



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: February 3, 2020

Agenda Item: 7.1

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

Subject: 19ARB-0457 to approve the building design, colors, materials, and landscape plans for a new three-story, mixed-use building with 46 residential units, ground floor commercial space, and a two-level subterranean parking garage.

The project was last reviewed on December 16, 2019.

Address: 2906-2918 Santa Monica Boulevard
Applicant: DFH Architects

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board approve application 19ARB-0457 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

Executive Summary

The proposed project is a three-story, mixed-use residential and commercial building containing 49,518 square feet of floor area. The project consists of 46 residential units, 12,080 square feet of commercial space, and a two level subterranean parking garage. Building and landscape design and material, as described in this report, are of high quality and comply with the design review findings. The project design has been revised in response to input received from the Architectural Review Board, and Staff recommends approval of the building design and landscape plans.

The proposal was considered by the Board on December 16, 2019 and was continued.

Board Comments and Applicant Responses

During its deliberation on December 16, 2019, the Board engaged in discussion regarding the project design and expressed a general support for its overall direction, some of the choices with the use of brick, and the availability of natural air and light to the residential units. The varied programming of the courtyard was also well-received. The Board voted to continue the hearing to provide the applicant with to address the following concerns expressed by Boardmembers:



Previous Project Rendering – Santa Monica Boulevard elevation - considered on December 16, 2019



Previous Modeling Image – Yale Street elevation – considered on December 16, 2019

Concern: The brick at the corner of Yale Street and Santa Monica Boulevard is too heavy and doesn't work well at the corner. The brick should be used more as a wall element rather than a structural element. The low-scale succulent screen at the corner has a confusing presence that clutters the corner.

Response: A corner column has been eliminated and the brick veneer has been removed from the two remaining structural columns prominently located on the

corner of the building, and their concrete materiality will be exposed. Concrete planters are now proposed in place of the movable planted screens. While this is a simpler approach, the planters appear too tall and have an uncomfortable relationship to the adjacent columns. A condition of approval has been included to address this condition.

Concern: Larger building openings on the north elevation into the courtyard will allow for more natural light and air to permeate into the courtyard. Repositioning the internal courtyard building will expand the usability of the entire courtyard space.

Response: The revised plans show the canted building mass on the upper floors shifting to the west, eliminating a small opening on the western portion of north elevation and expanding the width of the courtyard opening located at the eastern portion of the building. This will allow for increased cross ventilation and natural light to penetrate the deeper recesses of the courtyard. Although the building masses are no longer separated, a deep 18" wide inset will provide a meaningful visual break in the massing.

The shifting of the interior courtyard building to the west relieves a pinch point at the eastern end of the courtyard and creates a larger space on the eastern portions of the courtyard and enables enhanced landscaping to be installed.

Concern: The entry to the retail/commercial lobby along Yale Street should be redesigned to better identify as an entry.

Response: The Yale Street entry had appeared disjointed in relation to the building edges of the upper portions of the building which diminished its prominence as a major entry point. This entry has been shifted to align with the upper building edges (see detail 1 on Sheet A4.01) improving its appearance and heightening the sense of arrival.

Concern: Details of the standing seam metal siding, particularly its treatment at corners, needs to be provided.

Response: Details of the standing seam cladding do not appear to be included within the plan set, and will need to be provided for staff's review and approval prior to issuance of a building permit. A condition of approval has been included.

Concern: The rooftop equipment screening material should provide more of a contrast from the standing seam walls.

Response: The materiality of the rooftop mechanical equipment screening has been changed to a perforated aluminum panels with a 50 percent porosity. This will provide a lighter and complementary appearance to the standing seam siding material.

Concern: The landscape plan needs more work, particularly the planting configuration of the trees along the public streets.

Response: The overall landscaping plan for the ground floor level does not appear to have been altered from the original plan considered in December 2019. However, the plan for the courtyard has been redesigned in response to Board comments including refinements to the activity center, increasing the variety and intimacy of spaces, and expansion of the passive landscaping areas particularly those located on the eastern portions of the courtyard. In the series of smaller spaces in the south courtyard, an “L” shaped bench would better accommodate use of these areas.

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 project design has been modified in response to preliminary review by the Board and based on comments from the Planning Commission. The design is more cohesive and clearer in concept and creates a project with enhanced livability that is created with its upper-level courtyard. The proposed design is recommended for approval based on the findings below, and subject to the conditions outlined, including the submittal of more complete project detailing.

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 its design is a clear architectural concept reinforced by a variety of quality materials, and pedestrian-oriented ground floor commercial space. The design employs a palette of high quality materials and varying forms that are appropriate for the mix of commercial and residential uses.
- 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 the building will use high quality material such as broad board concrete, planters, dual pane insulated glass, a combination of

decorative metal materials, and outdoor living area that exceeds requirements, as detailed in the application submittal and as presented to the Architectural Review Board.

- C. The proposed design of the building or structure is compatible with developments on land in the general area in that it is similar in height and massing to other area developments along Santa Monica Boulevard and within its context adjacent to a lower density residential neighborhood. The building is consistent with the design and use objectives articulated in the Land Use & Circulation Element (LUCE) for the Mixed-Use Boulevard Low district in which it is located.
- 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 the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall revise the plans to reflect the following, to be reviewed and approved by staff:
 - a. Reduction in the height of the planters at the corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Yale Street and adjust their location so they do not touch the structural columns;
 - b. Detail the standing seam cladding; and
 - c. Provide “L” shaped benches in the linear south portion of the courtyard.
- 2. 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.
- 3. 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.
- 4. 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.

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

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