



# Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: May 4, 2020

Agenda Item: 7.4

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

Subject: 20ARB-0066 to approve the building design, colors, and materials for the construction of new Tier 3, 8-story, mixed-use building with approximately 2,313 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 93 SRO units and 41 residential units over four levels of subterranean parking.

Address: 1415 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Applicant: WS Communities

## Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) approve application 20ARB-0066 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

## Executive Summary

The proposal is a Tier 3, 8-story, 59,924 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 2,457 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 93 SRO units and 41 residential units on a 14,981 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes four levels of subterranean parking with 109 non-required parking spaces and (19 short-term and 159 long-term) bicycle parking spaces. The 15,000 square foot site is a mid-block lot developed with a two-story commercial building on one half of the lot and another two-story commercial building on the other half of the of the lot with a surface parking lot located at the rear of the site. The main façade along 7<sup>th</sup> Street provides three-dimensionality expressed by projecting private balconies at each level and presents a modern design that is compatible with the mixed-use developments in the immediate area.

## Background

On December 2, 2019, the preliminary design review of the project was conducted by the ARB. The Board members provided suggestions to improve the project and noted concerns that needed further consideration:

- The columns at the ground floor appear to be an impediment to the pedestrian activity along the street frontage and to rethink the idea of the colonnade location and impact on functionality.
- The overall programming and relationship of the SRO units can be represented as a design opportunity with the recognition for that culture.
- The opportunity to create greater porosity between the street and courtyard.

- The visible order of the balconies at the front façade needs improvement and consider more of an offering to the public with an improved design.
- The thickness of the ribbons/bands at the floor lines vary without a clear ordering mechanism.
- The courtyard design is somewhat separated in an unwelcoming way from the units and a solar study should be reviewed to understand how the planting in the courtyard area would thrive.

In response to this feedback, the most significant design revisions that resulted was improved porosity between the street and courtyard, redesign of the ground and second floor street frontage and column design, visible order of the balconies at the front façade and thickness of the ribbons/bands at the floor lines.

An application for an Administrative Approval was submitted on October 15, 2019 with final approval granted on January 30, 2020. The Mobility and Resource Recovery & Recycling Divisions have also approved the submittal.

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 to 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. For this project the ARB final determination would need to be made by April 29, 2020. 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 a mid-block parcel on the east side of 5<sup>th</sup> Street between Santa Monica Boulevard and Broadway Avenue with alley (5<sup>th</sup> Court) access. The 1400 block of 5<sup>th</sup> Street consists of a mix of buildings and uses including six-story mixed-use residential apartment buildings, one- and two-story commercial buildings, and parking lots. Located immediately south of the subject site are two other Administrative Approval mixed-use projects owned by the same ownership group consisting of 92-market rate units at 1425 5<sup>th</sup> (formally approved) and a 63 (45 SRO and 18 residential) unit project at 1437 5<sup>th</sup> Street (pending formal approval).

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	DCP-TA, Downtown Community Plan – Transit Adjacent
Parcel Area (SF):	15,000 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	Approximately 100'W x 150'D

Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	Two-story commercial building (1980) Two-story commercial building (1966)
Project height / area / FAR	8 stories/ 84-feet 59,924 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 commercial (Retail and Office) South DCP – TA, 1-commercial retail (Future Mixed-use AA Project-1425 5th) East DCP – TA, 1-story and 3-story commercial buildings (Light Industrial and Retail) West DCP – TA, 5- mixed-use commercial building

## 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 ground floor commercial/residential and seven residential floors above. The project also includes four levels of subterranean parking that includes, storage, bike 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, however the applicant is providing 109 spaces which is 27 additional spaces than the maximum allowed (82) per the settlement agreement.

The ground floor design is envisioned for 2,313 square feet of area comprised of two large commercial tenant spaces with a recessed entry at the south side of the building frontage and an entry to a 268 square foot leasing office with six residential units located around the courtyard towards the center of the site. In response to create greater porosity between the street and ground floor courtyard a canopy has been added above the residential entry to emphasize the two-story scale. A new 273 square foot exterior deck above the entry is also included to visibly connect the two areas together. This design also appears to achieve increased natural light and ventilation into the courtyard area from the street. At the rear of the site adjacent to the alley is the required trash room along with the loading area, parking access ramp and other utility and transformer rooms.

Storefront is proposed at the ground floor level for transparency between the commercial retail space and street frontage. During the preliminary design review, board members expressed concern that the columns at the ground floor appear to be an impediment to the pedestrian activity along the street frontage and to rethink the idea of the colonnade location and impact on functionality. The design of the ground and second floor has been revised to completely remove the columns at the ground floor to improve the functionality of pedestrian activity at the street frontage. The design also integrates the two lower levels into the upper levels of the front façade to provide continuity and reinforce the design concept.

Above the ground level are seven levels of residential units arranged around a 2,810 square foot courtyard following generally the same building footprint throughout each of the floors. The courtyard space is primarily open to the sky with the exception of projecting private balconies on the upper floors. Residential elevators are located at the southwest corner of the project with two stairwells located at both east and west ends of the site. Additional open spaces for residents are available on both the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> floors (community rooms) and on the roof deck overlooking 5<sup>th</sup> Street. In response to the courtyard design being separated in an unwelcoming way from the units, improved connectivity from the courtyard to the residential unit corridor has been accomplished by adding two sets of stairs which step the corridor down directly to the amenity courtyard. Also, the terraced section of the courtyard has been designed to include amphitheater style seating as an added amenity for smaller social spaces. The Board may wish to consider if the design of the courtyard space and access can be further enhanced.

#### Landscape Design

The landscape design concept is to use built-in planters to create a variety of social spaces throughout the site at the second-floor podium, terraces and roof deck. The plant palette consists of a variety of drought tolerant species that are provided within the courtyard at the ground floor, small planters along ground floor building frontage and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor common open space area and the roof deck level. The designs of both the courtyard, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor deck and the roof deck level define a series of social spaces that will serve as a true amenity to the residents. The planters are composed of CMU at the courtyard level and fiberglass at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and roof deck for more expansive sense of open space. The surface flooring material at the courtyard will be wood pavers on a pedestal system and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor deck and roof area will be pre-cast concrete pavers on pedestal system. The common open space decks appear to have adequate light, space, seating areas, and planting, sheet G013 provides a solar study diagram for reference. Additionally, the trellis proposed at the both the courtyard and roof deck will help control sun and wind exposure for residents and guests.

#### Building Design/Architectural Concept

The proposed building is a modern infill project with units arranged in a “C” shape around a courtyard while also providing an active storefront at the street frontage along the 1400 block of 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The main façade along 5<sup>th</sup> Street provides three-dimensionality expressed by projecting private balconies at each level. During the preliminary design review, Board members expressed concern over the formal and functional order of the balconies as they did not appear to be consistent throughout the project, and the overall design concept was unclear. The applicant has refined the ordering of the balcony projections by increasing the quantity at the upper and southernly portions of the building. The balcony pattern is a logical A-B pattern as you move up the building. Additionally, the thickness of the ribbons/bands at the floor lines are now all the same width to provide consistency throughout the façade. While this revision may provide consistency, the Board may wish to consider an alternative of thinner lines expressed in some locations. The Board may wish to consider if the overall design has improved with consistency around the entire building.



### Mass and Scale

As an infill project, the immediate context of mass and scale is established by the neighboring 5 and 6-story structures located across the street on the west side of 5<sup>th</sup> street and the 5-story project located immediately north of the site. Additionally, as noted earlier there are two other pending development projects located immediately south of the subject site which will also be 8 stories and 84 in total height matching the current massing of the subject building. On sheets A210-211 a streetscape rendering has been provided for context. The project complies with the allowable development envelope and the upper levels are stepped back relating well to the neighboring structures while also providing modulation expressed by an enlarged roof deck and projecting balconies and relates well to the other pending development projects.

The two-story volume at the ground level has been revised to include a new 2<sup>nd</sup> floor private open space balcony for three of the units facing the street. With the removal of the columns and the new balcony the ground level does not appear as heavy and relates well to the building to the north enhancing this relationship. Additionally, at the ground floor, the storefront glazing maximizes visual permeability, adding to the downtown pedestrian environment. The Board may wish to consider if the proposed storefront provides a logical location for retail signage.

Along the side elevations, the project appears to be a simple building block bracketed on the front and rear, especially on the south elevation. The south façade has an expanse of “smooth grey” stucco that extends from the ground floor all the way up to the top of the building at the stair and elevator tower. The Board may wish to consider if these elements should be further developed.

### Design, Details and Materials

The project will primarily be clad in plaster with a smooth and light sand finish on all exterior walls, with color as the only element differentiating the various forms. Further, where stucco is proposed staff is recommending it should be smooth, steel troweled stucco.

At the street frontage, a grey metal storefront system with clear glass from floor to ceiling is proposed. All other doors and windows throughout the entire building will be grey metal with clear glass. Details have been provided on sheets A901-A903 which include the canopies/trellis, residential units, storefront head, and balconies. A condition has been included to ensure consistency. Balcony railings typically consist of clear glass. A building materials detail is illustrated on Sheet A220 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 surface-mounted linear LED strip lights, cylinder downlights mounted in between ceiling slats, and stake-mounted LED accent lights to up light trees.

<b>DESIGN ELEMENTS</b>	<b>PROPOSED EXTERIOR MATERIAL, FINISH AND COLOR</b>
Façade	Plaster, smooth and light sand finish (White, Grey and light blue) Metal Panel, painted (white)
Windows	Metal/Glass, Grey (clear)
Doors	Metal/Glass, Grey (clear)
Roof	Bitumen roofing, smooth (grey) Pedestal system (pavers, wood /pre-cast concrete) (grey, natural wood)
Balcony guardrails	Glass (clear)
Mechanical Screening	Metal panels, painted (white)
Refuse Screening	Metal panels, painted (grey)
Conceptual Lighting Plan	
Trellis/Awning/Canopy	Metal panels, painted (white)

### 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 canopy 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	100 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: "1415" address sign in ground planter = 21 SF (exempt) Sign ST2: parking entrance/exiting = 20 SF (exempt) Sign ST3: Parking blade sign along alley=7.5 SF (exempt) Sign ST4: Loading area identification=4 SF (exempt) Sign C1: Tenant Sign = 25 square feet max (X 2)= 50 SF
Total Sign Area Upon Completion	102.5 SF (52.5 square feet of which is exempt) 50 SF commercial sign area
Total Number of New Signs	6
Compliance	Yes.

Sign ST1 – "1415"

Proposed Sign Type: Address sign in ground planter, stainless steel alloy, with brushed front and back (non-illuminated)  
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 3.5' X 6' (21 SF)  
Proposed Colors: Stainless steel with orange accent on sides

Sign ST2 – Parking entry/exit

Proposed Sign Type: Fabricated aluminum cabinet, with ½" thick routed and pushed through acrylic letters  
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 1' X 20' (20SF) total  
Proposed Colors: Light grey semi-gloss/ translucent white acrylic

Sign ST3 – Parking Blade Sign

Proposed Sign Type: Fabricated alloy stainless steel 8" deep cabinet, with ½" thick routed and pushed through LED internally illuminated acrylic letters  
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 2.9' X 2.9' (7.5SF) total  
Proposed Colors: Light grey semi-gloss/ translucent white acrylic

Sign ST4 – Loading Sign

Proposed Sign Type: 1/8" painted aluminum panel with graphics  
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 2' X 2' (4SF) total  
Proposed Colors: Light grey semi-gloss/ translucent white acrylic

Signs C1 (2) – "Future Tenant"

Proposed Sign Type: alloy brushed mounted stainless-steel letters translucent faces, LED Halo lit individual letters  
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 1.5' maximum cap height, 25 square feet maximum  
Proposed Colors: translucent white acrylic

### 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 approved under an Administrative Approval and has been 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 proposed project is a Tier 3, 8-story, 59,924 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 2,457 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 93 SRO units and 41 residential units on a 14,981 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes four levels of subterranean parking levels with 109 non-required parking spaces and (19 short-term and 159 long-term) bicycle parking spaces. The proposed building is a modern infill project with units arranged in a "C" shape around a courtyard while also providing an active storefront at the street frontage. The main façade along 5<sup>th</sup> Street provides three-dimensionality expressed by projecting private balconies at each level. Staff recommends approval as conditioned.

### **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 a modern infill project with units arranged in a "C" shape around an open courtyard while also providing an active storefront at the street frontage. The main façade along 5<sup>th</sup> Street provides three-dimensionality expressed by projecting private balconies at each level.
  
- 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 finish plaster, metal panel, grey metal windows and 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, 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. The grey metal window frames shall be consistent in both plan and elevation. Details to be provided for staff review and approval prior to plan check.
- 2. Architectural details which include, canopies/trellis, residential units, storefront head, and balconies shall be provided for staff review and approval prior to plan check.
- 3. 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.
- 4. 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.
- 5. 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.
- 6. 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.

7. 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

8. 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