



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: March 2, 2020

Agenda Item: 7.4

To: Architectural Review Board
From: Ross Fehrman, AICP, Associate Planner
CC: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design and Historic Preservation Planner
Subject: 20ARB-0035 to approve the design, colors, materials, and landscape plans for the construction of a new four-story, 73-unit, 100% affordable housing project totaling 68,153 square feet with one subterranean level of parking and 3,543 square feet of commercial office space.
Address: 1834-1848 14th Street
Applicant: Anthony Fonesca (Community Corporation of Santa Monica)

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board approve application 20ARB-0035 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

Executive Summary

Proposed is a new four-story, 73-unit, 100% affordable housing project totaling 68,153 SF with 3,543 SF of ground floor commercial office space to be used for organization operations and one subterranean level of parking located in the Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zone district between Michigan Avenue and Pico Boulevard. The design has an internal courtyard that opens onto 14th Street with a community room at the ground floor facing the street. The project has a clear governing design concept of solids and voids that is further enhanced by a consistent use of materials and colors on all four exterior elevations.

Background

Architectural Review Board Preliminary Concept Review

As a Development Review Permit (DRP) application, the proposed project was presented to the Architectural Review Board (ARB) on December 2, 2019 for a preliminary conceptual review pursuant to SMMC Section 9.40.040. Overall, the Board was supportive of the project including its massing, scale, openness of the courtyard, and overall design concept of solids and voids that reads as a series of cubic forms. However, the Board commented on the need for a consistent rhythm to the front façade design, specifically at the southeast corner. While the Board was very supportive of the courtyard and its relation to the building, comments were provided to improve the courtyard amenity including landscaping and layout to take advantage of the space for additional light and air, and to make it a more meaningful and strategic gathering space.



Figure 1 – Prior Project Rendering (14th Street elevation); As reviewed by the ARB on December 2, 2019

The current project design has modified the cubic form rhythm along the front façade in response to the Board’s comments, and has modified the programming of the courtyard.

New State Law

Subsequent to the Board’s preliminary review, new State law has come into effect that has resulted in the project being altered. As the project is a 100% affordable housing development and located within one-half mile of a major transit stop, the project qualifies for new State allowances stipulated in Assembly Bill (AB) 1763. Pursuant to AB 1763, the applicant is afforded no maximum controls on density and a height increase. Proposed is an increased floor area ratio (FAR) from 1.75 to 2.27 and one additional story bringing the proposed project from three to four stories. Furthermore, the project is also allowed to request concessions to development standards pursuant to Government Code Section 65915 in order to achieve the proposed density. The applicant has requested two concessions to reduce the number of residential parking spaces required from 64 to 54 spaces and to allow a 5’-4” high encroachment into the required daylight plane for properties adjacent to residential districts. The combination of these provisions and concessions allows for the addition of 18 affordable units.



Figure 2 – Proposed Project (14th Street elevation)

Planning Commission – Development Review Permit Approval

On February 5, 2020, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the DRP (19ENT-0032) for the proposed project. In its review, the Commission imposed the following design conditions that relate to ARB review:

1. The Architectural Review Board in its review shall pay particular attention to the size of the east elevation windows to ensure adequate light and visibility is provided for the proposed units.

Project / Site Information

The project is located on 14th Street across from the Woodlawn Cemetery and is zoned Neighborhood Commercial (NC). The subject block of 14th Street is largely comprised of one- and two-story retail and office buildings, with a recent approval of a three-story, 100% affordable senior housing project consisting of 39-units located two parcels to the north of the subject property. The subject site is comprised of four separate parcels (1834, 1840, 1844, and 1848 14th Street).

The following table provides a brief summary of project data:

Zoning District	Neighborhood Commercial (NC)
Parcel Area (SF):	30,060 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	200' W x 150' D
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	1834 14 th St – One-story office/retail (1972) 1840 14 th St – One-story office/retail (1962) 1844 14 th St – Surface parking (1922) 1848 14 th St – Surface parking (1968) All proposed to be demolished.
Historic Resource Inventory Status	Existing buildings are not listed on the HRI
CEQA	Exempt pursuant to Section 15194
Adjacent Zoning & Use:	North: NC – One-story office and three-story residential South: NC – One-story office and retail East: PL – Woodlawn Cemetery West: R2 – One- and two-story multi-unit residential

Analysis

Site Design

The project has been designed as a courtyard building with one level of subterranean parking and four stories of residential units. Positioned around the central courtyard on the ground floor is a community room facing 14th Street, commercial office space to be used for organization operations, on-site amenities such as a laundry room, and residential units. A visual connection has been provided into the courtyard from 14th Street via an entry plaza and full-height break in the front facade of the building. In addition to the courtyard, a layering of common open space areas overlooking 14th Street have been

incorporated into the break on the front façade at each of the upper floors. The second story includes a horizontal terrace cantilevered over the ground floor offices and entry plaza, while the third and fourth stories provide smaller terraces that are stepped back and cantilevered over the second story open space. Additional common open space areas are provided on the fourth floor along the south elevation and the northwest corner of the building. The vehicular entrance is at the rear alley with a driveway leading to the subterranean parking as well as the refuse/recycling rooms. Bicycle parking has been provided both at the front of the building and within the subterranean garage.

Landscape Design

Landscaping is fully integrated into the project design, providing screening and softening at the building perimeter, while creating a sense of place in the courtyard. Additionally, the common open spaces located on the upper stories have each a unique plant palette to provide an identity for each level.

The front elevation will be bordered by a continual planting area on grade and within raised planters comprised of *Muhlenbergia capillaris* ('Regal Mist' Pink Muhly), *Anigozanthos 'Big Red'* (Red Kangaroo Paw), *Dodonaea viscosa* (Hopbush), and *Senecio mandraliscae kleinia*. The elevated front entry plaza will be highlighted with two *Acer palmatum 'Sangokaku'* (Coral Bark Japanese Maple) trees and two *Olea Europaea 'Majestic Beauty'* (Fruitless Olive) trees, as well as *Agave 'Blue Glow'* (Blue Glow Agave) and *Dianella Revoluta 'Allyn-Citation'* (Coolvista Dianella) in raised planters. Additionally, a new landscaped parkway will be provided. Both the north and south side facades will be bordered by *Bambusa oldhamii* (Giant Timber Bamboo) to provide screening and privacy between the subject and adjacent parcels, however staff believes this selection may significantly diminish daylight into units once full grown. *Arbutus unedo 'Compacta'* (Strawberry Tree) and a green screen will be provided at the rear alley.

The main landscaped areas will be an interior ground floor courtyard and the terraces on each upper story. The courtyard will provide a common open space with an arrangement of built-in seating and a tot lot with playground equipment and synthetic grass. Landscape features such as strataweb mounds and a rain garden will be incorporated along with four *Feijoa Sellowiana* (Pineapple Guava) trees and two *Acer palmatum dissectum 'Crimson Queen'* (Red Laceleaf Japanese Maple) trees. The parking level below has been configured around a space to allow for in-grade planting in the center of the courtyard. This is helpful to enable full grown trees. However, the planting plan (LP1) shows this primarily as a viewing garden surrounded by circulation. Staff recommends this area be redesigned to promote greater usability of this substantial amenity space.

The second story terrace will have movable furniture and raised planters for vegetable gardens, bordered by *Anigozanthos flavidus 'Yellow Gem'* (Kangaroo Paw) and *Lomandra longifolia 'Breeze'* (Dwarf Mat Rush) in fiberglass planters. The third story terrace will be a more intimate space with a single *Citrus lemon 'meyer improved'* (Improved Meyer Lemon) tree surrounded by movable furniture and a kid's play place. The three open spaces located on the fourth floor will be divided between an outdoor kitchen area and seating areas with vegetable garden areas and *Citrus lemon 'meyer improved'* (Improved Meyer Lemon) trees.

Synthetic grass is proposed throughout the project at the courtyard tot lot and upper story outdoor spaces. Staff has recommended a condition to revise this material selection.

Building Design/Architectural Concept

The building is organized around an internal courtyard with an overall governing design concept of solids and voids reading as a series of cubic forms for each unit. In order to break down the four-story mass, a layering of two distinct planes has created a series of systematic shifts carried throughout every elevation of the building enhancing the reading of the individual cubic forms. The terraced break at the front façade affords a connection from the interior courtyard and the Public Right-of-Way, while the transparent community room glazing provides a welcoming entrance into the building.

Mass and Scale

Building modulation is significant to this project as it is in direct correlation to the design concept of solids and voids. While a large amount of the mass and scale has been reduced by the interior courtyard, the reading of separate cubic forms by the creation of two distinct planes on all four exterior elevations, along with the terraced front elevation break, help to reduce the perceived mass from the Public Right-of-Way. While the building rises to 42 feet in height, a daylight plane along the west (alley) elevation has been provided to better transition to the residential neighborhood to the rear of the project, and special attention has also been given to the proportions of the building to ensure the scale of each floor is consistent with adjacent properties. It should be noted that there are several projects similar in scale on nearby parcels. As such, the scale of the structure complements the surrounding development and is sensitive to the adjacent land uses.

Design, Details, and Materials

The systematic use of materials strengthens the overall design concept of solids and voids. The two distinct planes have a consistent material application carried throughout the entire project with the front plane clad in a “Champagne Metallic” colored metal sales ribbed paneling and the rear plane surfaced with a blue “Revel Blue” painted stucco. The fenestration will all be clear anodized aluminum with spandrel “Honey Bees – Vitro Starphire” colored glass incorporated into the windows placed within the metal paneled front plane to add additional color. The storefront glazing at the front community room will also be clear anodized aluminum. The stucco vertical circulation shafts will be painted a grey “Shark Grey” color and the interior courtyard elevations will have grey “Portico” stucco in exchange for the metal sales paneling.

DESIGN ELEMENTS	PROPOSED EXTERIOR MATERIAL, FINISH AND COLOR
Façade	Metal sales ribbed paneling (Champagne Metallic) Stucco (“Revel Blue” – Sherwin Williams 6530) Stucco (“Shark Grey” – Omega 9227) Stucco (“Portico” – Sherwin Williams 7548)
Windows	Clear anodized aluminum Spandrel glass (“Honey Bees – Vitro Starphire”
Doors	Clear anodized aluminum
Roof	Flat
Mechanical Screening	Roof parapet

Refuse Screening	N/A – located in subterranean level
Lighting	Lighting plan not provided
Railing	Steel guardrails

Conditions have been included to ensure that corners and locations where materials meet are properly detailed.

Compliance with Special Conditions related to design

The Planning Commission imposed a design related condition for the Board to review the size of the east elevation windows to ensure adequate light and visibility is provided into those units. The applicant has provided details of the subject windows illustrating that the proposed dimensions are 3’ wide x 7’-6” in height, which will provide adequate light and visibility into the subject units.

Potential Impact on Historic Resources

The subject property is 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 proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15194 of the State Implementation Guidelines in that the project involves the construction of an affordable housing development project that meets the threshold criteria set forth in Section 15192; the project site is not more than five acres; the project is located within an urbanized area; the project site and adjacent parcels are developed with qualified urban uses; the project consists of construction of residential housing consisting of 100 or fewer units that are affordable to low-income households; and the developer of the project provides sufficient legal commitments to the appropriate local agency to ensure the continued availability and use of the housing units for lower income households for a period of at least 30 years at monthly housing costs deemed to be “affordable rent” for lower income, very low income, and extremely low income households as determined pursuant to Section 50053 of the Health and Safety Code.

Summary

The proposed four-story, 73-unit, 100% affordable housing project has a clear architectural concept with a well-developed and adequately programmed courtyard that will enhance the quality of life for the residents. High quality materials are being proposed along with ample outdoor space for the tenants. While the building maximizes the parcel’s potential, it is respectful to the neighboring uses.

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 project is designed with a clear architectural concept, a fully developed courtyard, landscape design, and high quality materials. The building is also appropriately scaled for its location.
- 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 corrugated metal panels and clear anodized aluminum windows 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 project design is appropriate for the context of its location with its massing and configuration, three-dimensional façade design, and material selection.
- 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:

For Conditions 1 thru 5, prior to submittal of building permits:

- 1. Provide details on the following design features for staff to review:
 - Details at the corners and where materials meet
 - Parapet details
 - Window details
 - Railing details
- 2. Revise the landscape design at courtyard to provide a more useable amenity space rather than viewing garden.
- 3. Select a plant other than Giant Timber Bamboo along both side parcels lines that is not as dense and thick.
- 4. Select alternative material(s) to replace the use of synthetic grass at the tot lot and upper level terraces.
- 5. Provide additional information about paving pattern at courtyard, including detail plan and finishes.

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, exposue 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. 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.

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 SMMC9.61.100.

Attachments

- A. Applicant's Submittal Material

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