

## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** MARCH 10, 2020

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

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

**SUBJECT:** APPLICATION FOR MAJOR CHANGES TO AN APPROVED CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW  
A NEW SIX-STORY, 232-UNIT RESIDENTIAL PROJECT AND EXTERIOR REMODELING OF AN EXISTING PANDA INN RESTAURANT AND THE FIRST TWO FLOORS OF THE EXISTING GATEWAY METRO TOWER BUILDING  
3452-3488 E. FOOTHILL BOULEVARD

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#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The staff recommends that the Commission make the required findings for the environmental determination, tree removal and Major Changes to an Approved Project, subject to the conditions of approval as outlined below.

#### **Environmental Determination**

Find that the application for Changes to an Approved Project was subject to environmental review in the Categorical Exemption adopted by the Design Commission for Concept Design Review for this project on August 28, 2018, and that there are no changed circumstances or new information which would require further environmental review.

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

Acknowledge that, in conjunction with its approval of Concept Design Review on August 28, 2018, the Design Commission approved the removal of one protected mature tree and that this application is consistent with that decision.

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

1. Find that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the modification of the original Concept Design Review approval, specifically the applicant's proposal for a redesign of the previously proposed remodeling of the Panda Inn restaurant; and

2. Find that the proposed major changes are consistent with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the design guidelines in the East Pasadena Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial & Multi-Family Residential Districts; and
3. Based on these findings, approve the application for Major Changes to an Approved Project subject to the following conditions, to be reviewed and approved by the Design Commission during Final Design Review:

**Conditions:**

1. The conditions of approval and recommendation in the original approval letter dated August 28, 2018 listed below shall continue to apply to this revised project:
  - a. Provide elevations, materials specifications and architectural details of the arcing architectural element that is proposed to engage the two new buildings at the center of the site.
  - b. Provide clear demolition floor plans and elevations for both the Panda Inn and Gateway Metro Center remodeling.
  - c. Provide additional details of the green screen elements proposed to be attached to the parking structure, including product literature, physical samples, finishes, and attachment details. Provide landscape plans depicting locations of planters within the parking structure that would support the green screens as well as the specific plant material proposed.
  - d. The fire lane area at the rear of the site shall either be paved with the lighter color concrete proposed for pedestrian zones or turfblock. Provide details of all transitions between paving materials and colors.
  - e. Provide materials samples and extensive architectural details and diagrams of the metal screening and wooden slat features proposed on the restaurant building. The placement and proportions of these elements shall be further refined to follow a clear and demonstrated logic.
  - f. A lot tie will be required due to construction proposed to cross property lines.
  - g. One of the following two options shall be implemented to reduce health risks to future occupants of the buildings due to proximity to the 210 freeway. An alternative comparable solution that reduces cancer risks to below 10 per million may be provided subject to Planning staff approval.
    - Option A:
      1. For the North and South Residential Buildings, the applicant shall provide forced air mechanical ventilation with deep pleat (minimum 5-inch) fresh air filtration screens on outside air intake ducts for all residential units. The filter screens should have a minimum MERV

- 16 rating, capable of removing at least 95% of the particulate matter including fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and ultrafine particulate matter (less than 0.1 microns in diameter).
  2. For the North and South Residential Buildings, the applicant shall equip each residential unit with window and sliding door sensors that automatically trigger operation of the HVAC system when they are opened to create a positive pressure system within the residential unit.
  3. The applicant shall, at the time of lease signing for individual residential units with separate HVAC systems, provide a brochure notifying the future residents of the need for maintaining the filter screens and keeping windows closed to ensure adequate fresh air filtration. In addition, the applicant shall record a notice of the risk hazard of diesel particulates and the need for screen maintenance in the property title and include this notice with lease agreements. A copy of the Health Risk Assessment Report prepared for 3452–3488 East Foothill Boulevard Project will also be provided to all future residents. Lastly, the applicant shall be responsible for replacing HVAC filter screens in accordance with manufacturer recommendations.
  4. The applicant shall weatherproof windows and door with caulking and weather-stripping that is rated to last at least 20 years.
- Option B:
1. For the North Residential Building, the applicant shall provide forced air mechanical ventilation with deep pleat (minimum 5-inch) fresh air filtration screens on outside air intake ducts for all residential units. In addition, for all the residential units located directly along the south side of the building facing towards the I-210 Freeway, the applicant shall design and locate the air intakes providing the air supply to these units at the rooftop level only, and install the fresh air filtration screens on each HVAC unit serving these residential units. All filter screens installed at the building should have a minimum MERV 13 rating, capable of removing at a minimum 50% of the particulate matter including fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and ultrafine particulate matter (less than 0.1 microns in diameter).
  2. For the South Residential Building, the applicant shall provide forced air mechanical ventilation with deep pleat (minimum 5-inch) fresh air filtration screens for each residential HVAC unit that will have air supplied from intakes located at the rooftop level only. The filter screens should have a minimum MERV 13 rating, capable of removing at a minimum 50% of the particulate matter including fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and ultrafine particulate matter (less than 0.1 microns in diameter).
  3. For the North and South Residential Buildings, the applicant shall equip each residential unit with window and sliding door sensors that automatically trigger operation of the HVAC system when they

- are opened to create a positive pressure system within the residential unit.
4. The applicant shall, at the time of lease signing for individual residential units with separate HVAC systems, provide a brochure notifying the future residents of the need for maintaining the filter screens and keeping windows closed to ensure adequate fresh air filtration. In addition, the applicant shall record a notice of the risk hazard of diesel particulates and the need for screen maintenance in the property title and include this notice with lease agreements. A copy of the Health Risk Assessment Report prepared for 3452–3488 East Foothill Boulevard Project will also be provided to all future residents. Lastly, the applicant shall be responsible for replacing HVAC filter screens in accordance with manufacturer recommendations.
  5. The applicant shall weatherproof windows and door with caulking and weather-stripping that is rated to last at least 20 years.
- h. Continue to study the verticality of the residential buildings to better relate to the New Formalism style.
  - i. Continue to study and refine the pedestrian character of the town plaza, ensuring that the ground floor elevations of the buildings along this area relate to the use of the plaza as a pedestrian zone. Review the usage of the different elements of the town plaza to ensure that it is designed as a cohesively planned space. Provide extensive details for the areas that are depicted as pedestrian zone and town plaza including paving/hardscape materials, landscaping, furniture, amenities that will be used to encourage the use of the pedestrian zone and town plaza and clearly depicting the delineation between the vehicular and pedestrian space with focus on the areas of transition where the bollards will be located to ensure that there is sufficient detail on the exact appearance of these transitions.
  - j. The plaque proposed to be installed on the Panda Inn building shall be better integrated into the design of the building.
  - k. Option A for the trellis structure on the office tower shall be pursued and detailed for Final Design Review.
  - l. **Recommendation:** Review the materiality and patterning of the stone panels proposed to be added to the ground floor of the office building facing Foothill Boulevard to better relate to the proposed changes to the Panda Inn building. Study the possibility of amending or adding to the vertical panels on the sides of the building materials such as green screen, metal screening panels, and/or lighting. Provide additional details on either landscaping elements or metal panels or similar features proposed to screen the existing panels and columns at the base of the office building.

2. The applicant shall comply with the conditions in Attachment B from the Departments of Transportation and Public Works (dated February 7, 2020 and February 6, 2020, respectively).
3. Incorporate a prominent pedestrian-oriented entrance into the north elevation of the restaurant building, which may be in addition to the entrance proposed on the west elevation.
4. Provide sight-line studies of the restaurant building from the public right-of-way and further details to illustrate the visibility and character of the rooftop mechanical projections. If mechanical equipment is publicly visible, it shall be screened in a manner consistent with the design of the building and the details and materials specifications shall be provided for review during Final Design Review.
5. Revise the publicly visible east elevation of the restaurant building to break up the blank wall condition at that location. Solutions may include, but are not limited to, wall plane articulation, creation of openings or recesses in the wall plane, changes in materials and/or landscaping.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

On August 28, 2018, the Design Commission approved an application for Concept Design Review for construction of a 232-unit multi-family residential project and the exterior remodeling of the existing Panda Inn restaurant building, and the first two floors of the Gateway Metro Center office building. The project applicant subsequently engaged a different architect to redesign and expand the Panda Inn restaurant. A new application and plans have been submitted to reflect the redesign of the restaurant building as well as the additional underground parking required to accommodate the proposed additions to the building.

#### **Project Overview**

- General Plan Designation: High Mixed Use (0 – 3.00 FAR)
- Zoning: EPSP-d2-CG & EPSP-d2-CG-B (East Pasadena Specific Plan, Subarea d2, General Commercial)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines include 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 & Multi-Family Residential Districts.
- Site: The site is comprised of three adjoining lots totaling 4.3 acres on the south side of E. Foothill Boulevard between N. Halstead Street and N. Rosemead Boulevard. It is irregular in shape and is currently developed with an 11-story office building, a one-story Panda Inn restaurant with surface parking lots between and behind these two buildings. The southern edge of the site adjoins the 210 Freeway. A tree inventory provided with the application identifies 68 trees on site, one of which is a protected mature tree, as well as two street trees.

- Surroundings: Surrounding properties include one- to-three-story commercial, office, and institutional buildings and surface parking lots along East Foothill Boulevard, as well as newer five-story residential buildings and a parking structure adjacent to the Sierra Madre Villa Gold Line Station. The Design Commission recently approved a new six-story, 19-unit residential project adjacent to the site at 170 N. Halstead St., which would share an access driveway with this project from Halstead Street. Nearby historic resources include Fire Station #10 (now #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 six-story, 232-unit residential project in two buildings on an existing surface parking lot area behind the existing Gateway Metro Tower and Panda Inn buildings, as well as major exterior remodeling of both existing buildings (limited to the first two floors of the office tower). One protected mature tree, as well as 67 non-protected trees, are proposed to be removed to accommodate the project. Parking would be provided in two subterranean levels, two at-grade levels in the proposed northerly new building, and in a five-story above-ground structure at the rear of the site.
- Site Design: The two existing buildings are proposed to remain in their current locations and the parking lot between them is proposed to be reconfigured. The existing driveways flanking the Gateway Metro Center building are proposed to be retained and the existing driveway accessing the surface parking area west of the Panda Inn building is proposed to be eliminated. The driveways west and south of the existing office building would be used to access the subterranean parking, which is designated to serve the office building and north residential building. The 26'-wide driveway east of the office building would be used to access Panda Inn parking only and would extend to become a fire lane along the west and south sides of the south building. The smaller northerly building is sited approximately 7'9" from the south façade of the Panda Inn building and the southerly building is set back 26' from the rear of the northerly building. The northerly building is proposed to have zero setback from the east property line while the southerly building is proposed to have a 10' setback from this line.
- Architectural Style: Contemporary with references to New Formalism
- Developer: CFT NV Developments, LLC
- Architects: Lim Chang Rohling & Associates (residential)  
McKentley Malak Architects (office)  
Architects Orange (restaurant)
- Landscape Architect: EPT Design

#### **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED CHANGES:**

Please note that the applicant submittal (Attachment A) includes all the sheets from the approved Concept Design Review plans that are affected by the proposed changes. Each approved sheet is followed by a new sheet reflecting the proposed changes. The sheets are each marked at the top with notations reflecting either "Originally approved concept design

review sheet” or “Proposed changes” as appropriate. In addition to the major changes proposed to be made to the restaurant building, some minor changes are also proposed to be made to the residential building. The following changes are proposed to be made to the previously approved design:

- Underground Parking:
  - At the first two levels of underground parking, two rows of additional parking spaces are proposed to extend north from the previously proposed extent of the parking structure to the property line. A partial third floor of parking is now proposed to be added.
- Site plan:
  - Two small additions are proposed on the east and west sides of the existing restaurant building, set back from the north property line in compliance with current setback requirements (which are greater than when the building was originally built, resulting in a stepped configuration on the north end). Surface parking adjacent to the restaurant is also proposed to be reduced from nine spaces to four spaces.
- Residential elevations:
  - Minor changes are proposed to fenestration, patterning of recesses and screened openings at the parking levels and placement of materials in response to the Commission’s conditions of approval from Concept Design Review.
- Restaurant floor plan
  - The main entry to the restaurant is proposed to be relocated from the north side of the building facing the street to the west side facing the surface parking area.
- Restaurant elevations
  - The design and materiality of the restaurant elevations are proposed to change substantially from the previously approved design. The north and west elevations are proposed to consist of floor-to-ceiling storefront glazing with a defined transom line, heavy, dark-colored metal-clad mullions and solid walls clad in grey travertine stone at either end. The main entry at the center of the west elevation is also proposed to include an area of solid travertine-clad wall surrounding a pair of tall, solid wood entry doors. The south and east elevations are proposed to be more solid, with the east elevation having no openings and the south elevation having thin vertical strips of floor-to-ceiling glazing. Both elevations are proposed to be clad in travertine stone at the ends and stucco in the center. Signage is proposed to be brushed bronze metal and will be installed on both the north and west elevations. The building is also proposed to have a more substantial cornice at the roofline, which is proposed to extend beyond the face of the building on the west side.

## **ANALYSIS:**

The findings required to approve an application for Major Changes to an Approved Project are the same findings required to approve the original application for design review (i.e., consistency with the purposes of design review and the applicable design guidelines) as well as the additional finding that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the change. In this case, the major changes to the project were necessitated by the applicant engaging a new architect to substantially redesign the previously proposed restaurant remodel. Staff finds that this changed circumstance is sufficient to justify approval of changes to the design.

The redesigned restaurant building is compatible with the design of the other components of the project and incorporates more expansive street-facing glazing than was previously proposed, thereby improving the building's relationship to the street. However, both the East Pasadena Specific Plan design guidelines and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial & Multi-Family Residential Districts recommend that buildings have entrances facing the street to enhance the pedestrian character of the street, particularly in transit-oriented districts such as the proposed project location. As such, staff recommends that a condition of approval be included in this decision requiring the incorporation of a prominent entrance on the north elevation, which may be in addition to the entrance currently proposed on the west elevation. In addition, the elevations and renderings appear to depict rooftop mechanical equipment that may be publicly visible and, therefore, require screening. Staff recommends a condition requiring sight-line studies from the street and further details of proposed rooftop projections. If the rooftop mechanical equipment is publicly visible, equipment screening will be required. The equipment screen will require details and materials/finish specifications to be submitted for review during Final Design Review. Finally, the east elevation will be highly visible to the public and is currently proposed as a blank wall with no openings and minimal articulation in the form of differing materials between the ends and center of the elevation. As such, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring this elevation to be further broken down. Means of achieving this may include wall plane articulation, creation of openings or recesses in the wall plane, changes in materials and/or landscaping.

## **Time Limit**

PMC §17.64.050.D.1 states, "If a major change is approved within three years of the initial approval, the three-year time limit for the entitlement shall start on the date on which the major change was approved. Extensions to the major change may be requested. Any subsequent requests for a major change shall not reset the time limits." Pursuant to PMC §17.64.050.C.4, Concept Design Review approval is valid for one year rather than the standard three-year time limit for other entitlements granted outside single-family residential zoning districts. The initial application was approved on August 28, 2018 and the application for Major Changes was submitted on August 13, 2019. As this application for a major change has been requested in the first year of approval, if approved, the applicant would have one year from the date of approval of this application in which to submit a complete application for Final Design Review.



**CONCLUSION:**

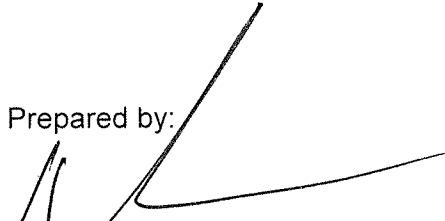
The applicant has presented information to support a finding that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the proposed changes. Staff finds that, upon implementation of conditions of approval, the changes will be consistent with the applicable design guidelines and recommends that the Commission approve the changes with the conditions noted in the report.

Respectfully submitted,

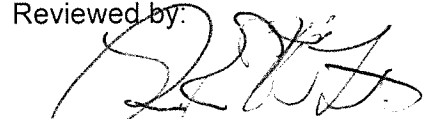


David M. Reyes  
Director of Planning & Community Development  
Department

Prepared by:

  
Kevin Johnson, Senior Planner

Reviewed by:

  
Leon E. White, Principal Planner

Attachments:

- A. Approved and proposed plans and elevations
- B. Concept Design Review decision letter dated August 30, 2018, without attachments
- C. Comments from the Departments of Transportation and Public Works dated February 7, 2020 and February 6, 2020, *respectively*