



# Architectural Review Board Report

**Architectural Review Board Meeting: March 2, 2020**

**Agenda Item: 7.3**

To: Architectural Review Board  
From: Rathar Duong, Associate Planner  
CC: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design and Historic Preservation Planner  
Regina Szilak, ARB Liaison  
Subject: 20ARB-0010 to approve the design, colors, materials, and landscape plans for the construction of a new two-story, approximately 29.5 feet high, 27,230 square-foot condominium project comprised of 19 residential dwelling units and 43 subterranean parking spaces located on four adjoining lots within the R2 district.  
Address: 2002-2018 21<sup>st</sup> Street (2020 Virginia Avenue)  
Applicant: Park Virginia, LLC

## **Recommended Action**

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board approve application 20ARB-0010 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

## **Executive Summary**

Proposed is a two-story multi-family residential building comprised of 19 dwelling units organized around a central courtyard with openings in the front and rear as well as at-grade patios, balconies, and private roof decks. All two-bedroom units range from 1,105 SF – 1,508 SF designed in a townhouse style configuration with direct access to the garage below. Three of the nineteen units (Units 11, 12, and 13) incorporate mezzanine levels and are located within the interior of the site. Two parking spaces per unit (38 spaces total) are provided in a subterranean level in private and enclosed garages that are accessible from the 10<sup>th</sup> Court (alley). A total of six short-term bicycle parking spaces are located along Virginia Avenue and 21<sup>st</sup> Street within the setback areas. Long-term bicycle parking is provided in a separate room within the subterranean parking level for a total of 20 bicycles. Additionally, five guest/visitor parking stalls are also provided in the same level.

The project site consolidates four adjoining parcels into one parcel totaling approximately 28,935 SF of lot area and located on the southwest corner of Virginia Avenue and 21<sup>st</sup> Street with frontage along Virginia Avenue.

Surrounding uses include other multi-family residential buildings within the same R2 zoning district ranging from one- to two-stories of varying density, building design,

configuration, and mass/scale. New landscaping and outdoor living spaces will be incorporated into the site and building design to enhance the quality and livability of the units while providing appropriate buffer to adjoining residential uses and from the alley. The contemporary style buildings incorporate high quality materials with a complementary color palette. The overall design employs three-dimensional elements resulting in an appropriate mass and scale sensitive to the neighborhood context. The current proposal reflects a series of design changes that have been made in response to staff and Planning Commission feedback.

**Background**

06DRP-007                    On May 15, 2019, the Planning Commission approved Development  
 06TM-021  
 09EIR-004:                    Review Permit (DRP) 06DRP-007, Tract Map 06TM-021 and certified the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) 09EIR-004 for a new 19-unit condominium project. A detailed background of the project review process is provided in the Planning Commission report available through the following link:  
<https://www.smgov.net/departments/pcd/agendas/Planning-Commission/2019/20190206/s2019020608-B.pdf>

**Project / Site Information**

The proposed project is a two-story, 19-unit condominium development within two buildings above a subterranean level containing 19, two-car private and enclosed garages (38 spaces) including guest/visitor parking and long-term bicycle parking facilities. The project consolidates four adjoining parcels totaling approximately 28,935 SF of lot area and containing six buildings and 15 rent-controlled units. The existing buildings are proposed to be demolished, including two Structures of Merit. The project site is a corner lot bounded by Virginia Avenue as its frontage and 21<sup>st</sup> Street within the Pico Neighborhood. In order to construct the proposed project, all 15 dwelling units must be vacated in compliance with the Ellis Act and rent control requirements before the buildings can be demolished.

The following table provides a brief summary of project data:

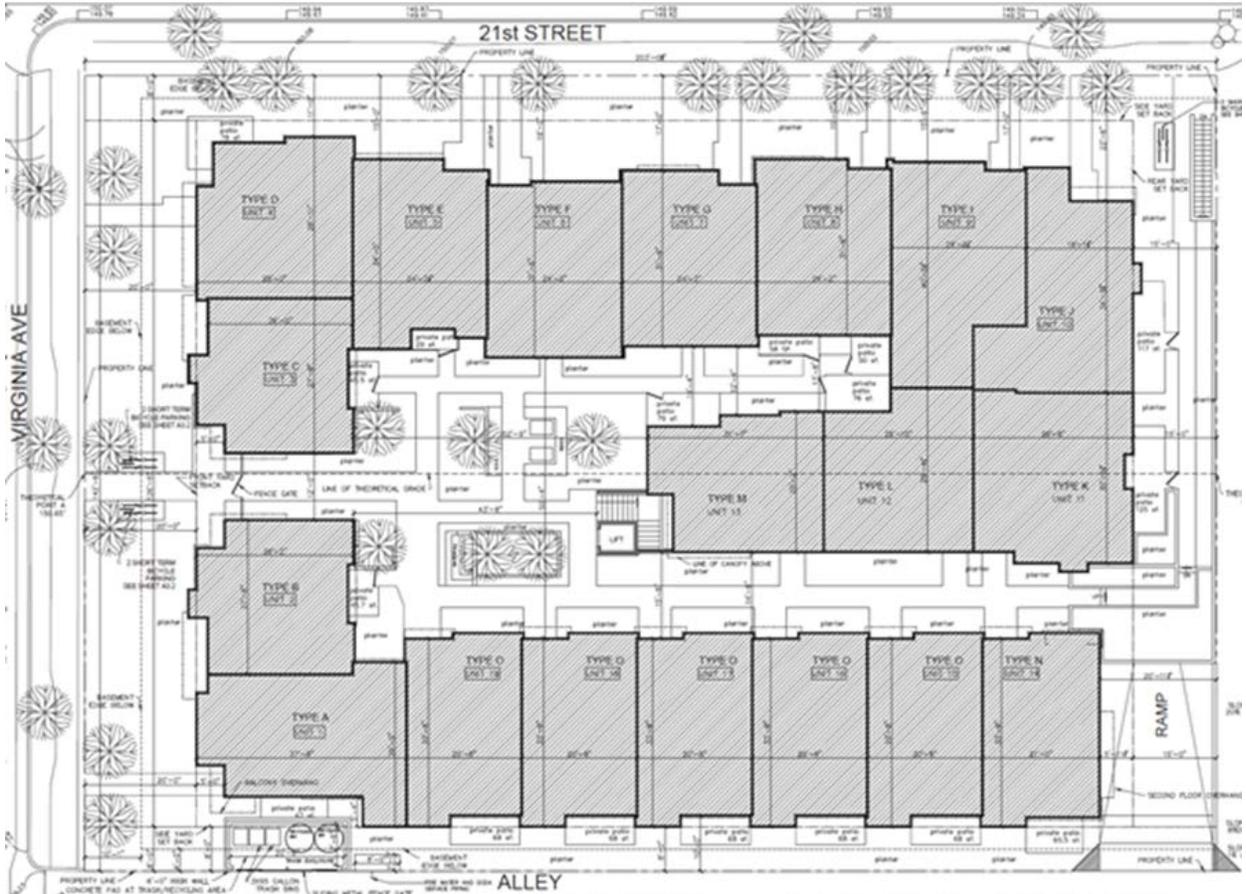
Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	R2 (Low Density Residential) District
Parcel Areas (SF)/Dimensions:	28,935 SF / 203' x 142.5'
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	Six one-story residential buildings comprising of 15 rent-controlled dwelling units totaling approximately 8,985 SF and three garage structures constructed between 1935-1951.
Historic Resource Inventory Status	2002 21 <sup>st</sup> Street designated Structure of Merit 2008 21 <sup>st</sup> Street designated Structure of Merit
CEQA	An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Statement of Overriding Considerations (SOC) were prepared and certified and adopted by the Planning Commission on May 15, 2019.

Adjacent Zoning & Use:	R2 (Low Density Residential) District adjoins the subject site on all sides and is developed with one- and two-story multi-family residential buildings of varying density.
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**Analysis**

Site Design

The project site consolidates four adjoining lots with addresses ranging from 2002-2018 21<sup>st</sup> Street containing six buildings and 15 rent-controlled units. The proposed project is comprised of two, two-story detached buildings (Building 1 and Building 2) with a combined total of 19 residential units situated on a rectangular corner parcel bounded by Virginia Avenue, 21<sup>st</sup> Street, and 10<sup>th</sup> Court (alley). For purposes of determining setback requirements, the buildings address Virginia Avenue as its frontage and 21<sup>st</sup> Street as its side street consistent with the Zoning Code. Further, the siting of Building 1 with respect to its variation in setback distances from 21<sup>st</sup> Street shows sensitivity and consistency with the development pattern along the same street where there is no uniform setback.



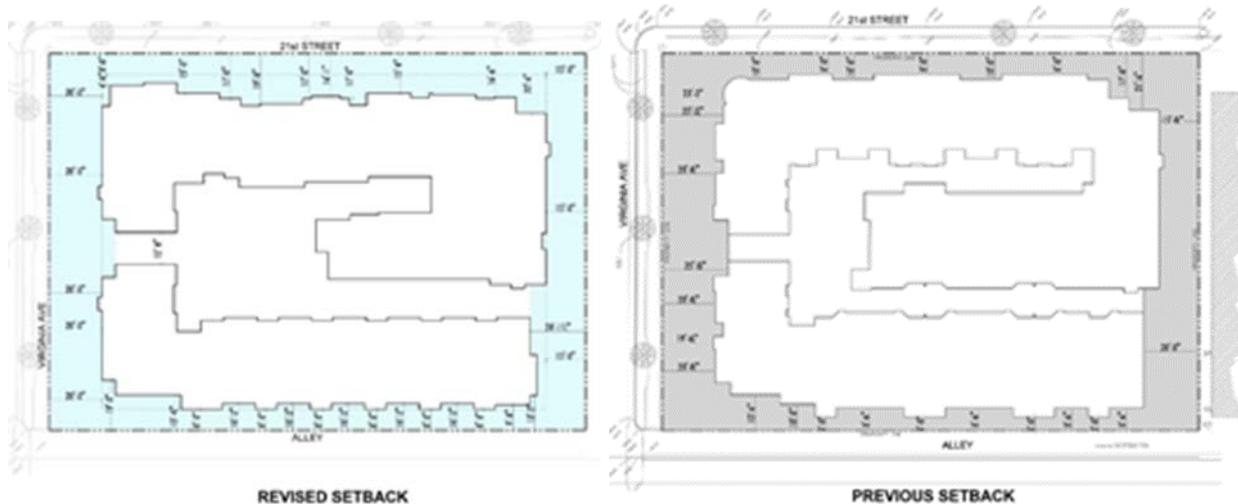
*Previous Site Plan*



*Revised Site Plan*

The townhouse units are arranged in two buildings organized around a central courtyard punctuated with a primary entry portal from Virginia Avenue that connects to a secondary opening east of the site which leads to the rear of the property. Placement of the main entry off of Virginia Avenue as well as entrances to individual units along 21<sup>st</sup> Street and entry to the subterranean parking level from the alley activate street frontages providing a design that is pedestrian-oriented. Trash/recycling area is located directly off the alley towards the front of the property as required and approved by Refuse, Recovery, and Recycling (RRR) Division.

Private open spaces are provided throughout the site as patios, balconies, and private roof decks. The size of the private outdoor space range from 76 SF – 396 SF and complies with the required 50 SF for each unit. The majority of the units are provided with a combined outdoor living area between 200 to over 300 square feet.



The placement of the buildings shown on Sheet A2.2 meets or exceeds all required minimum setback and provides additional opportunities and flexibility for a varied and attractive landscape design and outdoor living spaces that further enhance the livability and quality of the units.

### Landscape and Courtyard Design

The project's primary open space is provided within a central courtyard that is approximately 4,500 SF in size or about 237 SF per unit. Setback areas along Virginia Avenue and 21<sup>st</sup> Street will also be landscaped to enhance the entry experience along both street-facing facades. The common outdoor living space is integrated with both buildings and is accessible from all units either from the private patios or front entry of each unit. The courtyard landscape is situated above a parking deck and will be achieved by depressed planters as recommended by the Planning Commission. Sheets V.5 and V.8 provide an overview of the landscape design and proposed features while the landscape plan is shown on Sheet LP-1.

The primary space of the courtyard is a circular gathering space ringed with a primary pathway linked to private walks leading to patios and entries of nearby units. The linear spaces that lead to the units are primarily circulation and otherwise is filled with planting. The Board may wish to consider if additional seating/social space would be desirable. A more successful design may prevent the rear courtyard space from simply being used as a pass-through, but a design that encourages social space and use of the courtyard in a variety of ways.



*Interior Courtyard View – Original 2014 Design*



*Revised Interior Courtyard View*

Variety in the landscape design will be accomplished through a select plant palette that includes groundcover, shrubs, and trees within at-grade and bermed planting areas. The plant palette is shown on Sheet LP-1 and will include evergreen and deciduous trees such as *Acer palmatum* 'Atropurpureum' (Red Japanese Maple), *Syagrus romanzoffianum* (Queen Palm), and *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Little Gem' (Dwarf Magnolia Tree). The larger and taller plants will be supported by shrubs and groundcover including *Ophiopogon japonica* (Mondo Grass), *Asplenium bulbiferum* (Mother Fern), *Liriope muscari* 'Gigantea' (Giant Lily Turf) as well as *Dymondia margaretae* 'Silver Carpet' and *Delosperma Spp.* (Ice Plant).

The overall palette is generally appropriate and are arranged and layered to create a thoughtful design, but may benefit with simplification, ie reduction in plant variety, particularly the proposed shrubs and groundcover. Additionally, Ice Plant can be an attractive groundcover; however, its growth habit is invasive and can out-compete native flora and should be replaced with an alternative plant species. The outdoor space is further enhanced with a BBQ area, built-in seating areas/benches to facilitate social gatherings and encourage year-round use. A water feature is also proposed, which the Board may wish to consider replacing with a landscape feature. A few ground floor patios open directly to the courtyard providing easy access to the outdoor area and impromptu interaction with neighbors.

#### Building Design/Architectural Concept

The two buildings which make up the project are designed in the contemporary style in an architecturally eclectic neighborhood. A contemporary and articulated design is achieved through its composition of building forms, clean lines, modern finishes and flat and shed roof design of standing seam metal. The buildings are configured as townhomes consisting of two levels of living spaces above grade with direct access to private enclosed garages in a subterranean parking level below.

Two buildings, containing 11 and 8 units, identified as Building 1 and Building 2, respectively, surround a central courtyard that is the common outdoor space. Both buildings line the perimeter of the site, outside of the required setback areas. Building 1 is the larger of the two buildings with a reversed G-shaped footprint fronting Virginia Avenue and 21<sup>st</sup> Street with four units that turn the corner extending into the center of the lot. Building 2 is an L-shaped building that addresses Virginia Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> Court (alley). All units that parallel the perimeter of the property are two-stories above grade with a roof deck. The three units on the interior of the site are two-story with a mezzanine level (Sheet A2.3) without roof decks as illustrated on Sheet A2.5.

Both buildings are sufficiently modulated along their exterior and interior façades through receding and projecting volumes which are further enhanced by different finishes such as stucco, horizontal wood siding and metal panel in a complementary color palette. The modulation also lends to a clear delineation of the units and informs the placement of the entries. Entries are recessed and enhanced with a metal awnings to provide cover and further enhance the arrival experience and street presence. Flat and shed roof designs are employed to create a varying roofline and is clad in standing seam metal.

The modern, clean, simple design and finishes are consistent with and complementary to other multi-family buildings located within this architecturally diverse neighborhood.

### Mass and Scale

The proposed buildings are two-story high in a mixed neighborhood of one- and two-story, single- and multi-unit buildings. Numerous two-story, multi-family buildings exist around the project site and within the immediate neighborhood. As such, the mass and scale of the proposed project is consistent with these existing buildings.

The proposed buildings comply with the size, story, and height requirements of the 2006 Zoning Code. While both buildings are rectilinear in shape, their mass and scale are sensitively addressed and benefit from sufficient modulation along its facades. Aside from achieving visual interest, the modulated facades add variation throughout the exterior walls via projecting and receding volumes and in turn, break the mass by delineating the units. In a similar approach, various volumes are treated differently through a variety of finishes such as wood siding, stucco, and metal panel.

The fenestration pattern also appears appropriate to the building design. The placement, size, and proportion of the windows eliminate blank wall surfaces. Upper level balconies further punctuate the façades creating a layered appearance across all prominent elevations. Similarly, the composition of the facades through the placement of the various design and building features allows the interplay of shades and shadows that help highlight the building's three-dimensional quality.

### Design, Details, and Materials

The contemporary building is enhanced by a simple material and color palette consisting of three primary finishes: wood siding, fiber cement siding, and steel troweled stucco as illustrated on Sheets B.15 and B.16. The application of these materials appear thoughtful and their start and termination points are logical and adeptly addressed. Control joints are incorporated into the stucco finish to limit crack lines and introduce a subtle pattern that echo the pattern of the metal roof, siding, windows, and railing. Overall, this surface treatment is appropriate, but can be further simplified to minimize a busy appearance, particularly in small stucco areas.

The various finishes are incorporated strategically, although appear randomized across all elevations to highlight certain projecting and receding volumes for a visually balanced application of materials and colors. Due to the alignment of the stairwell enclosures, the west (alley) elevation result in a rhythmic repeating vertical pattern as depicted on Sheet V.7 and appear most successful of all elevations.

The roof design is a combination of flat with parapet wrapped in plaster and sloped clad in standing seam metal. The parapet design provides an effective screening of the rooftop HVAC equipment. Details of various features of the design, their attachment, as well as transition of different materials are provided on Sheets A5.1 to A5.4.

The fenestration is appropriately addressed and appears successful through their placement, alignment, and proportion. The deliberate placement of the windows create rhythm along the façades and their sizes help eliminate large expanses of solid walls that

is generally attributed to the appearance of added mass. All windows and sliding glass doors to the units are anodized aluminum windows while the front entry door will be wood with a vertical glass inset. A simple horizontal steel railing with a flat ½” x 2” thin profile will be utilized at the balconies.



*Original 2014 Design: North Elevation (Virginia Avenue)*



*Revised North Elevation (Virginia Avenue)*



*Original 2014 Design: East Elevation (21st Street)*



*Revised East Elevation (21st Street)*

The current design reflects significant improvement over previous design iterations. While staff supports the overall design approach, additional refinements may be necessary such as further simplification of the design to achieve a clearer architectural concept/idea, reconsideration of variety of materials, their placement, as well as where they terminate. Additionally, consideration should be given to providing “J” molding, corner bead or other detail to ensure corners of stucco elements are executed in a quality manner. Moreover, since the site is bounded by two streets and an alley making it highly visible, the applicant should continue focusing on creating visually interesting design moments at the building corners.

DESIGN ELEMENTS	PROPOSED EXTERIOR MATERIAL, FINISH AND COLOR
Façade	Horizontal Wood Siding (clear stain) Fiber Cement Siding (grey) Steel Troweled Stucco (white)
Windows	Clear Anodized Aluminum (silver)
Doors	Wood entry door with glass inset
Roof	Flat and shed roof design (standing seam metal) with roof decks
Mechanical Screening	Roof parapet walls
Refuse Screening	An enclosure for refuse/recycling bins is provided off the alley
Railing	Painted Steel Guardrail at Balconies (silver)
Awning	Metal Clad Awning (silver)

Impact on Historic Resources

Two of the six buildings (2002 and 2008 21<sup>st</sup> Street) are Structures of Merit and the demolition has been reviewed by the Landmarks Commission.

**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**

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared and a Final EIR was published for the project in November 2012. In May 2014, the Planning Commission held a hearing to consider certification of the Final EIR. Following the initial Planning Commission hearing on May 28, 2014, a revised EIR was prepared to reflect issues relating to historic resources and the designation of 2002-2008 21<sup>st</sup> Street as Structures of Merit as well as some minor changes to the project design, including reduction in unit count. A Recirculated Draft EIR was prepared and released for a 45-day public review period beginning on March 13, 2018 and ending on April 27, 2018.

The Final EIR was published in December 2018 which concluded that the project would result in a significant and unavoidable impact on historical resources and groundborne construction vibration requiring the preparation of Statement of Overriding Considerations (SOC). Due to the significant and unavoidable impacts of the project with respect to Construction Vibration and Historic Resources, approval of the project will require the Planning Commission to adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations, determining that the benefits of the project would outweigh the potential impacts identified in the EIR. A more detailed discussion of the project environmental review process is provided in the Planning Commission report on Pages 32-35 and is available through the following link: <https://www.smgov.net/departments/pcd/agendas/Planning-Commission/2019/20190206/s2019020608-B.pdf>

On May 15, 2019, the Planning Commission certified the Final EIR and adopted the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

### **Summary**

The proposed project is a contemporary two-story infill development that is comprised of 19 residential dwelling units within two buildings configured as townhomes over a subterranean parking level.

The buildings exhibit a residential scale and appearance that is achieved through its site planning, setback, design treatment/finishes, modulation, placement of entries, and their orientation/connectivity to the Public Right-of-Way. For these reasons, the proposal is consistent with the surrounding residential uses and appears compatible with the development pattern and existing context of this eclectic residential neighborhood.

The building design has been substantially improved since its initial design iteration and the applicant has been diligent and focused in addressing the feedback provided by staff. As noted in the staff report, there may be additional opportunities in simplifying the design further to strengthen the project's architectural concept, such as minimizing the control joints, where different materials meet, and simplifying the landscape palette as well as improving the quality of the courtyard to include more seating areas and social spaces. Conditions have been included to reflect these minor refinements.

### **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 contemporary design is generally cohesive throughout the project. Its site planning and outdoor spaces are further enhanced by a layered landscape design achieved through a variety of plant materials. The buildings are situated on the lot to complement the existing neighborhood context and development pattern such as consistency in setback distances and entry placement that offer direct access to the units from the streets. The design incorporates a palette of high quality materials and colors, such as cement fiber and wood siding, steel-troweled stucco finish, and aluminum windows to highlight its varying forms which appear complementary to the architectural style.

- 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 anodized aluminum window, wood and cement fiber siding, steel-troweled stucco, standing seam metal roof, metal clad balcony and canopy for lasting durability as detailed in the application submittal and as presented to the Architectural Review Board will be used. Additionally, various design features of the project are adequately detailed to ensure quality construction.
- C. The proposed design of the building or structure is compatible with developments on land in the general area in that the buildings are designed to complement the neighborhood context and development pattern of the existing neighborhood. For example, the setback distances are consistent with the prevailing setback within the immediate neighborhood and entries to the units front the streets with direct access. The mass and scale are thoughtfully addressed through its projecting and receding forms, fenestration pattern, and varying roofline.
- 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:**

Prior to submittal for plan check and subject to staff review (Conditions 1-7):

1. Provide details where materials meet and terminate.
2. Provide corner beads or other detail at all plaster elements for quality installation.
3. Simplify the control joints to minimize and/or eliminate a busy pattern.
4. Simplify the landscape palette by reducing the number of plant species to achieve a more cohesive design.
5. Replace *Delosperma spp.* (Ice Plant) with a non-invasive and/or alternative species.
6. Consider design alternatives to incorporate to the rear linear portions of the courtyard that lead to the rear units and above the driveway with additional seating areas/social spaces within selected landscape planters.
7. Consider replacement of the water feature (fountain) in the courtyard with a landscape feature.

8. The recordation of a deed restriction is required for the consolidation of four lots into one project site prior to the issuance of building permits.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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. Final plant material selection shall be subject to staff review and approval.
12. 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, including Parks and Recreation Facilities Tax, Condominium Facilities Tax and Affordable Housing Production Program.
13. 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 Section 9.61.100.

## **Attachments**

- A. Applicant's Submittal Material

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