



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

DATE: JUNE 25, 2024
TO: DESIGN COMMISSION
FROM: JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
ADDRESS: 713-719 LOCUST STREET
SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION (DHP2024-00098)
NEW CONSTRUCTION OF A FIVE-AND-SIX-STORY, 27-UNIT MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Project Description:

The project proposes the demolition of three non-historic multi-family residential buildings housing a total of seven units, and the construction of a new five-and-six-story, multi-family residential development with 27-units and one level of partially subterranean parking accommodating 19 parking spaces. The new development will be comprised of two buildings with a gross square footage total of 26,525 square feet.

Neighborhood Context:

The project site is located within the Residential Multi-family subdistrict of the Central District Specific Plan (CD-RM-87, 0-87 units per acre). The surrounding context consists of multi-family residential developments between two and seven stories in height and reflective of a variety of architectural styles and construction periods to the east, west, and south of the project site, with the 210 freeway located north of the project site. Immediate surrounding adjacencies include the following:

- Immediate west (709 Locust Street): a 10-unit, multi-family residential building constructed in 1958. The building is two-stories in height and is designed in a Mid-Century Ranch style.
- Immediate east (729 Locust Street): an 8-unit, multi-family residential building constructed in 1962. The building is two-stories in height and is designed in a Mid-Century Shoe-Box style.
- Directly south of the site, and across Locust Street (700 Locust Street): a 51-unit, multi-family residential building constructed in 1987. The building is three-stories in height and is designed as a contemporary courtyard-style building.
- Directly north of the site, and across East Corson Street is the 210 freeway.

West of the project site, across N. El Molino Ave. (267 N. El Molino Ave.) is the Lukens House, a designated historic resource listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The building is a single-family residence designed in the Queen Anne Style, and constructed in 1896.

Site & Architectural Design:

The project site is located on an L-shaped, 13,168 square-foot, through lot with dual frontages along Locust Street to the south, and East Corson Street to the north. The applicant is proposing a five-and-six-story multi-family residential development with one level of partially subterranean parking. A total of 19 parking spaces will be located in the partially subterranean parking garage with an access drive located off of Locust Street. The project will be designed as two buildings separated by a courtyard garden, and connected through open-air, multi-level circulation walkways, with the north building having a frontage along East Corson Street, and the south building having a frontage along Locust Street. The gross square footage of the buildings will be approximately 26,500 square feet and will house a total of 27 residential units.

The ground floor of the south building will feature one residential unit, and amenity spaces including a gym and community room; the ground floor of the north building will house two residential units. Common open space is proposed as a courtyard garden along with green space at the north end of the project site along East Corson Street. The second and fourth floors are mirrored, and will accommodate six residential units; the third floor will also accommodate six residential units. The fifth level will provide five residential units, and the sixth floor will provide one, three-bedroom unit. The south building, overlooking Locust Street, will have five floors, with an approximate height of 58 feet, while the north building overlooking East Corson Street, will have six floors with an approximate height of 68 feet.

Proposed setbacks for the building include 10 feet at both street frontages, and five feet at the sides. The multi-family residential development that abuts the property to the west currently shares a driveway with the project site, and this shared access will be retained through side yard setbacks with the new development.

The project is modern in design with an expressive composition of undulating facades with varied applications of materials, inset and projecting balconies, angled wall planes, and chamfered windows carried across the two buildings.

The applicant proposes a preliminary material palette consisting of board-formed concrete, ceramic glazed tile, vertical wood siding, smooth trowel plaster, and standing-seam metal paneling.

Height Averaging:

Pursuant to the development standards of the CDSP, the maximum height for this subdistrict is 63 feet. However, with the approval of the Design Commission, the height limit may be increased to 78 feet for up to 30 percent of the building footprint using Height Averaging. The north building has a maximum proposed height of 67'-9" which exceeds the 63-foot height limit. Additional information is required to determine if the project complies with the Height Averaging standards of the CDSP. The project's compliance with Height Averaging requirements will be reviewed during Concept Design Review.

Trees:

A tree inventory provided by the applicant notes the existence of one on-site tree (Tree #02, Magnolia grandiflora/Southern Magnolia) with a DBH of 18-inches, which is also proposed for removal. Southern Magnolias are protected with a DBH of 20-inches or more, and therefore Tree #02 is not subject to the City's Tree Protection Ordinance. The other trees listed on the tree inventory are one public tree along Locust Street (Tree #01), and three public trees along East Corson Street (Tree #s 03, 04, 05), all of which are protected as public street trees and are proposed to be retained.

Applicable Design Guidelines:

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

Previous/Existing Applications:

- Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR). A PPR comment letter was provided to the applicant in September 2023.

Approvals Needed/Project Scheduling:

- Concept and Final Design Review (Design Commission)
- Building Permits (Building & Safety Staff)

CEQA Clearance:

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

Staff Observations:

Applicable Design Guidelines:

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

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

- 4.11: Development that is Compatible. Require that development demonstrates a contextual relationship with neighboring structures and sites addressing such elements as building scale, massing, orientation, setbacks, buffering, the arrangement of shared and private open spaces, visibility, privacy, automobile, and truck access, impacts of noise and lighting, landscape quality, infrastructure, and aesthetics.
- 4.12: Transitions in Scale. Require that the scale and massing of new development in higher-density centers and corridors provide appropriate transitions in building height and bulk and are sensitive to the physical and visual character of adjoining lower-density neighborhoods.

- 5.2: Pedestrian-Oriented Development. Require buildings in the Central District, Transit Villages, Neighborhood Villages, and along corridors specified by the adopted specific plans to be located along the street/sidewalk and designed to promote pedestrian activity. This can be accomplished by incorporating transparent facades, small plazas, and dining areas; while locating parking to the rear or underground and placing primary entries on the street.
- 6.1: Sense of Place and History. Require new development and changes to existing development to be located and designed to respect the defining elements of Pasadena's character and history such as its grid street pattern, block scale, public realm, courtyards, paseos, alleys, neighborhoods and districts, building massing and heights, significant architecture, and relationship to the mountains and Arroyo Seco.
- 6.2: Established Neighborhoods. Preserve, protect, and enhance established residential neighborhoods by providing appropriate transitions between these and adjoining areas. Require new development to complement and respond to the existing physical characteristics that contribute to the overall character and livability of the neighborhood.
- 7.3: Compatibility. Require that new and adaptively re-used buildings are designed to respect and complement the defining built form, massing, scale, modulation, and architectural detailing of their contextual setting.
- 23.1 Character and Design: Design and modulate buildings to avoid the sense of "blocky" and undifferentiated building mass, incorporate well-defined entries, and use building materials, colors, and architectural details complementing the neighborhood, while allowing flexibility for distinguished design solutions.
- 23.3: Landscaped Setbacks and Walkways: Provide appropriate setbacks, consistent with the surrounding neighborhood, along the street frontage and, where there are setbacks, ensure adequate landscaping is provided.
- 23.4 Development Transitions. Ensure sensitive transitions in building scale between buildings in multi-family residential areas and lower-scale buildings in adjoining residential areas.

Design-Related Goals and Policies of the Central District Specific Plan:

- Policy 5c: Scaled Transitions. Provide upper floor stepbacks where new development is adjacent to lower density residential districts and historic resources, and where development fronts Green Street to accommodate mature tree canopies.
- Policy 5g: Transparency. Require façade transparency, particularly on the ground floor, that improves architectural design and connection to the street, and restrict the use of blank walls in new development.
- Policy 5h: Materials. Use durable, high-quality that exhibit a sense of permanence on all sides of a building, but particularly at the street level and entrances.

- Policy 6c: Quality Design. Introduce open space design standards that apply universal design to maximize the comfort, utility, visual appeal, and programming potential of each open space for human activity and social interaction.
- Policy 6f: Connections. Encourage ground level pedestrian passages and common spaces with a strong functional and visual connection to the street for safety; use integrated site planning to solidify links between interior and exterior.
- Policy 6h: Point of Interest. Consider adding a focal element; for instance, a sculpture, fountain or art piece to outdoor space.
- Policy 6i: Urban Greening. Use all open space areas to further environmental goals – such as carbon sequestration, drought tolerance, and reducing the urban heat island effect – through tree planting, stormwater capture, and native landscaping.

Potential Design Issues:

- Setbacks and relationship to public realm. Revise the first-floor level of the project to ensure the project is oriented towards the pedestrian and provides adequate street activation. If it is infeasible to lower the height of the podium deck, consider additional transparency along the street frontages such as the balustrade walls. Treat the Corson Street elevation equally with the Locust Street elevation in materials, transparency, residential scale, and interconnectivity to the public realm, particularly at the ground plane. Additionally, provide residential-scaled building typologies at the street frontages such as covered stoops, porches, and street-facing unit entries.
- Contextual compatibility. The building will be several stories higher than the immediately adjacent surrounding context. Consider how this mid-block building provides appropriate transitional scale and added density, while reducing the possibility of overwhelming the established scale of the street block.
- Consistency in building form. Maintain consistency in building form by establishing and maintaining clear datum lines, particularly at horizontal fenestration alignments and roof edges. Maintain a clear dialogue between the two proposed buildings through consistency in building form, patterning, and material application. The application's referenced case studies have a clear and expressive idiom that is simple, yet dynamic. Consider simplifying the design approach to better reflect these case studies.
- Materials. Apply materials consistently to maintain traditional hierarchy and building datum lines. The base of the buildings utilize a combination of materials including wood and tile. Traditionally, when a building has multiple building finishes, the heavier materials are located at the base to visually ground the building. Reconsider the use of wood and other lighter materials at the base. Also ensure there are no coplanar material transitions and consider applying the materials to follow the massing and programming. Additionally, be consistent in the treatment of the numerous exposed soffits at all locations. Finally, consider the overall building idiom as a building form identified by distinctive material cladding.

- Enhanced circulation patterning. Provide an enhanced and clearly demarcated entrance to the building from the Locust and Corson Street edges. Consider a framed entrance element that outlines the entries and accentuates the interior circulation corridors. Treat the first-floor corridors as activated colonnades with transparency at the abutting wall planes, enhanced pavement, building materials, and lighting. The catwalk bridge system currently divides the courtyard area. Reconsider the necessity of the structure, and, if required, consider shifting the structure to provide a more expansive and enhanced courtyard area. Also, begin to consider the railings required for this structure and ensure they provide appropriate levels of transparency.
- Fenestration patterning. Establish a clear rhythm of fenestrations and fenestration typologies, particularly the chamfered openings at the side elevations. Ensure there is consistency and logic in the solid-to-void patterning throughout the building facades. Also, establish a consistent pattern of transparency at particular features such as the slatted walls at the inset balconies.
- Ensure a clear structural idiom is proposed. The ground level indicates some columns to be independent, while others are shown as engaged with the adjacent building wall. Portions of the building also cantilever; however, this is not expressed fully as building idiom. If the building structure is part of the design, ensure that it is fully expressed.

Project Scheduling/Sequencing:

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

Respectfully Submitted,




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Department

Prepared by:



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Reviewed by:



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Attachments:

- A. Current Planning (Zoning) compliance matrix
- B. Plans, Diagrams, and Site Photographs