



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: January 21, 2020

Agenda Item: 8.2

To: Architectural Review Board
From: Michael Rocque, Associate Planner
CC: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design and Historic Preservation Planner

Subject: Preliminary Review of the design, colors and materials for the construction of a new Tier 2, 6-story, mixed-use building with approximately 1,870 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 41 SRO units and 11 residential units with one subterranean basement level.

Address: 1323 5th Street
Applicant: KFA Architects

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) review the project design and provide feedback to staff and the applicant team for incorporation into the project.

Executive Summary

The proposal is a Tier 2, 6-story, 26,236 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 1,870 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 41 SRO units and 11 residential units on a 7,496 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes one subterranean basement level with 72 (10 short-term and 62 long-term) bicycle parking spaces. The project site is located along the east side of 5th Street and is currently developed with a surface level parking lot.

Pursuant to the Downtown Community Plan application thresholds, housing projects up to 75,000 square feet require an Administrative Approval. The project is required to be conceptually reviewed by the ARB for design recommendations prior to the issuance of an Administrative Approval.

Background

As reported by the City Attorney at the June 25, 2019 City Council meeting, the City and WS Communities reached an agreement to settle a threat of litigation related to six proposed single room occupancy (SRO) housing projects located at 1415 5th Street, 1437 5th Street, 1437 6th Street, 1323 5th Street, 1557 7th Street and 1338 5th Street.

Specifically, the settlement agreement does not affect the ARB's discretion, but requires the ARB issue a determination for all the projects listed above within ninety (90) calendar days from the final date of approval for the Administrative Approvals for the projects. And, in the event of an appeal (or appeals) of the ARB's design review determination(s) to the Planning Commission, a hearing shall be scheduled within sixty (60) days, and final

determination must be issued for the appealed project(s) within thirty (30) days following the submittal of the appeal(s), in accordance with the Santa Monica Municipal Code.

Project / Site Information

The project site is currently a mid-block lot developed with a surface level parking lot. The site is located on the east side of 5th Street between Santa Monica Boulevard and Arizona Avenue with alley (5th Court) access. The 1300 block of 5th Street consists of a mix of buildings and uses including mostly one- and three-story commercial office buildings on the east side of 5th Street, and directly across from the site is a large city owned surface level parking lot which is a pending Development Agreement mixed-use project, The Plaza at Santa Monica. Also, located across the street, west of the subject site is a pending Administrative Approval mixed-use project with the same ownership group consisting of 94 SRO units and 26-market rate units at 1338 5th Street.

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	DCP-NV, Downtown Community Plan – Neighborhood Village
Parcel Area (SF):	7,496 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	Approximately 50'W x 150' D
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	Surface level parking lot (1978)
Project height / area / FAR	6 stories/ 60-feet 26, 236 SF 3.5 FAR
Unit Mix / Affordable Housing	52 total Housing units 41 SRO units <u>11 Tier 2 Market rate units</u> Studios: 0 units 1 BDRM: 7 units 2 BDRM: 2 units 3 BDRM: 2 units <u>9 Affordable units provided per settlement agreement</u> 20% of Market rate units: 11*.20=3 units 15% of SRO units: 41*.15= 6.15 units
Historic Resource Inventory Status	Property is not listed on the Historic Resource Inventory
CEQA	Exempt pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3)
Adjacent Zoning & Use:	North DCP – NV, 3-story commercial office South DCP – NV, 1-story commercial retail East DCP – NV, Santa Monica YMCA facility West DCP – NV, City owned surface level parking lot (Approved DA)

Analysis

Site Design

The proposal is a new 60-foot tall mixed-use project comprised of ground floor commercial/residential and five residential floors above. The project has one subterranean basement level that includes storage, bicycle parking and mechanical equipment rooms. Pursuant to SMMC Section 9.28.040(A)(6)(a), there is no minimum parking requirement for projects located in the DCP, therefore no parking is being provided for the site.

The ground floor design includes a 1,128 square foot commercial retail space with a residential lobby entry at the north end of the street frontage. The lobby area consists of a residential elevator, mail room, small office, and a common space room that leads to a courtyard situated along the southern side yard. In the middle of the ground floor there are two SRO units provided. At the rear of the site adjacent to the alley is the required trash room along with other utility and transformer rooms. The current design is providing a modified loading space which will require approval of a minor modification. The applicant is working with staff to seek approval of a modification in order to resolve this issue. The upper floors consist of 50 residential units following generally the same building footprint throughout each of the floors.

While not required on a lot of this size, open space has been provided in the form of private balconies and common outdoor space. At the ground floor there is a 515 square foot courtyard located along the southern side yard which is open to the sky to bring additional light and air to the units. There is also a 400 square foot community room adjacent to the courtyard that has a folding glass wall that opens up into the courtyard space. The Board may wish to consider if the courtyard can be reconfigured or enlarged to improve the functionality of the space. Currently, the proposed private balconies and planters adjacent to the courtyard appear to impede on this space and circulation. A modification could provide greater connectivity to the open space and result in more light and air making the space more inviting. Additional open space for residents is available on both the 5th and 6th floors with two 230 square foot community rooms situated at the southwest corner of the site, and a 1,081 square foot roof deck overlooking 5th Street.

Building Design / Architectural Concept

The proposed building design provides a modern infill project that activates the pedestrian frontage along the 1300 block of 5th Street with retail space and building entries. The main façade along 5th Street provides three-dimensionality expressed by projecting and recessed private balconies at each level, with the intent of a “tree-house” concept. The balconies have a dialogue with the two large existing ficus trees along the streetscape. The Board may wish to provide guidance on how to ensure that the balconies can realize this concept without conflicting with the ficus trees.

Mass and Scale

As an infill project, the immediate context of mass and scale is established by a few of the existing multi-story buildings located on the east side of 5th street and directly across the street on the west side which is a pending Development Agreement mixed-use project, The Plaza at Santa Monica which will be larger in mass and scale. Additionally, located across the street, west of the subject site is a pending Administrative Approval

mixed-use project at 1338 5th Street which will also be 6 stories and 60 feet in total height matching the current massing of the subject building. The project complies with the allowable development envelope and the upper level step-back requirements while also providing modulation expressed by a carved-out courtyard space that is open to the sky at the south end of the building.

At the ground floor, the storefront glazing maximizes visual permeability at the commercial tenant space. The Board may wish to consider if the commercial space should have a more unique identity.

Along the side elevations, the project could be further developed. The south elevation will be in full view due to the adjacent one-story buildings. A series of projecting balconies throughout each level overlooking the courtyard and varying colors of cement plaster finishes with wood posts staggered at the private balconies enhances the building design. Conversely, the north side should provide the same material and accents as the south elevation. Perhaps replacing the light brown plaster accents on both elevations with same wood post material or staggering the planes to provide some offset will add some visual interest to the elevations. The Board may choose to review the overall design of the elevations holistically with the entire building, to provide guidance to the design team.

Materials and Details

A generic key of proposed materials is labeled on the elevation sheets on the applicant's submittal and details were not included at this time. The Board may wish to provide feedback and/or convey expectations for quality and type of materials for the formal design review plan submittal.

Landscape Design

The plans include a conceptual landscape plan. The common open space areas, specifically the ground floor courtyard, and roof deck, should be considered as well as any areas along the ground floor street frontage should be considered as an opportunity to provide a landscape design concept and design development. The Board may wish to provide guidance as to expectations of the landscape design in these spaces.

Potential Impact on Historic Resources

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

DISCUSSION

Proposed is a Tier 2, 6-story, 26,236 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 1,870 square feet of ground floor commercial. The proposed building design provides a modern infill project that activates the pedestrian frontage along the 1300 block of 5th Street with retail space and building entries. The project complies with the allowable development envelope and the upper level step back requirements while also providing modulation expressed by a carved-out courtyard space that is open to the sky and adjacent site at the south end of the building. At the ground floor, the storefront glazing maximizes visual permeability at the commercial tenant space. Additional open space for residents is available on both the 5th and 6th floors by providing two 230 square foot community rooms situated at the southwest corner of the site, and a roof deck overlooking 5th Street.

Staff suggests that the Board may wish to also consider the following with regards to design:

- Does the project have a clear architectural concept?
- Is the architectural concept sufficiently expressed around the building?
- Is the overall configuration appropriate to the project site and surrounding context?
- Is the mass and scale appropriate?
- Should the design concept be separate and distinct from the adjacent neighboring development proposals?
- Can the courtyard can be reconfigured or enlarged to improve the functionality of the space?
- Does the front façade integrate well with the two large existing ficus trees?
- What areas of the project require further design study?
- Are there recommendations to improve the pedestrian orientation of the street frontage design?
- Should the storefront commercial space have a more unique identity?
- Are the proportions of windows and other elements appropriate for the overall design?
- Do materials and details enhance the overall concept and represent a high quality project?
- What is the landscape design concept for the site?
- What design considerations should be addressed in the common open space areas?
- Where would landscaping be appropriate?
- What is the lighting strategy for the exterior of the building?

Attachments

A. Applicant's Submittal Material

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