



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: December 17, 2018

Agenda Item: 8.4

To: Architectural Review Board
From: Scott Albright, Senior Planner
Cc: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design & Historic Preservation Planner
Russell Bunim, AICP, ARB Liaison

Subject: 18ARB-0342 review the building design, colors, materials, landscape plans, sign plans, and a sign program for a new six-story (60 feet), 46,124 square-foot, mixed-use building with 4,860 square feet of ground floor commercial space, 64 residential units, and a four-level subterranean parking garage with space for 138 automobiles and 113 bicycles.

Address: 1325 6th Street
Applicant: WNMS Communities

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board review and provide direction for ARB application 18ARB-0342 based upon the analysis provided within this report.

Executive Summary

The proposed mixed-use commercial and residential project is being developed in conjunction with a Development Agreement that was approved by the City Council on November 27, 2017. Design approval is sought for the proposed building design, colors, materials of the six-story building, along with the appurtenant landscaping and sign plans as described in this report. The plans remain largely unchanged from what was approved by the City Council as part of the Development Agreement and have not adequately addressed the concerns included that require special design attention.

Project Description

Proposed is a six-story, 60-foot high, mixed-use building 64 residential units, 4,860 square feet of retail commercial space and four levels of subterranean parking. The proposed project has a floor-area ratio (FAR) of 3.1. As proposed, the residential mixed-use project is within the maximum allowable height (60 feet) and FAR (3.5) for a Tier 2 project in this zoning district.

Background

Preliminary Architectural Review Board Concept Review

The project was presented to the Architectural Review Board on April 4, 2016, for preliminary design review and feedback in advance of Planning Commission and City Council consideration of the proposed development agreement. Overall, the design received positive feedback from Boardmembers, particularly the overall asymmetry of design and the openness of the interior courtyard and the access to air flow it will

provide to interior units. However, the Board also noted concerns that needed further consideration:

- The angular patterns in the building appear disjointed and take away from the building design and compete with the rectilinear elements of the design;
- The ground floor commercial area needs work to soften the transition from the sidewalk.
- The extensive use of concrete on the north side of the front elevation where the elevator tower and stairway are located appear cold and lack articulation, which is not desirable from a pedestrian perspective and detract from the extensive articulation of the rest of the building.
- The party wall on north elevation requires further consideration in its relationship to the adjacent building that is lower in height.

In response to this feedback, the most significant design revision that resulted was the removal of the angular patterns from the building elevations. The angular geometry was considered a distraction that was thought to compete and conflict with the building's rectilinear qualities.

Planning Commission review and recommendation

The revised project was presented to the Planning Commission for recommendation on April 20, 2016. The Commission in general also had an overall positive response to the project, but also felt that components of the design needed further attention:

- Balconies and other building features, including bike parking should not project beyond property line
- Elevator at southwest corner pinches pedestrian circulation and should be relocated
- Livability of the interior units should be further considered relative to natural light/air flow.
- Residential bike storage should be on ground floor for greater accessibility
- Upper levels have office building appearance
- Enhancing the appearance of the 6th Street elevation to make it the project's prominent elevation
- Extend façade materiality to alley side
- Further activate south elevation and remove expansive concrete walls
- Design looks unbalanced (heavy on one side)
- Unit sizes are small
- A minimum of two tenants required for commercial space
- Reduce visual impact of massing from street

City Council approval and adoption

The City Council considered and adopted an Ordinance on November 27, 2017, approving the aforementioned Development Agreement. The Council's action included

specific direction to the Architectural Review Board to pay particular attention to the following elements of the project design during its review:

- Enhancing the visual interest of the north elevation to avoid blank walls; and
- Orientation of mezzanine (2nd floor) level residential units to ensure that they achieve sufficient access to natural light and ventilation.

In addition, the Development Agreement specifically states that the ARB cannot require changes to the building design which requires modification to the fundamental development standards of the DA, including reduction in the overall height, number of stories, residential density, or reduce proposed floor area by more than five percent. Otherwise, the Board has full discretion regarding project design within its purview.



Rendering showing project at southwest corner, as approved by City Council as part of the Development Agreement.

Project / Site Information

The project site consists of a 100' x 150' lot totaling 15,000 square feet in size that is located on the east side of 6th Street Santa Monica Boulevard and Arizona Avenue. The site is currently developed with a surface parking lot that is for private use only and is not available to the general public, as shown in Figure 1 below. Adjacent uses consist of a three-story office building to the north, the Santa Monica Main Public Library to the south, the YMCA to the west, and a five-story office building to the east.

The following table provides a brief summary of project site data:

Zoning District / Land Use District:	NV (Neighborhood Village)/Downtown Core
Parcel Area:	15,000 square feet
Parcel Dimensions:	100' X 150'
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	Private parking lot with landscaping
Historic Resources Inventory Status	Not listed on Historic Resources Inventory
CEQA	The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 21155.1 of the CEQA Guidelines, which exempts a special class of Transit Priority Project (TPP) determined to be a Sustainable Communities Project (SCP) by the local jurisdiction
Adjacent Zoning Districts and Land Uses:	North: DCP-NV (Neighborhood Village), two-story office East: DCP-NV, multi-story office South: DCP-NV, public library, parking West: DCP-NV, YMCA

Analysis

Site Planning

The ground floor consists of approximately 4,860 square-feet of retail commercial space and a residential lobby with stairwells and elevators. Appurtenant utility rooms are also found on this level set towards the rear and interior of the site. Two of the proposed residential units are situated along the southern face of the building. Exterior access to these units is provided by cutting through the open space located along the south side of the building. Access to the four-level subterranean garage is currently provided from 6th Court alley. The proposed garage provides 138 off-street parking spaces for residents, guests, the ground floor commercial uses, and for private off-site users.

The upper floors include residential units with single-loaded and double loaded corridors. The proposed 64-residential units will be served by a linear open space about 20 feet at its widest located on the 3rd floor level, and a 2,234 square foot rooftop deck. The design of the this open space will consist primarily of landscaped walkways with passive seating provided at various locations. The rooftop deck will provide active amenities including a spa, a barbecue area, and ample bar and tabletop seating.

As currently designed, programming possibilities for the 3rd floor open space appear limited. Staff suggests the applicant reconsider the placement, design, and layout of the walkways and landscape planters in order to create larger, more meaningful gathering spaces with possible amenities for use by the residents.

Landscape Design

The plant palette consists of a variety of drought tolerant species. The plant palette includes large signature plantings consisting of the following:

- Two, 48” box Maidenhair Trees (Ginkgo biloba), and one, 36” box Pearl Acacia (Acacia podalyrifolia) within the 3rd Floor courtyard.
- Two, 36” box Meyer Lemon Tree (Citrus X Limon ‘Meyer’) located on the roof deck.
- A combination of 24” box Alphonse Karr Bamboo (Bambusa X Alphonse Karr) and 24’ box Red-edged Dracena (Dracaena marginata), 24” box Torbay Cordyline (Cordyline X ‘Torbay’) on the ground floor and third floor levels.

These will be underplanted by shrubs, vines and groundcover each with distinct flowering patterns allowing these open spaces to have bursts of color year-round.

Building Design

The proposed building is contemporary in design. It consists of a single building mass that is transparent on much of the ground floor, particularly along the street facing elevation, and has a more solid appearance on the upper portions. In order to lessen the imposing scale of a singular six-story mass, the upper portions of the building are broken into smaller components through the strategic placement of courtyard openings (prominently located on the 6th Street and the publicly visible south elevation), building insets, and the recessed balconies found throughout.

The ground floor’s transparency is a result of the extensive use of clear glazing along the 6th Street elevation. Although the retail spaces are two stories in height (approximately 20 feet), a perforated metal screen panel (approximately 3-4 feet in height affixed below the third floor plate line) and the suspended retail tenant signage reduce the building’s apparent height somewhat. However, this remains rather tall and would benefit from a strong horizontal canopy or other element that could incorporate signage.

The retail storefronts along 6th Street are angled inward which draws the pedestrian into the residential entry and also to the common open space found along the southern edge of the property at the building southwestern corner, adjacent to the retail tenant spaces. At this building corner, the upper floors cantilever beyond the ground floor, providing a sense of enclosure and some overhead protection for this important outdoor space.

The upper floors are composed of storefront with alternating panels of glass and stucco. This design produces an overall busy appearance as reinforced by the fenestration, balcony/rail design, layout/composition of the building’s skin, and the extensive use of projecting fins.

Residential units are proposed on all floor levels including the ground floor. All units are provided with private open space and most have openings onto the interior courtyard space or within the volume of the courtyard opening. However, some of these units will have limited natural ventilation and light available to them due to the arrangement of units. The City Council gave specific direction for the ARB to pay particular attention to

this issue specific to the 2nd floor units. Staff notes that this issue may be problematic in other units as well. The units situated along the southern face of the project will experience the natural light and ventilation benefits due to having openings along the southern exposure coupled with openings onto the interior courtyard. However, the residential units along the northern face of the project will not have much direct light and cross ventilation will be hampered by the the project's north elevation where no openings are proposed due to its close proximity to the north property line.

Design and Detailing

The concept for this building uses a material palette as shown below.

DESIGN ELEMENTS	PROPOSED EXTERIOR MATERIAL, FINISH AND COLOR
Façade	Stucco, white and gray Concrete
Windows	Clear anodized aluminum frames with clear glazing
Doors	Aluminum frame with clear glazing
Balcony railings	glass
Roof	unknown
Refuse Screening	RRR is provided in a room of suitable dimensions and access.
Lighting	Ingrade uplighting Surface mounted linear fixtures

The project will primarily be clad in stucco, utilizing panels of varying rectilinear sizes. The panels will generally be white in color. All doors and windows will be aluminum framed with clear glazing. Balcony railings typically consist of clear glass panels. These materials will be found on the other less prominent elevations. The east (alley) elevation appears to utilize concrete in the appurtenant service areas where damage could result.

The north elevation is problematic. The design of this elevation consists of an entirely flat white stucco surface, broken only by inset horizontal bands of gray stucco. Although the elevation will be partially obscured by the adjacent building, the City Council has given the ARB special direction to pay particular attention to improve its articulation and appearance.

Sign Plans/Sign Program

Approval of sign plans and a sign program (for future retail tenants) for the project is included in the submittal. All of the signs are appropriately sited, generally above the main residential entry, the garage entry, and the planned retail entries. However, the tenant signs appear to be hanging nine feet below the 2nd floor plate (see Sheet C-1). Reconsideration of the signage design is recommended. If any of the commercial tenant spaces are further divided, each retail tenant is provided by code of a minimum of 25 square feet of sign area and would have to adhere to the design specifications described in the Sign Program.

SIGN AREA CALCULATIONS	
Multi-tenant Building	Yes.
Existing Sign Program	No.
Permitted Sign Area	87 square feet of commercial sign area
Existing Sign Area (signs that will remain)	None - New Construction
Proposed Sign Area (this application)	Sign 1-1: "1325" address wall sign = 38 SF (exempt) Sign 2-1: parking entrance/exiting wayfinding wall sign = 50 SF (exempt) Sign 3-1: parking wayfinding = 5 SF (exempt) Sign 3-2: elevator wayfinding = 5 SF (exempt) Sign 4-1: resident wayfinding = 3 SF (exempt) Sign C-1: Retail Tenant Sign = 25 square feet max (X 2)= 50 SF
Total Sign Area Upon Completion	151 SF (101 square feet of which is exempt) 50 SF commercial sign area
Total Number of New Signs	6
Compliance	Yes.

Sign 1-1 – "1430"

Proposed Sign Type: wall sign, cut-out lettering in perforated metal screen, unilluminated
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 15'3" X 2.5' (38 SF total)
Proposed Colors: clear

Sign 2-1 – parking entry/exit

Proposed Sign Type: wall sign, cut-out lettering in perforated metal screen, small cabinets (no parking symbol and parking entry are illuminated)
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 2.5' X 20' (50 SF total)
Proposed Colors: clear, red (no parking), green (parking entry)

Sign 3-1 – parking wayfinding

Proposed Sign Type: suspended blade sign, perforated aluminum cabinet, internally illuminated, with push-thru symbol with acrylic face
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 2.25' X 2.25' (5 SF total)
Proposed Colors: green (symbol)

Sign 3-2 – elevator wayfinding

Proposed Sign Type: suspended blade sign, perforated aluminum cabinet, internally illuminated, with push-thru symbol with acrylic face
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 2.25' X 2.25' (5 SF total)
Proposed Colors: black/white (symbol)

Sign 4-1 – resident wayfinding

Proposed Sign Type: wall sign, stainless steel lettering, non-illuminated
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 0.25' X 12' total (3 SF total)
Proposed Colors: black/white

Signs C-1 (2) – “Future Tenant”

Proposed Sign Type: suspended stainless steel letters acrylic faces, illuminated
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 16” maximum cap height, maximum 25 square feet each tenant (50 SF total)
Proposed Colors: black, white, light gray

Impact on Historic Resources

The subject property is not listed on the City’s Historic Resources Inventory.

Code Compliance

In the processing of the project’s development review permit, staff conducted extensive preliminary review for compliance with the Zoning Code, including the base district’s development standards, mixed-use design standards and Tier 2 requirements. There do not appear to be outstanding issues that could potentially affect the plans and result in significant changes to the project’s design. A complete code-compliance review will occur when the application is submitted for plan check. Any significant changes to the design subsequent to any ARB approval will require Board approval.

CEQA Status

The Planning Commission determined that this project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 21155.1 of the CEQA Guidelines, which exempts a special class of Transit Priority Project (TPP) determined to be a Sustainable Communities Project (SCP) by the local jurisdiction. The proposed project meets all of the necessary requirements set forth in Section 21155.1 as a Sustainable Communities Project and, therefore, is exempt from CEQA.

Summary

The proposed project is a Tier 2 six-story (60 feet), 46,124 square-foot mixed-use project commercial building constructed over four levels of subterranean parking with 138 vehicle parking spaces. The project is a modern/contemporary building design intended to activate the streetscape and enhance the surrounding developments and pedestrian realm. While the project has a strong concept, there remain concerns as detailed in this report. If the Board is inclined to approve the project, the following findings may apply.

FINDINGS:

- A. The plan for the proposed building or structure is expressive of good taste, good design, and in general contributes to the image of Santa Monica as a place of beauty, creativity and individuality in that the proposed design is an attractive pedestrian oriented project with a strong design concept and appropriate massing.

- B. The proposed building or structure is not of inferior quality such as to cause the nature of the local neighborhood or environment to materially depreciate in appearance and value in that high quality materials will be used.
- C. The proposed design of the building or structure is compatible with developments on land in the general area the proposed building massing and volumes are consistent with the context of other multiple story structures in the project area. Furthermore, the project design promotes an activated street frontage, which is appropriate and consistent with the goals and policies of the zoning district and the Downtown Community Plan.
- D. The proposed development conforms to the effective guidelines and standards adopted pursuant to Chapter 9.55 – *Architectural Review Board*, and all other applicable ordinances insofar as the location and appearance of the buildings and structures are involved. Specifically, the location and appearance of the buildings and structures comply with required findings set forth in Chapter 9.55, as documented by the Architectural Review Board, and as conditioned, the plans will fully comply with all applicable regulations prior to the issuance of a building permit.

CONDITIONS:

- 1. Prior to building permit submittal, the applicant shall work with staff to refine the design of the 3rd floor linear open space and reconsider the placement, design and layout of the walkways and landscape planters in order to create larger, more meaningful gathering spaces with possible amenities for use by the residents.
- 2. Prior to building permit submittal, the applicant shall work with staff to enhance the articulation and appearance of the proposed north elevation.
- 3. Prior to building permit submittal, the applicant shall work with staff to revise the design and placement of the proposed retail tenant identification signs.
- 4. This approval shall expire when the administrative or discretionary entitlements, not including any Subdivision Map approvals, previously granted for the project have lapsed. If no such entitlements have been granted, this approval shall expire 24 months from its effective date, or 30 months if in the Coastal Zone unless appealed.
- 5. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall demonstrate landscape and irrigation plan compliance with the City's Green Building Ordinance standards (SMMC 8.108) subject to staff approval. Modifications to the landscape plan that effect less than 150 square feet of area may be reviewed and approved by the Staff Liaison to the Board.
- 6. Prior to the issuance of a building permit a hydrozone matrix shall be included in the landscape and irrigation plans that describes for each hydrozone the

following: the square footage, percentage of total landscaped area, plant type and plant form, hydrozone basis, hydrozone description, exposure or micro-climate, irrigation method, irrigation devices (including manufacturer, make and model), zone pressure, precipitation rates, zone gallons per minute and controller station numbers.

7. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall demonstrate that the plans comply with all applicable provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. Significant changes to a project's design shall require review and approval of the Architectural Review Board. Minor changes may be approved administratively pursuant to all applicable guidelines.
8. No building permit shall be issued for the project until the developer complies with the requirements of the Santa Monica Municipal Code with respect to applicable fees. No building permit shall be issued for the project until the developer complies with the requirements of Part 9.30.040 of the Santa Monica Municipal Code, Private Developer Cultural Arts Requirement.

If the developer elects to comply with these requirements by providing on-site public art work or cultural facilities, no final City approval shall be granted until such time as the Director of the Community and Cultural Services Department issues a notice of compliance in accordance with Part 9.30.050

The Architectural Review Board's approval, conditions of approval, or denial of this application may be appealed to the Planning Commission if the appeal is filed with the Zoning Administrator within ten consecutive days following the date of the Architectural Review Board's determination in the manner provided in SMMC 9.61.100.

Attachments

- A. Applicant's Submittal Material

F:\CityPlanning\Share\ARB\STFRPT\SR18\18ARB-0342 (1325 6th Street) New MU 64 Unit (Autosaved).docx