



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: FEBRUARY 9, 2021

TO: DESIGN COMMISSION

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

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR FINAL DESIGN REVIEW
NEW CONSTRUCTION OF A FIVE-STORY, 24-UNIT MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL PROJECT
164 CHESTNUT STREET

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 September 22, 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 there are no protected trees on the site.

Findings for Final Design Approval

1. Find that the project, upon implementation of the conditions of Final Design Review approval, will comply with the conditions of Concept Design Review;
2. Find that the project, upon implementation of the conditions of Final Design Review approval, will be 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:

Conditions:

1. Provide a detail of in-plane transitions from fiber-cement cladding to plaster walls, which shall have an articulated reveal.
2. All stucco-clad balcony rails, planter walls and perimeter walls shall be finished with a high quality, durable cap element consistent with the style of the building. Provide a revised detail of these features in the plans submitted for building plan check.
3. Study the possibility of directing overflow drainage for the stucco-clad balcony railings within the building walls without visible scuppers. If found to be infeasible, restudy the locations of scuppers to ensure they are placed in the most visibly discreet locations possible.
4. Provide details of the metal fencing at the pedestrian entries and ground-level patios. The entry canopy is prohibited by Zoning Code setback requirements. Therefore, study alternative means of accentuating the main pedestrian entry point at the northeast corner of the site.
5. Brake metal trim near the top of the lower-height volume at the front façade shall be continuous along the articulated elements of the façade, including at inside corners.
6. Exposed soffits shall be clad in the same material as the adjoining vertical wall surface or be painted to match as closely as possible.
7. Study the possibility of relocating mechanical vents shown on the north, street-facing elevation to a more discreet location on a secondary elevation of the building or within the parking structure entry portal.
8. Provide a lighting plan depicting locations of all exterior lighting fixtures proposed, as well as specifications of any additional proposed exterior fixtures not provided for review during design review.
9. A separate application for design review shall be required for the proposed address number sign, as well as any other signage that may be proposed on the building in the future.
10. Provide further details of the design and materials of the parking ramp side walls and ceiling and any gates that may be visible from the street. Any mechanical equipment, piping, conduit, utilities or other similar features within the parking entry portal shall be screened from public view and any visible walls or ceiling of the portal shall be finished in a high quality manner that is consistent with the design and finishes of the building.

11. Provide details of the fifth-floor courtyard canopy. In addition, revise wall section C on Sheet A6.1 to include the projecting trim detail above the fifth floor window, with a callout to the applicable detail provided (detail 7 on sheet A8.5).
12. The project shall comply with all Zoning Code requirements as outlined in Attachment A, with the exception of the driveway location requirement modified during Concept Design Review. In addition, the project shall comply with the conditions from the Departments of Public Works and Transportation in Attachment A, to the satisfaction of said departments.
13. The project shall comply with the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance and any changes to the proposed landscape design that may be required shall be reviewed and approved by staff prior to issuance of a building permit.
14. A copy of this decision letter, including written responses to each condition indicating how and where they are addressed, shall be included in the plans submitted for building permit plan check.
15. 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.
16. An 8' x 8' minimum mock-up panel of the building finishes shall be provided and reviewed by staff prior to construction and installation.
17. Prior to issuance of a building permit, submit to staff written confirmation from utility providers (Pasadena Water & Power and The Gas Company) that the utility equipment shown on the plans are sufficient to meet the demands of the project and that the locations shown in the plans are approved.
18. 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 more detailed plans, 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 September 22, 2020, the Design Commission approved an application for Concept Design Review for construction of a new five-story 24-unit multi-family residential building at 164

Chestnut Street. This application is for Final Design Review of the same project.

Project Overview

- General Plan Designation: High Mixed Use (0 – 2.25 FAR)
- Zoning: CD-1 (Central District Specific Plan, Old Pasadena Subdistrict)
- 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 10,012-square-foot lot on the south side of Chestnut Street at the terminus of Townsend Place. It is trapezoidal in shape and is currently developed with a historic two-story house that was previously converted into multiple units and has been approved for relocation to a vacant lot at 781 S. Grand Avenue. There is also a detached garage/carport structure on the site. There are no trees on the site and there is one street tree along the property's frontage.
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties are developed with one-to-four-story residential buildings, three-to-four-story office buildings, one-to-three-story church buildings and surface parking lots. The Metro Gold Line right-of-way is in close proximity to the site, separated by a development site, on which a 100-unit residential development has been approved, but not constructed. Nearby historical resources include the Old Pasadena Historic District (nearby contributing structures include St. Andrew's Church, 1929, 281 N. Raymond Avenue and the Fannie Bonham Rowhouses, 1898, 221 N. Raymond Avenue) and the Pasadena Civic Center Historic District, including nearby contributing site - Memorial Park.
- Project Description: The proposed project is a new, five-story approximately 22,492-square-foot, 24-unit multi-family residential building with two levels of subterranean parking.
- Site Design: The proposed building covers the entire site with a 5' setback on the north side and 10' setbacks on the east, south and west. A driveway entrance ramp to the subterranean parking structure and a ground-level shared courtyard are also proposed at the northeast corner of the site.
- Architectural Style: Contemporary
- Developer: Alpha Cap, LLC
- Architect: Plus Architects
- Landscape Architect: SQLA, Inc.

ANALYSIS:

Conditions of Concept Design Review:

Below are the Commission’s conditions of approval and recommendations from Concept Design Review for the project, as well as the architect’s responses and staff’s comments. See Attachment B for the complete set of revised plans, elevations, wall sections, architectural details and materials specifications and imagery.

Concept Design Review Conditions, September 22, 2020:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
<p>1. All balcony railings shall be the glass-and-metal design proposed for the upper level railings. In addition, the solid side wall on the east side of the easterly stack of balconies on the north elevation shall be removed or broken up to lighten the mass.</p>	<p>“Based on the comments of the Chairperson, we believe this condition was written inaccurately. During the hearing our understanding was that the condition should require that most balconies be glass railing, not that all railings would be required to be glass. As a result, we are providing two schemes. The first is our preference, which is a greater proportion of overall balcony glass railings and maintaining the stucco railings on the second floor for tenants. We believe that having a mix of materials serves as an overall break from the uniformity of the glass and additionally, provides greater privacy for tenants who will reside on the second floor of the building.</p> <p>We are also submitting a secondary option, which reflects the condition as described in the Notice of Decision dated September 23rd. 2020, which required all balconies to be glass railings. We believe that the first option presented is a more attractive design, which will fit better within the overall neighborhood.</p> <p>Regarding the solid wall on the east side of the easterly stack of balconies on the north elevation, this is a structural wall. Given the length of the balconies, this wall is necessary to support the balconies as they cantilever into the front yard area. Given the long span of the balcony, we are not able to entirely</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i> To address the architect’s comments, staff reviewed the recording of the Concept Design Review hearing and the motion that was made accepting the staff-recommendation for all balcony railings to be glass and metal. However, there was discussion during the hearing about allowing a combination of solid and glass railings and the applicant’s preferred design provides solid railings at the second floor only, while the previous design provided solid railings at the second and third floors. The design guidelines do not specify a preference; however, staff’s concern was that the use of solid railings at two floors appeared too heavy as previously proposed. The proposal to convert the third-floor balcony railings to glass provides additional lightness to the building and satisfactorily addresses staff’s concern. As such, staff is in agreement with the applicant’s preferred design. Staff also understands the need for structural support for the front-façade balconies and is in agreement with the design proposed.</p>

Concept Design Review Conditions, September 22, 2020:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
	<p>eliminate this wall since it provides structural support. We have consulted with our structural engineer on potential ways to eliminate this wall, however the only solution would be to provide a post below the balconies for support. However, since these balconies are directly above the driveway, it would not be feasible to add a post in this location, therefore we have left the wall in place and shrunk it to the minimum dimension necessary.”</p>	
<p>2. Incorporate fenestration and/or additional cladding materials into the building walls surrounding the courtyard to break up blank wall conditions and enliven and soften the outdoor space.</p>	<p>“We have reconfigured the interior of the Unit 105 Stack of units in order to accommodate for windows above the kitchen sink. This additional fenestration helps to break up the blank wall in the courtyard and soften the outdoor space as well.”</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i> The additional fenestration provided on the north-facing wall of the courtyard space adequately breaks up the previous blank wall condition. The remaining two walls surrounding the courtyard incorporate exterior stairs and walkways that also enliven the outdoor space with circulation.</p>
<p>3. The proposed fiber-cement wall cladding shall terminate at inside corners, which may include vertically stacked window openings.</p>	<p>“We have provided additional details in the plans which show details of installation for the fiber-cement wall cladding. Additionally, we have provided the material specifics for the product as well.”</p>	<p><i>Comment addressed upon implementation of staff-recommended condition.</i> Details of the fiber-cement system provided on sheet A8.5 depict it as a rainscreen system that floats a minimum of 1 ½” beyond the façade. As the plaster will be applied directly to the exterior walls of the building, staff assumes that there will be an articulated reveal at the locations of in-plane transitions from the fiber-cement system to the plaster walls. To verify this, staff has recommended a condition of approval requiring provision of a detail depicting this transition, and requiring an articulated reveal.</p>

Concept Design Review Conditions, September 22, 2020:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
<p>4. The project shall comply with all Zoning Code requirements, with the exception of the driveway location requirement modified in this decision. In addition, the project shall comply with the conditions from the Departments of Public Works and Transportation in Attachment A, to the satisfaction of said departments.</p>	<p>“Agreed. We have already contacted the Departments of Public Works and Transportation to and will continue to coordinate with them in order to adhere to their requirements.”</p>	<p><i>Comment addressed upon implementation of staff-recommended condition.</i> Staff of the Current Planning Section has provided comments on the Final Design Review drawings, which are essentially the same as was provided for Concept Design Review. Staff recommends that this condition be repeated in this decision to ensure that all requirements of other City departments are addressed during building plan check.</p>
<p>5. Further study and explore the pedestrian entry canopy and its visibility from the sidewalk to pedestrians approaching from the west.</p>	<p>“We have updated the pedestrian canopy and driveway to be more accessible and practical for residents and pedestrians walking by. Additionally, we have updated the building number to make it more visible and convenient to find.”</p>	<p><i>Canopy location prohibited by Zoning Code.</i> Comments provided by staff of the Current Planning Section indicate that the entry canopy encroaches into the required 10’ side yard setback and is therefore not permitted. Therefore, this condition is moot and the canopy must be removed. Alternative means of accentuating the pedestrian entry should be studied and staff has recommended a condition to this effect.</p>
<p>6. Further study the design within the context of the area, particularly the west elevation.</p>	<p>“We have added additional fiber-cement wall cladding in the central portion of the Western Elevation. This acts as a break from the white stucco of the Western Elevation and makes for a more interesting perspective when approached from the West as well.”</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i> The additional fiber-cement cladding on the west elevation effectively breaks up the long expanse of white plaster that was previously proposed, to better relate to the surrounding neighborhood.</p>

Concept Design Review Recommendations, September 22, 2020:	Architect Responses	Staff Comment:
1. Continue to study the color palette to ensure an appropriate combination of colors and tones for the building.	“We have continued to explore multiple color schemes and combinations for the 3 main elements of the building: stucco, metal banding, and fiber cement panels. Based on feedback from the Preliminary hearing, we had lightened the color scheme from a previously darker scheme. Based on our continued exploration of various colors, we believe the colors that we have selected continue to be the most attractive combination which also fit best within the neighborhood as well.”	The light colors proposed for the building are appropriate for the surrounding neighborhood. Other residential buildings in the vicinity have a similar color palette as proposed for this building.
2. Consider revision of the fifth floor at the northwest corner to reduce the mass at that location.	“As mentioned in the previous hearing, the balcony of the fifth floor unit at the northwest corner is open to the sky. We have set this unit back additionally from the units below in order to reduce the overall mass of the building.”	Further consideration should be given to incorporating an open canopy, similar to others proposed for the building, at this location, which would differentiate the corner and reduce its mass. However, as this was a recommendation rather than a condition, staff does not recommend that this be required as a condition of approval.

Materials & Colors:

The building is proposed to be clad in a simple palette of smooth white (Dunn Edwards “Lace Veil”) plaster, Cembrit Patina fiber-cement rainscreen panels in a blend of “Tufa” and “Sand” colors and aluminum-colored metal trim elements and window framing (anodized aluminum storefronts by Arcadia). Metal-and-glass balcony railings are proposed at the third through fifth floors and solid railings coated in matching stucco are proposed at the second floor. Ground-level patios are enclosed in open metal railings that match proposed fencing/gates near the pedestrian entries.

Strategically located large-scale wall sections are provided on sheets A6.1 and A6.2, with architectural details on sheets A8.1 – A8.5. Staff has reviewed the materials and details provided and determined that they provide a sufficient level of detail at this stage of the design process. The detailing of the building will be high quality and consistent with the architectural style of the building. In particular, windows are shown recessed a minimum of 3½” within stucco walls and 1½” within fiber-cement walls, which is appropriate for the architectural style and

creates a sense of permanence. Balconies are shown with stucco cladding wrapping the base to the soffit and glass railings are shown with square metal frames that match the color and finish of other metalwork on the building. Brake metal trim elements are shown projecting 5” from the face of the building, with a height of 14”. Section C on Sheet A6.1 is missing a projecting trim element above the fifth floor windows; although a detail callout to this element is provided on the elevation drawings, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring it to be also shown on the wall section to ensure consistency throughout the drawings. Staff also recommends the following conditions of approval: all stucco-clad balcony rails, planter walls and perimeter walls to be finished with a cap element consistent with the style of the building to minimize staining of the top surface; provision of details of the entry canopy and metal fencing at the entry and ground-level patios; application of continuous brake metal trim near the top of the building on the front façade, which is shown in renderings being broken at inside corners; and cladding exposed soffits in the same material as the adjoining vertical wall surface or painting them to match as closely as possible. Finally, consistent with standard conditions of recent Final Design Review approvals, staff also recommends that a large-scale mock-up panel be provided for staff review during construction to ensure high-quality materials installation.

Mechanical Screening:

The roof plan depicts placement of mechanical systems on the roofs of the building, set back from the edge of the building and screened from view by the building parapet. The site plan on sheet A1.1 depicts the locations of a Fire Department connection and backflow device integrated with the easterly deck space along the north elevation. Gas meter locations are shown within the westerly side yard and an underground electrical vault is shown within the vehicular access driveway. These locations are appropriate and concealed from public view as much as possible.

Mechanical vents are depicted in the elevations on the east and west sides of the building, arranged in a clear pattern on the building and specifications for circular, hooded clear-anodized aluminum vent caps are provided in the submitted specifications. Two vents are shown on the front façade at ground level facing the street and staff has recommended a condition requiring study of re-routing these to secondary elevations. Detail 12 on sheet A8.4 depicts quality, integrated finishing of the caps with no exposed flashing.

Balcony rail details indicate that the glass-and-metal railings will have a gap below the railings to allow for overflow drainage to sheet flow off the balcony; however, stucco-clad railings will be solid and require provision for overflow drainage in compliance with Building Code requirements. Although a scupper detail is provided (detail 10 on sheet A8.5) depicting an integrated scupper installation, with locations shown on the elevations, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring study of the possibility of providing overflow drainage within the building wall to avoid interruption of the clean, simple design of the railings with a scupper. If this is found to be infeasible, the scuppers should be installed in the most discreet locations possible.

Landscaping:

Hardscape and landscaping plans have been provided for the project, on sheets LP-1 and LP-2, with landscape details on sheet LD-1. Extensive ground level landscaping is proposed around

the perimeter of the building and within the ground-level courtyard. Built-in concrete planter walls coated in stucco, 12"-high metal planters and small square planter boxes are proposed, which provides interesting scale variations throughout the landscape design. A circular fountain and built-in benches and work tables are proposed within the courtyard. At the intersection of the main easterly access pathway and the courtyard is a focal element consisting of an in-ground Flowering Cherry tree, a built-in bench and a green screen. A total of 44 24" box trees are proposed at the ground level. Drivable grass is proposed at the vehicular access driveway and bands of uncolored and light grey concrete are proposed for paving throughout. A plan for landscaping and amenities at the fifth floor roof deck is also provided. The design of these spaces is consistent with the design of the building and will be usable outdoor amenity spaces for the project residents. Staff has recommended a condition of approval requiring details of the fifth-floor courtyard canopy. In addition, the planting plans will require review for compliance with the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance during plan check.

Lighting:

Landscape lighting locations and images of the proposed fixtures are noted on the landscape plans. Fixtures include 24"-high linear L-shaped pathway lights, rectilinear step lights, circular in-ground lights, and cylindrical spotlights, all in dark bronze finish. Specifications for a rectilinear wall sconce in dark charcoal color have been provided, with locations shown at side walls of the two ground-level patio spaces along the street edge and at the ground level along the east, south and west elevations. As it seems likely that there would also be visible light fixtures at the exterior balconies, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring provision of locations and fixture specifications of any other exterior lighting fixtures that may be proposed. 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:

Detailed signage plans are not provided for this review. One sign identifying the address of the project is shown on the north elevation. Because the Zoning Code requires design review for signs on all new development projects, staff recommends that this requirement be reinforced with a condition of approval requiring a separate design review for the proposed address sign.

Comments from Other Departments:

During Concept Design Review, the Departments of Transportation and Public Works, the Fire Department and the Cultural Affairs Division of the Planning & Community Development Department provided a series of recommended conditions, which were incorporated into that previous approval. In addition, staff of the Current Planning Section has reviewed the Final Design Review plans for compliance with Zoning Code requirements and has indicated that there remain areas of non-compliance, including the proposed entry canopy and a stair encroaching into the required 10' side yard setback, some dimensional discrepancies, and some additional information needed to determine compliance with certain standards. Comments and conditions from other departments are included in Attachment A. To reinforce that compliance with these standards and conditions will continue to be required, staff recommends repeating this condition of Concept Design Review in this decision.

CONCLUSION:

Upon implementation of recommended conditions of approval, the project will comply with the conditions of Concept Design Review. 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.

Respectfully submitted,



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Director of Planning & Community Development
Department

Prepared by:



Kevin Johnson, Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



Leon White, Principal Planner

Attachments:

- A. Comments/conditions from other City Departments/Divisions
- B. Architect's responses to Concept Design Review conditions & recommendations
- C. Plans, elevations, sections & details
- D. Materials specifications
- E. Project renderings