



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: May 4, 2020

Agenda Item: 7.5

To: Architectural Review Board
From: Michael Rocque, Associate Planner
CC: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design and Historic Preservation Planner
Subject: 20ARB-0067 to approve the building design, colors, and materials for the construction of new Tier 3 8-story, mixed-use building with approximately 1,505 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 46 SRO units and 17 residential units with one subterranean basement level.

Address: 1437 5th Street
Applicant: WS Communities

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) approve application 20ARB-0067 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

Executive Summary

The proposal is a Tier 3, 8-story, 29,936 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 1,505 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 46 SRO units and 17 residential units on a 7,489 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes one subterranean basement level with 89 (11 short-term and 78 long-term) bicycle parking spaces. The project site is located along the east side of 5th Street and is currently developed with a surface level parking lot. The main façade along 5th Street provides three-dimensionality expressed by two large gold framed openings at the 2nd and 3rd floor and 7th and 8th floor levels and provides 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 were critical of the overall design and provided suggestions to improve the project and presentation and noted concerns that needed further consideration. In response to the overall feedback, the applicant has substantially revised the project design. Rather than provide the specific feedback and suggestions presented, the Board should review this project as a completely new project and design concept.

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 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 currently a mid-block lot developed with a surface level parking lot. The site is located on the east side of 5th Street between Santa Monica Boulevard and Broadway Avenue with alley (5th Court) access. The 1400 block of 5th 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 north of the subject site are two other pending Administrative Approval mixed-use projects with the same ownership group consisting of 92-market rate units at 1425 5th (approved) and a 134 (93 SRO and 41 residential) unit project at 1415 5th Street (pending approval).

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	DCP-TA, Downtown Community Plan – Transit Adjacent
Parcel Area (SF):	7,489 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	Approximately 50’W x 150’D
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	Surface level parking lot (1988)
Project height / area / FAR	8 stories/ 84-feet 29, 818 SF 3.98 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, 1-story commercial (Financial Institution) South DCP – TA, 1-Surface level parking lot East DCP – TA, 5-story mixed-use building West DCP – TA, 5-story mixed-use building

Analysis

Site Design

The proposal is a new 84-foot tall mixed-use project comprised of ground floor commercial/residential and seven residential floors above. The project also includes one subterranean basement level that includes storage, laundry 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, therefore no parking is being provided for the site.

The ground floor design includes a 1,215 square foot commercial retail space with a recessed retail entry and a recessed residential lobby entry at the south end of the street frontage. The lobby area consists of a concierge, residential elevator, mail room and two small offices. At the rear of the site adjacent to the alley is the required trash room along with other utility and transformer rooms. The upper floors consist of 63 residential units following generally the same building footprint throughout each of the floors.

While not required on a lot of this size, ample open space has been provided in the form of private balconies and common outdoor space. At the second floor there is a linear common outdoor terrace located along the southern interior side yard which is open to sky and visible to the adjacent parcel (surface parking lot) that provides additional light and air to the interior of the building and space. This space also extends all the way to the street frontage which results in a visual connection from the outdoor space to the street. This space is highlighted by a frame element of gold color corrugated metal. Additional open space for residents is available on both the 2nd and 4th floors offering community rooms of approximately 250 square feet and roof deck areas on both the 8th floor (445 SF) and roof level overlooking 5th Street (645 SF). The space on the roof has a similar frame element.

Landscape Design

The plant palette consists of a variety of drought tolerant species that are provided along the street frontage in the ground floor at grade, 2nd floor common open space area and the 8th floor and roof deck level. The designs of all of these common outdoor spaces define a series of social spaces that will serve as a true amenity to the residents. At the 2nd floor outdoor terrace area, private patios were removed, and the planters are congregated along the southern side yard to increase the amount of useable space. The Board may wish to consider if the planters could be minimized and to simplify the paving pattern. There will also be planting which will drape over the edge of the south wall providing greenery for the façade. The planters will be composed of fiberglass planting pots at the levels for more expansive sense of open space. The surface flooring material at the 2nd floor and roof deck level will be a combination of decorative pre-cast concrete pavers and IPE pavers while the 8th floor will consist of porcelain pavers on a pedestal system. The common open space decks appear to have adequate light, space, seating areas, and planting, sheet G014-G015 provides a solar study diagram for reference. Additionally, there are trellis structures proposed at the both the 8th floor and roof deck level which will help control sun and wind exposure for residents and guests.

Building Design/Architectural Concept

The proposed building design provides a modern infill project that activates the pedestrian frontage along the 1400 block of 5th Street with retail space and building entries. The main façade along 5th Street provides three-dimensionality provided by two large gold corrugated metal frame openings and recessed private balconies at each level. The intended project design is based on the creation of a clean and simple background, punctuated by the large colored and textured elements. These elements are intended to act as frames for the green spaces beyond and relate to the large voids in the facades of the adjacent proposed developments. As the gold color frames appear to be highlighting outdoor areas at the podium and roof, the frames however, are more than twice the size of the open space and appears to be less integral to the building design. Staff is suggesting the frame be reduced to highlight the outdoor area only or perhaps connect the two elements vertically. The Board may wish to consider if the overall design of the framed masses relates well to the overall design concept and to the streetscape.



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 5th street and a 5-story structure located just two sites north of the subject site. Additionally, as noted earlier there are two other pending development projects located immediately north of the subject site which will also be 8 stories and 84 in total height matching the current massing of the subject building. 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 a carved out 8th floor roof deck area at the south end of the building.

Along the side elevations, the project could be further developed. Areas of blank walls remain on both the south and north elevations. The south elevation will be in full view due to the adjacent surface level parking lot. There are a series of recesses at the upper levels and planting is proposed which will drape over the edge of the south wall providing greenery for the façade although it is not shown on the plans provided. In particular the solid areas of wall near the property line could provide some variation in plane or a change in materials and color. Conversely, the north side could provide some further change in plane with material change to provide some added visual interest throughout the entire elevation. The Board may choose to review the overall design of the elevations holistically with the entire building, to provide guidance to the design team.

Design, Details and Materials

The project will primarily be clad in acrylic plaster with a smooth and light sand finish on all exterior walls, with color (tones of grey) as the only element differentiating the various forms. The only other notable material is the proposed box channel gold colored corrugated metal finish for the large frames at the front façade.

At the street frontage, a grey metal storefront system with clear glass from floor to ceiling is proposed. 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 retail storefront provides a logical location for signage, and the relationship of the gold frame element to the ground floor storefront. All other doors and windows throughout the entire building will be a dark grey vinyl with clear glass. The Board may wish to consider the quality of the vinyl windows proposed. Details have been provided on sheets A900-A902 for reference and a condition has been included to ensure consistency. Balcony railings will typically consist of clear glass or light gold tint. A building materials detail is illustrated on Sheet A220 of the applicant’s submittal.

The corners on the corrugated metal may be challenging to detail in the current configuration. Perhaps mitering the corrugated metal at the framing elements and providing a detail or the use of flat panel would be helpful. The Board may wish to review this detail and provide guidance as to how the metal be detailed or finished.

The projects lighting plan has an overall soft appearance and provides adequate light that relates well to streetscape. Light fixtures include surface-mounted wall scones, suspended decorative LED pendants at the trellis, recessed LED downlight and spike mounted LED tree up lights.

DESIGN ELEMENTS	PROPOSED EXTERIOR MATERIAL, FINISH AND COLOR
Façade	Plaster, smooth and light sand finish (light, medium and dark grey) Box channel corrugated metal (gold)
Windows	Aluminum and vinyl /Glass, dark grey (clear)
Doors	Aluminum and vinyl /Glass, dark grey (clear)
Roof	Bitumen roofing, smooth (grey)
Balcony guardrails	Glass (clear and light gold)
Mechanical Screening	Metal panels (grey)
Refuse Screening	Metal panels, painted (grey)

Conceptual Lighting Plan	Surface-mounted wall scones suspended decorative LED pendants, recessed LED downlight and spike mounted LED tree up lights.
Trellis/Awning/Canopy	Metal, mannered (gold)

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	50 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: "1437" address sign centered horizontally on wall = 6.5 SF (exempt) Sign ST2: Loading area identification=4 SF (exempt) Sign C1: Tenant Sign = 25 square feet max (X 1)= 25 SF
Total Sign Area Upon Completion	35.5 SF (10.5 square feet of which is exempt) 25 SF commercial sign area
Total Number of New Signs	3
Compliance	Yes.

Sign ST1 – "1437"

Proposed Sign Type: Address sign centered horizontally on wall, aluminum cut out mounted to wall, (non-illuminated)
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 6.5' X 1' (6.5 SF)
Proposed Colors: Aluminum powder coated white

Sign ST2 – 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 (1) – "Future Tenant"

Proposed Sign Type: Mounted stainless-steel letters translucent faces, front illuminated
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

Tier 3, 8-story, 29,936 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 1,505 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 46 SRO units and 17 residential units on a 7,489 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes one subterranean basement level with 89 (11 short-term and 78 long-term) bicycle parking spaces. The proposed building design provides a modern infill project that activates the pedestrian frontage along the 1400 block of 5th Street with retail space and building entries. The main façade along 5th Street provides three-dimensionality punctuated by two large gold corrugated metal frame openings and recessed 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 along 5th Street that provides three-dimensionality provided by two large gold corrugated metal frame openings and recessed private balconies at each level while also providing an active storefront at the street frontage.
- 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 acrylic plaster, gold corrugated metal panel, 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 at the storefront shall be consistent in both plan and elevation. Details to be provided for staff review and approval prior to plan check.
2. All proposed vinyl windows shall provide details, cut sheet and sample to ensure high level of quality.
3. Prior to plan check submittal, the applicant shall provide details of exterior façade corrugated metal material transitions (at corners, etc.) and other typical and unique details subject to staff review and approval.
4. Architectural details which include, trellises, residential units, storefront head, and balconies shall be provided for staff review and approval prior to plan check.
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