



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: November 18, 2019

Agenda Item: 7.8

To: Architectural Review Board

From: Michael Rocque, Associate Planner

CC: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design and Historic Preservation Planner

Subject: 19ARB-0501 to approve the building design, colors, and materials for the construction of new Tier 3, 8-story mixed-use building with 4,480 square feet of ground floor commercial space and 100 market rate residential units over four levels of subterranean parking.

Address: 1543 7th Street
Applicant: WS Communities

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) approve application 19ARB-0501 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

Executive Summary

The proposal is a Tier 3, 8-story, 59,848 square foot mixed-use building with 4,480 square feet of ground floor commercial space and 100 market rate residential units on a 14,962 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes four levels of subterranean parking with 104 non-required parking spaces and 175 bicycle parking spaces. The project site is a mid-block parcel along the east side of 7th Street consisting of two parcels currently developed with a multi-unit residential building and auto storage lot. The architectural treatment of the street front façade, openness of the ground floor and design centered around the creation of two large masses provide a Contemporary expression that is compatible with the mixed-use developments in the immediate area.

Background

On April 1, 2019, the preliminary design review of the project was conducted by the ARB. The Board members provided suggestions to improve the project and presentation and noted concerns that needed further consideration:

- The project provides very little three-dimensional variation and there appears to be a lack of proportional relationship along the front façade.
- The primary façade does not provide a potential compositional strategy for the building.
- The podium- level and overall open space is inadequate for the size and type of building and needs to be further explored.
- The use of an all-stucco material appears to be too simplistic and does not provide a sufficient quality design.
- The units have some functionality issues in that there is concern with the lack of light and air to the units at the ground floor.

- The roof deck open space is the most inviting area and should be enlarged or extended.
- The project should provide more common open space, amenity space and overall amenities in general.

In response to this feedback, the most significant design revisions that resulted was the design concept at the front façade by providing two framed masses separated by a recessed bay, expansion of the roof deck open space, reduction of the ground floor outdoor dining area, removal of the third level subterranean storage area and addition of a fourth level subterranean parking area increasing the non-required parking to 104 spaces.

An application for an Administrative Approval was submitted on July 12, 2018 with final approval granted on November 12, 2019. The Mobility and Resource Recovery & Recycling Divisions have approved the submittal.

As reported by the City Attorney at the June 25, 2019, 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. As part of that settlement, the parties further agreed that 1425 5th Street and 1543 7th Street will be entitled to expedited processing.

Specifically, the settlement agreement does not affect the ARB’s discretion, but requires the ARB issue a determination for all the projects located at 1425 5th Street and 1543 7th Street 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 developed with a 4-story multi-unit residential building consisting of 3 units and a 1-story light industrial auto storage building and surface parking lot on the east side of 7th Street between Broadway and Colorado Avenue with alley (7th Court) access. The block is predominantly developed with multi-unit residential developments ranging from 3 to 4 stories in height. Located just north of the subject site is an existing 4–story (36 units) multi-unit residential development and the parcel immediately south is a one-story commercial office building.

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	DCP-TA, Downtown Community Plan – Transit Adjacent
Parcel Area (SF):	14,996 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	Approximately 100’W x 149’-11.5”D
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	4-story Multi-unit residential building (1990) 1-story light industrial auto building (1956)
Project height / area / FAR	8 stories/ 84-feet 59,848 SF 4.0 FAR

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 – TA, 4-story multi-unit residential units South DCP – TA, Auto Storage (pending 4-story mixed-use development site) East DCP – LT, vacant (pending mixed-use development site) West DCP – TA, 3-4 story multi-unit residential units

Analysis

Site Design

The project includes demolition of all the existing development and construction of a new 84-foot tall mixed-use project comprised of a podium level and six upper level residential floors. The project also includes four levels of subterranean parking accessed from 7th Court.

The ground floor commercial retail space is envisioned for two large tenant spaces with storefront that are more closely situated at the required Building Frontage Line. This is a change from the preliminary design review in which the project was seeking a modification to the Building Frontage Line by providing a large outdoor dining area in which several Board members had concerns with the design, engagement and overall activation of this space and interaction with the pedestrian. The project now provides a small outdoor dining area adjacent to one of the proposed tenant spaces for the opportunity for a restaurant type use. The other tenant space at the ground floor is recessed from the front building façade by approximately 8 feet creating a break in the building. This break highlights the two separate framed masses at the front elevation and provides a small yet functional gathering spot in front of the building.

An understated residential lobby entrance is situated at the north side of the front façade with a leasing office space located adjacent to the lobby. There are three one-bedroom residential units proposed on the ground floor. The ground floor uses also include commercial tenant spaces, residential lobby, leasing office, utility and support rooms, loading area, and garage access ramp. The Board may wish to consider recommending, but not as a condition, the applicant further explore ways to improve the natural light and passive ventilation into these ground floor units.

Above the podium level (2nd floor) are six levels of residential units in a “C” shape arranged around a 1,503 square foot open space carved out of south face of the building. The common open space is primarily open to the sky with the exception of projecting private balconies on the upper floors. The design of the open space has remained relatively the same regarding size, however the landscape design has been improved to provide a defined social space with circulation at the periphery.

In response to providing more common open space and amenity space the applicant added a 429SF roof deck at the 6th floor and another 477 SF roof deck on the 8th floor at the northwest corner. Additional open space for residents is available on the revised and expanded roof deck totaling 2,200SF overlooking 7th street and on the 8th floor along the south (interior) side yard. There are two elevators located at the northwest corner of the project and two stairwells, one near the elevators and the other on the east end of the building.

Landscape Design

The plant palette consists of a variety of drought tolerant species that are provided at the ground level at the building frontage line, within the courtyard at the podium level, 6th floor common open space roof deck area, 8th floor common open space and the roof deck level. The surface decks, roof area and ground level use a variety of flooring materials including porcelain tile pavers, integral color concrete paving and decorative concrete paving system. The common open space decks appear to have adequate light, space, seating areas, and plantings. Additionally, the trellis proposed at the roof deck levels will help control sun and wind exposure for residents and guests.

Building Design/Architectural Concept

The proposed building design is intended to provide a Contemporary infill project that reinforces the street wall and provides continuity along the pedestrian frontage and intends to activate the pedestrian frontage along the 1400 block of 5th Street. At the front façade the concept is centered around the creation of two large, framed masses composed of repeating patterns of recessed balconies of alternating heights, supported from below by colonnades framing the retail area. These masses are offset from each other both in plan and elevation. Above the podium deck the building is configured as a “C shape around an open space.



Mass and Scale

As an infill project, the immediate context of mass and scale is established by the neighboring 3 and 4-story structures. As such, the proposal is not primarily consistent with the pattern of the adjacent residential development and mixed-use development on the block and Downtown vicinity. However, the project complies with the allowable development envelope and there is one other pending mixed-use project on the east side of the street immediately adjacent to the site at 1557 7th Street/701 Colorado Avenue (directly south) which is a project of similar size and scale. The current proposal expresses a more straightforward vertical volume through creation of the two large framed masses discussed above. The north mass, which sits slightly back from

the property line, sits on a one-story colonnade over the residential entrance and stops at the 8th floor in order to provide clean and unobstructed views from the roof deck level. The south mass sits on a two-story colonnade, above the outdoor dining space at the 2nd floor residential balcony and extend to the roof.

At the ground floor, aluminum storefront glazing shall be clear and un-tinted which maximizes visual permeability. Care should be taken to activate the space while enhancing the pedestrian experience.

Design, Details and Materials

The project will primarily be clad in plaster on all exterior walls, with color as the only element differentiating the various forms. Further, where plaster is proposed it should be finished as proposed and noted in the project plans. All doors and windows will be clear anodized aluminum metal framed with clear glazing. Balcony railings typically consist of clear glass frameless railing.

During the preliminary design review, board members expressed concern of an all-stucco material being used for the building as being too simplistic or not providing a sufficient design. The Board may wish to consider a solid surface panel or other materials used for the frame elements. A condition has been included for consideration. A building materials detail is illustrated on Sheet A2.20 of the applicant’s submittal.

The projects lighting plan has an overall soft appearance and provides adequate light that relates well to streetscape. Light fixtures include recessed linear “wall grazing” fixture, in grade up light at columns and surface mount wall scones at the ground level.

DESIGN ELEMENTS	PROPOSED EXTERIOR MATERIAL, FINISH AND COLOR
Façade	Plaster, smooth/light sand, painted (white, dark-navy, blue-silver, light grey and dark grey)
Windows	Aluminum metal, clear anodized glass
Doors	Aluminum metal, clear anodized glass
Roof	Built-up roofing (TBD)
Balcony guardrails	Frameless glass (clear) Metal mesh (white)
Mechanical Screening	Snap-on metal panels over steel supports
Refuse Screening	NA, separate room provided by alley
Trellis/Awning/Canopy	Plaster, smooth painted (white) Metal, clear coat

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. 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	99 square feet Each retail tenant may utilize a maximum of 25 square feet
Existing Sign Area (signs that will remain)	New Construction
Proposed Sign Area (this application)	Sign ST1: "1543" address canopy sign above entry = 8 SF (exempt) Sign ST2: parking entrance/exiting = 43.5 SF (exempt) Sign ST3: Parking identification blade sign=7.5 SF (exempt) Sign C1: Tenant Sign = 25 square feet max (X 2) = 50 SF Sign C2: Retail Tenant Blade Sign =5 SF (X2) =10SF (see compliance below)
Total Sign Area Upon Completion	118 SF (59 square feet of which is exempt) 59 SF commercial sign area
Total Number of New Signs	7
Compliance	No. Proposed blade signs cannot exceed 4.5SF total (SMMC 9.61.170(9))

Sign ST1 – "1543"

Proposed Sign Type: Address canopy sign, aluminum reverse channel letters, with internal LED
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 1'-9" X 4.5' (8 SF)
Proposed Colors: Semi-gloss white

Sign ST2 – parking entry/exit

Proposed Sign Type: Fabricated aluminum cabinet, with ½" thick routed and pushed through acrylic letters
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 2' X 21'-9" (20SF) total
Proposed Colors: White acrylic

Sign ST3 – Parking identification

Proposed Sign Type: Fabricated stainless-steel blade sign
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 2'-9" X 2'-9" (7.5SF) total
Proposed Colors: translucent lexan face and silk screened

Signs C1 (2) – "Future Tenant"

Proposed Sign Type: Fabricated aluminum letters mounted to raceway. alloy brushed, LED Halo lit with acrylic faces
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 1'-4" maximum cap height, 25 square feet maximum
Proposed Colors: translucent white acrylic

Signs C2 (2) – "Future Tenant"

Proposed Sign Type: Blade sign, non-illuminated
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 2'-9 x 2'-9" 10SF square feet-Blade sign cannot exceed a total 4.5SF (double sided-see compliance above)
Proposed Colors: TBD

Impact on Historic Resources

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

Code Compliance

This application has been preliminarily reviewed for compliance with the base district's development standards which address aspects of the plan that could result in significant changes to the project's design. A complete code-compliance review will not occur until 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 project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3) in that it can be seen with certainty that the proposed project does not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment in that the project involves the review of design-related issues associated with the proposed structure(s) in terms of general architectural design, proposed materials, colors, mechanical screening and/or landscape plans.

Summary

The project is a Tier 3 8-story, 59,848 square foot mixed-use building with 4,480 square feet of ground floor commercial space and 100 market rate residential units on a 14,962 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes four levels of subterranean parking with 104 non-required parking spaces. The project is a modern/contemporary building design intended to activate the streetscape and enhance the surrounding development and pedestrian realm. While the project has a strong concept, overall quality design and staff recommends approval.

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 design is straightforward yet interesting, complementing the adjacent buildings while providing its own design identity.
- 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 material such as, smooth and light sand finished plaster, exposed smooth concrete, clear anodized aluminum doors and windows and clear glass/metal mesh railing as detailed in the application submittal and as presented to the Architectural Review Board will be used.
- C. The proposed design of the building or structure is compatible with developments on land in the general area in that the mass, scale, configuration, setbacks and sidewalls are all complementary to the adjacent buildings.

- 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 submittal for plan check, the applicant shall submit a revised sign program for staff review that includes the following:
 - All retail tenant signs shall not include a visible raceway
 - All retail blade (projecting) signs shall not exceed a total of 4.5 square feet
2. Prior to submittal for plan check, the material of the “frame” elements should be modified to a solid surface panel or material other than stucco.
3. Stucco shall be smooth finish.
4. Prior to the submittal for plan check, the applicant shall revise project drawings or provide additional and/or supplemental drawings and/or details to provide details of the proposed railings, balconies, and planters subject to staff review and approval.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.

9. 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

10. No building permit shall be issued for the project until the developer complies with the requirements of Chapter 9.72 of the Santa Monica Municipal Code, the Child Care Linkage Program.

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 Section 9.61.100.

Attachments

- A. Applicant's Submittal Material