



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: NOVEMBER 10, 2020

TO: DESIGN COMMISSION

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

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR FINAL DESIGN REVIEW
MAJOR EXTERIOR MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING OFFICE BUILDING AT
101 SOUTH MARENGO AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION:

The staff recommends that the Commission:

Environmental Determination

Find that the application for Final Design Review was subject to environmental review in the Categorical Exemption adopted by the Design Commission for Concept Design Review on August 25, 2020, 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 no trees are proposed to be removed in conjunction with this project.

Findings for Final Design Approval

1. Find that the project complies with the conditions of Concept Design Review;
2. Find that the project is consistent with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan and the Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan; and,
3. Based on these findings, approve the application for Final Design Review subject to the following conditions, which shall be subject to staff review and approval prior to issuance of a building permit unless otherwise stated:

Conditions:

1. Note on the storefront schedule on sheet A00.85 that the existing ground-level storefronts will remain except in two locations on the west elevation as noted on the demolition and proposed floor plans and elevations.
2. Clarify in the demolition plans and elevations that the existing parapet will be removed and reconstructed, with no increase in height over the existing condition. Ensure that all references to the parapet indicate the correct height (46”). Provide the heights of all new proposed rooftop appurtenances and a calculation of the area of the roof covered by all existing-to-remain and proposed new appurtenances, which shall not cover more than 25% of the roof area.
3. A copy of this decision letter shall be included in the plans submitted for building permit plan check.
4. The lighting temperature specified on the final plans shall not rise above 3,000 kelvin for all proposed exterior fixtures. Replacement lighting elements should be regulated by maintenance staff in the future.
5. An 8' x 8' minimum mock-up panel of the building finishes shall be provided and reviewed by staff prior to construction and installation.
6. This project will be subject to 50%, 75%, and 100% inspection points and sign-off by staff of the Design & Historic Preservation section to ensure that the project is constructed as indicated and specified in the decision letter and that all work is performed consistent with the approved plans.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The application presents design revisions in response to the conditions of approval from the previous Concept Design Review phase in addition to providing plans that are more detailed, elevations, sections and color and material information for the project. The current drawings are more fully detailed and present a palette of materials that is consistent with the design of the building. Upon reviewing the drawings in detail, staff recommends approval of the application with the conditions of approval outlined above and explained within this report.

BACKGROUND:

On August 25, 2020, the Design Commission approved an application for Concept Design Review for major alterations to the existing building at 101 S. Marengo Avenue. This application is for Final Design Review of the same project.

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: High Mixed Use (0 – 3.00 FAR)

- Zoning: CD-1 (Central District Specific Plan, Old Pasadena Sub-district) on the west side of the site & CD-2 (Central District Specific Plan, Civic Center/Midtown Sub-district) on the east side of the site.
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan and, the Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan.
- Site: The site is comprised of a single two-acre lot on the entire block on the south side of E. Green Street between S. Marengo Avenue and S. Arroyo Boulevard. It is square in shape and is currently developed with a five-story office building surrounded by an open plaza and with semi-subterranean parking.
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties include the two-story Pasadena Conference Center building and the six-story Paseo Colorado building to the east; a three-to-four-story parking structure to the north; a two-story brick building, vacant lot and the one-to-three-story former Pasadena Winter Garden (now Public Storage) buildings to the west; and a four-story office building and surface parking lot to the south. The project site lies between the Old Pasadena Historic District, the Civic Center Financial Historic District and the Pasadena Civic Center Historic District. Nearby historic buildings, which may be contributing to these historic districts, include the Pasadena Winter Garden (1940, Cyril Bennett) at 171 S. Arroyo Parkway to the west, the Security Pacific Building (1924, Curlett and Beelman) at 230-234 E. Colorado Boulevard to the northeast, the Citizens Savings Building (1914, Parkinson & Bergstrom) at 18 N. Marengo Avenue to the northeast; and the Chamber of Commerce Building (1905, Parkinson & Bergstrom) at 117 E. Colorado Blvd. to the northwest.
- Project Description: The project involves major alterations to the existing office building, including the creation of window openings and re-cladding the building with new GFRC material to match the existing travertine as closely as possible.
- Site Design: The building is located at the southwest corner of the site, with an open plaza with brick-framed pebble paving, concrete benches and raised planters, and a large circular water fountain with tile cladding to the north and east of the building. The existing site design is not proposed to change.
- Architectural Style: Contemporary
- Developer: Atlas Capital Group
- Architect: RCH Studios

ANALYSIS:

Conditions of Concept Design Review:

Below are the Commission's conditions of approval from Concept Design Review for the project, as well as the architect's responses and staff's comments. See Attachment A for the complete

set of revised plans, elevations, wall sections and architectural details as well as Attachments D and E for materials specifications and additional details and imagery.

Concept Design Review Conditions, August 25, 2020:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
1. Further explore ways to improve pedestrian access on Green Street.	“During the Concept Design Review, we demonstrated that it would not be possible to add a second pedestrian connection from Green Street up to the plaza, due to the existing configuration of parking stalls and mechanical ventilation within the garage, as highlighted in our response to the Commission (08/19/20), particularly concern #2. However, a new plant palette on the Plaza and perimeter planters will soften the edge and allow for the potential for landscape to flow over the precast wall. In addition, we continue to ideate on other ways to enhance the pedestrian experience along Green Street and add programming to the Plaza to encourage activity throughout.”	The design team has studied and responded to the Commission’s request, but has not identified a means to improve pedestrian access on Green Street. The condition to further explore this issue has been satisfactorily addressed.
2. Explore the possibility of creating a through-block connection between Marengo Avenue and Arroyo Parkway at the southern end of the block.	“We studied the possibility of implementing a through-block pedestrian connection from Marengo Avenue to Arroyo Parkway, on the south side of the building. Due to the loading dock location at the south end of the property on Arroyo Parkway, it was not feasible to add new vertical circulation to accommodate pedestrian access in this area.”	The design team has studied and responded to the Commission’s request, but has not identified a means to create a through-block connection between Marengo Avenue and Arroyo Parkway. The condition to further explore this issue has been satisfactorily addressed.
3. Explore ways to improve the façade to clearly address the location of the entrance to the building.	“An entry canopy with the address numbers now marks the main entry to the building. The “L-shaped” form of the canopy allows for a clear view by pedestrians entering the site from Marengo, as well as those who may be arriving via the NW corner stair. This canopy feature will include linear downlights so that its form will be clearly outlined at night, as well as up lights to create a halo on the underside of the existing soffit.”	The proposed entry canopy with lighting and address number sign clearly demarcates the building entry in a manner that is consistent with the design of the building. This condition has been satisfactorily addressed.

Concept Design Review Conditions, August 25, 2020:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
4. Provide photorealistic images, including pedestrian-level visualizations from all three streets on which the property has frontage.	“Pedestrian-level visualizations showing the project within its surrounding context have been prepared with views from Marengo Avenue, Green Street, and Arroyo Parkway. The exhibits are attached.”	This condition has been satisfactorily addressed.
5. Explore ways to salvage the travertine cladding and solutions to reuse it in the project to the extent possible.	“Travertine fragments salvaged from the existing facades will be reused as a feature material within the planters in the new courtyard.”	This condition has been satisfactorily addressed.
6. Explore differentiation between the Arroyo Parkway and Marengo Avenue facades in light of the existence of a plaza vs. a street wall and the directionality.	“We studied ways to differentiate the Marengo Avenue and Arroyo Parkway facades, and found that bringing a human scale element to mark the main entry to the building most directly addressed the difference between the pedestrian scale of the Plaza and the vehicular thoroughfare that is Arroyo Parkway. Exhibits illustrating the entry canopy design are attached.”	In addition to highlighting the entry, the proposed entry feature also addresses this condition to differentiate the east and west facades. This condition has been satisfactorily addressed.
7. Study an alternative option that ties the fenestration panels together between panels and at the building corners to create a screen-like element.	“We reviewed the possibility of introducing a screen element to the façade. In the first approach, we looked at a continuous screen that would cover the glazing in a monolithic nature, similar to some of the precedent found in Edward Durrell Stone’s work. We determined that the tenant experience would be adversely affected by the masking of views to the exterior as well as adversely affect the light and air in the building. In the second approach, we looked at ways to use a screen element to infill in between the projected fenestration panels. In this case, we believe the screens serve to break down the monolithic nature of the building.”	This study has been provided in the submittal, although the design team has opted not to implement this study into the proposal. This condition to study this alternative has been satisfactorily addressed.
8. Study the incorporation of a solid, horizontal spandrel centered vertically within the fenestration panels, which would create 16 square openings on the east and west facades in lieu of the proposed eight rectangular openings.	“Although we studied the option to create more square shaped openings on the facades, we have elected to continue with the vertically oriented fenestration strategy as approved during the Concept Design Review phase.”	This study has been provided in the submittal, although the design team has opted not to implement this study into the proposal. This condition to study this alternative has been satisfactorily addressed.

Concept Design Review Conditions, August 25, 2020:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
9. Study the selection of glazing or other treatments that would avoid easily seeing into the building's structure.	"After reviewing options to select a darker glass or provide a standardized window treatment strategy, we have chosen to provide a mechoshade system that has pre-programmed stops. We believe this strategy will minimize tenant-driven variation as viewed from the exterior. An exhibit of this study is attached."	The proposed integrated shading system will ensure a consistent treatment throughout the building. This condition has been satisfactorily addressed.

Materials & Colors:

The building is proposed to be clad in GFRC panels in "Old World Travertine" finish. The proposed new windows will utilize a high performance frameless clear glazing system by Vitro or Guardian with custom metal panel framing with a high performance finish in medium bronze. Sections and details of the curtain-wall system are provided on sheets A9.00 and A12.50, respectively and depict the window assemblies projecting one foot beyond the building façade and having, at each floor, seven-foot and six-inch high fixed glazing with a three-foot-high operable panel below and a three-foot-high spandrel panel/shadow box at the transition to the floor below (except at the second floor), for a total overall window assembly height of 51 feet. The GFRC panels are shown with butt joints and mitered corners. An axonometric view with details is in Attachment C. Sheet A9.00 also includes a close-up elevation and section of the proposed slot window on the north elevation, with details on sheet A12.52. The section depicts an angled header and squared sill detail at each floor. The drawings also depict a new L-shaped metal frame canopy structure proposed to be installed adjacent to the main entry lobby, floating slightly below the building soffit, with four-foot-high metal address numbers at both termini. See Attachment D for details of this feature. The proposed materials and detailing are high quality and durable and, therefore, consistent with the design guidelines.

It should also be noted that the demolition elevations depict reduction in size of the large column at the northwest corner pedestrian entry and the proposed elevations depict covering of the new smaller column at that location with a break metal panel, as was proposed during Concept Design Review to enhance this pedestrian entry point. However, the previously proposed lowering of the stairs at that location was since found to be infeasible and is no longer proposed. The recessed base structure of the building along Arroyo Parkway and a portion of Green Street is proposed to be painted an unspecified red color, as shown in the Visual Context Photo Montage in Attachment C.

Mechanical Screening:

The roof plan on sheet A03.60 depicts placement of mechanical systems on the roof of the building, which would be screened from public view by the building parapet. The proposed new elevations (sheets A07.00 and A07.01) and sections (sheets A08.00 – A09.00) indicate construction of a new parapet on the building; however, staff has clarified with the applicant that the existing parapet is proposed to be demolished and reconstructed as part of the project, with no increase in height, although there are discrepancies in the plans with respect to the height of

the new parapet. In addition, an existing rooftop penthouse is proposed to be partially demolished and a new rooftop projection to create a clerestory to bring light into the escalator area it also proposed. This projection would be lower in height than the existing penthouse and would not be visible from the ground plane. To ensure compliance with Zoning Code requirements for building height and rooftop appurtenances, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring clarification in the demolition plans and elevations that the existing parapet will be removed and reconstructed with no increase in height over the existing condition. In addition, the condition will state that all references to the parapet indicate the correct height of 46", and that the heights of all new proposed rooftop appurtenances and a calculation of the area of the roof covered by all existing-to-remain and proposed new appurtenances be provided, including a requirement that the appurtenances shall not cover more than 25% of the roof area, as required by the Zoning Code.

Landscaping:

Hardscape and landscaping plans have been provided for the project and are in Attachment F. All existing planters and the large existing water feature east of the building are proposed to remain. A series of new square fiberglass planters and site furniture are proposed to be installed in the courtyard area north of the building. The planting plan depicts existing landscaping to remain as well as new shrubs and four new 36-inch-box Cajeput Trees along the outer perimeter. The new fiberglass planters are proposed to be planted with "meadow mix" as described in the planting schedule on sheet L7.10. Hardscape and landscape plans for the new interior courtyard are not provided; however, as these are interior to the building and not visible to the public, they are not required. The new landscaping and site features proposed are compatible with the design of the existing building and courtyard.

Lighting:

An exterior lighting plan is provided within the Landscape Plans in Attachment F (sheet L5.01). In addition, an entry canopy lighting plan and existing site lighting exhibit are in Attachment E. For the most part, existing site lighting is proposed to be retained except at the northwest corner pedestrian entry, which is proposed to receive new linear wall-wash LED lighting and new step lighting. The proposed new entry canopy is also proposed to include linear LED fixtures recessed within the underside as well as above the structure; the address numbers proposed to sit atop the new canopy structure are not proposed to be internally illuminated. Subject to the standard condition regarding lighting temperature not rising above 3,000 Kelvin, the lighting fixtures proposed are high quality and consistent with the design of the building.

Signage:

The only signage proposed at this time is the address numbers at the new entry canopy feature, as described previously. Any future tenant signage proposed will require design review or a Master Sign Plan.

Comments from Other Departments:

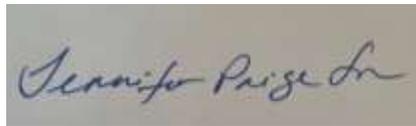
As the project does not involve new construction, it has not been routed for comments from other City Departments. As outlined above, staff discussed with staff of the Current Planning

Section the requirements for building height and rooftop appurtenances and the condition that has been recommended will ensure that these requirements have been addressed.

CONCLUSION:

The applicant has provided all of the studies that were required as conditions of Concept Design Review approval, although the design of the project has not substantially changed as a result. A projecting canopy feature with address number signage has been added to highlight the main building entrances on the east and north elevations and existing travertine will be re-used in the central courtyard landscape design. The submitted drawings include materials specifications and architectural details that are high quality and compatible with the overall building design. Staff recommends that the Commission approve the application for Final Design Review with conditions described in this report, which will be further reviewed by staff during building plan check or during construction.

Respectfully submitted,



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Department

Prepared by:



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Reviewed by:



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Attachments:

- A. Building plans, elevations, sections & details
- B. Professional renderings
- C. Design team responses to Concept Design Review conditions of approval & accompanying studies & images (5 separate files)
- D. Materials & curtain wall axonometric view with details (2 separate files)
- E. Entry canopy lighting plan, sign details & existing lighting fixtures (3 separate files)
- F. Landscape plan