bronze and white vinyl windows. As noted above, staff recommends condition no. 4 requiring the white vinyl windows to be replaced with black or bronze vinyl to achieve an elevated design and maintain consistency throughout. Enclosing the children’s play area, and side gate that adjoin the sidewalk, will be an eight-foot-high fence consisting of black decorative metal panels with a hexagon pattern. The entry features a metal canopy and side fins to frame the door, while the upper level windows on the east, west and south elevations will be provided with metal sunshades that will be painted in an accent color. The selected materials and colors are high quality and appropriate to the building design and will help highlight various design treatments.</p>
<p>Preliminary Consultation Comments 12</p>
<p>Views from the interior of the site, including design and detailing of the elevations facing the children’s play area will be equally important to the main building façades. The transition between indoor/outdoor spaces should be seamless and complementary to each other.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>
<p>“The children’s play area is accented by a decorative metal panel fence. Planter boxes have also been added on both sides of the fence to provide planting on either side. A colorful play structure and turf block will provide both color and interest to this area.”</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: Comment to be addressed through condition of approval no. 8.</p>
<p>The common interior spaces at the front of the building have been rearranged in concert with the design improvements along the front façade. The spaces are seamlessly and logically connected through the central lobby where access into the community room, leasing office, laundry room, and children’s play area can be achieved. A playhouse structure is proposed within the children’s play area. Visual connection from the lobby and laundry room into the play area is also provided through window openings from both rooms. However, because the laundry room adjoins an open space area and is visible from the street, staff recommends condition no. 8. This condition requires the west-facing elevation of the laundry room to be provided for review during plan check to ensure its fenestration and window type/material are similar to and complement the storefront window system proposed for the community room and lobby.</p>
<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 13</p>
<p>Landscape and hardscape designs are important design considerations, especially in the front setbacks adjoining the sidewalk, children’s play area, shared driveway and screening of mechanical equipment. Both landscape and hardscape features should also complement and reinforce the building’s architecture and achieve a seamless transition between the public and private realms and enhance all outdoor spaces.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>
<p>“With the revised building footprint, the hardscape has been limited to the main entrance, the children’s play area, and around the building for fire and bike storage access. Both at-grade planting and planter boxes have been added to create a softer transition between the public and private realms. Color through the use of plants will also help to soften and create a more inviting atmosphere.”</p>

<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment to be addressed through condition of approval no. 9.</i></p> <p>Landscape is provided along the west (front) façade and within the setbacks along the north and south property lines within at-grade planters and raised powder-coated steel planters. The combination of in-ground and raised planters, as proposed along the west and south elevations, will create a stepped or layered design by way of the planter height and plant selection. Along the north property line, more steel planters are proposed against the building as well as vine pockets along the existing wrought iron fence. The proposed plant palette is comprised of a limited selection of ground cover, a climbing vine and low-growing plants that provide a mix of texture, colors and height as shown on Sheet LP-2. As for hardscape features, paved concrete is proposed where pathways or exterior entries are proposed. However, staff recommends condition no. 9 requiring the hardscape in front of the primary building entry be enhanced with a specialty material or design, such as pavers, stamped concrete, or similar decorative treatment.</p>
<p>Preliminary Consultation Comment 14</p> <p>Ensure that the communal open spaces for the project include amenities that will allow for their active use by the residents of the project.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>“The children’s play area will have a play structure for the children as well as seating benches and planter boxes. There will be both synthetic grass for fall protection and hardscape to allow for various activities. The community room will have a kitchenette, TV, and various seating arrangements for activities and gathering opportunities. The lobby area is another opportunity for gathering or lounging.”</p>
<p>Staff Analysis: <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>All common interior spaces and the children’s play area will be programmed for specific uses, such as the laundry room and leasing office. The community room is a flexible space that will also serve as a computer room but could be arranged to accommodate gatherings. The children’s play area will incorporate a play structure as its center piece with hard and soft surfaces and outdoor seating areas, such as benches. The lobby is a welcoming space that is designed to accommodate lounging or gathering.</p>

Programming and Circulation

The building will be situated close to all property lines with pedestrian paths of travel provided along all sides. Landscaping will also be provided within the setback areas along the perimeter of the building with the exception of the east property line.

Primary pedestrian access to the site and building will be from N. Halstead Street through a central lobby. At the front of the building and adjoining the lobby are onsite amenities that include a leasing office, a community room, a laundry room and a children’s play area. All common spaces are on the ground floor and have direct access to the street. A secondary ingress/egress is located along the rear façade. Three vertical circulation cores are provided within the interior of the building that provide access to all levels. This includes two stairwells which are located on the opposite west and east ends of the building and an elevator that is located next to the front (west) stairs. A double-loaded corridor on each level provides access to all units while also connecting to the vertical circulation.

Overall, the programming of the building and site is consistent with the applicable design guidelines and appropriate based on the site characteristics and adjoining context. The programming and circulation of the building fully engage the pedestrian realm and activate the street through a seamless transition.

Orientation

The proposed building communicates a strong orientation towards N. Halstead Street, with a ground floor façade and entry that connects to and adjoins the sidewalk, providing easy access from the street. The lobby and community room on the ground floor features a transparent design, enclosed by tall storefront windows, that allow views into the interior spaces and out

onto the street. Within the lobby is the leasing office. The children's play area is located at the front of the building. The play area will be secured and screened by an 8-foot-tall decorative metal fence, that will span the length of the play area, along Halstead Avenue. The fence would include low planters on both sides, facing the street and the play area. A secured pedestrian gate, at the north end of the fence, provides access from Halstead Avenue to the play area and the rest of the development. The pedestrian gate is of the same height and design. Behind the children's play area is the laundry room. These onsite amenities and public spaces are concentrated on the ground floor at the front of the building to create a greater street presence and, due to high use, are intended to help activate the public realm. As a whole, the building also incorporates a fenestration pattern that is arranged in a clear and readable pattern on all sides.

Height, Massing and Modulation

The proposed building is six-stories and 73'-2" feet high to the parapet. The proposed height is compatible with existing and proposed developments surrounding the project site, which ranges from one to ten stories.

The elevation drawings depict a simple building mass that is rectangular in form and capped by a flat roof. The building establishes a clear base at the ground floor that is differentiated from the upper floors and reflects a consistent treatment. During the Preliminary Consultation, the Design Commission recommended simplification of the design and showing restraint. In response, the building volume is not modulated; instead, there is a strong reliance on achieving an effective fenestration pattern to help break down the building's mass/scale and provide a balanced solid-to-void ratio. The repeated pattern in the punched openings appears effective along all façades.

Architectural Style and Detailing

The proposed building is a contemporary design with a simple, clean form and volume void of any extraneous features or ornamentation. The roof is flat throughout and terminates at a consistent height, but is interrupted by the stair and elevator overruns. The ground floor is intentionally designed to be different from the upper floors in order to create an articulated base in a darker finish. The upper floors are designed with a repeated fenestration pattern on all levels created by a single window type and size, which is highlighted by a dark stucco finish and projecting metal sunshade. There are two proposed sunshade designs: a horizontal (canopy) design that will be installed above the window openings on the south and east elevations and a horizontal canopy with a vertical side panel on the west elevation. Staff recommends condition no. 15 requiring the applicant study the positioning of the vertical sunshades to ensure their functionality (i.e., potentially placing them on the south side of the openings due to the intensity of sunlight and heat gain that will be experienced from the south). Along all façades, expansion joints are introduced to minimize cracking of the stucco surfaces while also creating patterns that complement the fenestration. The size and location of the columns are carefully placed at the ground floor as continuation of the wall planes on the upper levels. The overall architectural treatment and detailing are employed consistently throughout the building to achieve a uniform and clear expression of the design.

Compatibility

The proposed building is compatible with its immediate surroundings, particularly recently completed and anticipated future development, in terms of height, massing, setbacks, materiality and architectural design. The revised design submitted for this review is compatible with both the existing office building east of the project site as well as the multi-family residential buildings across the street, to the west, while also expressing a unique design within the surrounding context.

Materials and Colors

A limited material and color palette comprised of white and grey stucco, aluminum storefront and vinyl windows, decorative metal screens and metal sunshades is proposed to complement the simple design. Although the building is primarily white throughout, colors are used as accents, such as the yellow 'Rayo de Sol' (SW9020) by Sherwin Williams that is proposed to be applied to the underside of the sunshades (with the outer sides proposed to be black). At the ground floor, a metal canopy provides a cover above the entry and thin metal fins will wrap the side of the door while decorative metal panels screen the children's play area. The materials and colors are understated and highlight the clean and simple design while creating a strong base. Although the building is entirely clad in smooth stucco, visual and design interest is achieved through color, including white and dark grey stucco, black window frames, decorative metal screens and the accent yellow color in the window shade. Since there are no variations in the exterior finishes, concerns over how different materials transition is avoided. Nonetheless, changes in color on the same wall plane should be carefully considered, such as the transition from the white stucco to the accent grey stucco around the windows.

The grey color should either be recessed from the white color or framed within expansion joints to define a clear boundary, as recommended in condition no. 11. For the same reason, any soffits in the recessed areas on the ground floor should be painted white to match the wall surface color above, as recommended in condition no. 13. Visual harmony is achieved on the façades with the use of fenestration, colors, and reglet patterning; however, aside from the ground floor, the upper levels are composed of flat wall planes. For this reason, staff recommends that all windows be recessed to create depth, dimensionality, and shadow lines on all façades, as recommended by condition no. 14. With incorporation of these conditions of approval, along with the previously mentioned conditions requiring uniformity in window color, minimized reglet size, decorative hardscape, study of the sunshade color and proportion and placement of the entry canopy, will provide design refinements that will help the building achieve an elevated design consistent with the design guidelines.

Mechanical Screening

The mechanical units serving the project will be located at the center of the roof and installed on a concrete pad, while solar panels will be installed along the periphery of the roof. Both features will be located behind the roof parapet. Section drawings are provided in the submittal and demonstrate that all rooftop mechanical units will be sufficiently screened from view. Other mechanical features, such as the transformer and trash collection area are in separate rooms and are fully enclosed. The north and south elevations show three scuppers and downspouts at the roofline on each side and are appropriately arranged. However, these features should be placed internally within the building walls as recommended by condition no. 2 to maintain an

uninterrupted and clean design throughout the building. Similarly, staff recommends condition no. 3 requiring the applicant to route mechanical venting to the roof or, if infeasible, to show the arrangement of mechanical vents/vent caps on the elevations and consider placing them on secondary elevations if possible and arranged in a clear and logical pattern as well as providing specifications and details of the vent caps.

Landscaping

The proposed landscape design is focused on softening the building foundation at the perimeter of the site within the setback areas as shown on Sheet LP-1. Landscape features will be provided in in-ground planters and raised steel planters (or a combination) to achieve a layered design and heighten visual interest. The largest landscape area is located along the south property line. Landscape proposed along the front elevation is intended to frame the entry, community room and the children's play area. The secondary pathway along the north property line will be enhanced with climbing vines and narrow planters against the wall. No landscape is proposed along the rear property line. The landscape design is consistent throughout the project site and is comprised of drought tolerant groundcovers, low-growing plants and a climbing vine.

Within the children's play area, seating/benches are proposed, but the drawings did not include the design of these features. Condition of approval no. 10 is recommended to provide elevation and detail drawings of the seating/benches.

Lighting

A lighting plan was not provided with the submittal; however, overall lighting of the building, walkways, and landscape areas, particularly at the ground floor, should be considered for safety and an enhanced design quality of the building during nighttime hours. Staff recommends condition of approval no. 12 requiring a lighting plan/design to be submitted and manufacturer's specifications provided for all light fixtures to be reviewed during plan check, to ensure compatibility of the fixtures with the design of the building. Additionally, staff recommends condition no. 16 requiring the exterior lighting temperature not rise above 3,000 kelvin.

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. 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 density bonus and is eligible for up to four concessions as afforded by the State's Density Bonus Law (SDBL, Government Code Section 65915).

Density Bonus

The SDBL allows an increase in density, with no maximum, by-right, if the project is located within one-half mile of a major transit stop and one hundred percent of the units, exclusive of a manager's unit or units, are for lower income households. The project site is located within a

quarter-mile distance from the Sierra Madre Villa “A” Line station, which qualifies as a “major transit stop”. All the proposed units, exclusive of the one manager unit, are for lower-income households.

The base density for this site, as established by the Land Use Element of the General Plan, is 87 dwelling units per acre. This yields 26 allowed base units for the subject 12,537 square foot site. The project proposes 48 units, 47 are affordable units for lower income households and one is a manager’s unit.

Density Bonus – Incentives

Since the project is located within one-half mile of a major transit stop and 100% of the units, exclusive of a manager’s unit, are for lower income households, SDBL allows a height increase of up to three additional stories, or 33 feet. SDBL also eliminates a minimum parking requirement.

The maximum height for the site is 60’. The project proposes a height of 73’-2”; an increase of 13’-2” above the maximum and within the permitted range described above.

The required parking for the project is a range, where the minimum required is 67 and the maximum that can be provided is 81 parking spaces. The project does not propose any parking, which is permitted by SDBL.

Density Bonus – Concessions

Since one hundred percent of the units, exclusive of a manager’s unit or units, are for lower income households, SDBL allows the project to receive up to four concessions. The project includes following concessions:

- To allow a zero-foot front yard setback, where the minimum required is 10 feet, pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.32.070, Table 3-8.
- To allow a zero-foot side and rear yard setback, where the minimum required is 10 feet, pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.50.350.C.2.a.
- To reduce the landscape area requirement to 3.8 percent of the lot area, where a minimum of 15 percent of the lot area shall be provided with planting, pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.32.070, Table 3-8.
- To reduce the open space requirement in Zoning Code Section 17.50.350, by not providing the minimum open space requirement of 30 percent of the net floor area and not landscaping the courtyard (children’s play area).

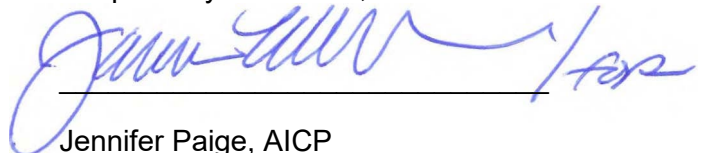
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This project has been determined to be exempt from environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), §15332, Class 32, In-Fill Development Projects. Based on the technical studies prepared by EcoTierra Consulting (Attachment D), an environmental consulting firm under contract to the City, the project would not have the potential to result in significant impacts related to air quality and noise. The project is consistent with the General Plan, East Pasadena Specific Plan and Zoning designation. The project site is 12,537 square feet (less than five acres) and surrounded by other commercial and residential uses. The project site has been previously developed and graded, and currently is vacant and unimproved. The Department of Transportation reviewed the application and determined, based on the number of residential units, that the project is below the threshold for the preparation of a transportation CEQA analysis. The project site is located in an urban area where utilities and public services can be adequately served. Furthermore, there are no unusual circumstances that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class.

CONCLUSION:

The project design has satisfactorily addressed the comments provided during Preliminary Consultation and is consistent with the design guidelines in the East Pasadena Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial & Multi-Family Residential Districts. Staff recommends approval of the application for Consolidated Design Review for the project with the conditions of approval described above and included in Attachment A, which will be reviewed during the plan check phase.

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. Current Plans & Elevations
- C. Responses to Preliminary Consultation Comments
- D. Environmental Documentation