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# Architectural Review Board Report

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**Architectural Review Board Meeting: May 18, 2020**

**Agenda Item: 7.3**

To: Architectural Review Board

From: Michael Rocque, Associate Planner

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

Subject: 20ARB-0100 to approve the building design, colors, and materials for the construction of new Tier 3, 8-story, mixed-use building with approximately 2,267 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 41 SRO units and 18 residential units with one subterranean basement level.  
20ARB-0101: Sign Program

Address: 701 Colorado Avenue

Applicant: WS Communities

## **Recommended Action**

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) approve applications 20ARB-0100 and 20ARB-0101 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

## **Executive Summary**

The proposal is a Tier 3, 8-story, 29,924 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 2,267 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 41 SRO units and 18 residential units on a 7,481 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes one subterranean basement level with 84 (11 short-term and 73 long-term) bicycle parking spaces. The project site is located on the northeast corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Colorado Avenue and is currently developed with a one-story commercial office building and surface level parking lot at the rear of the site.

## **Background**

On December 16, 2019, the preliminary design review of the project was conducted by the ARB.



*Project Rendering-ARB Preliminary Review*

The Board members provided suggestions to improve the project and noted concerns that needed further consideration:

- The overall design concept is not clear. The corner site provides a lot of opportunity and is very important and could be stronger and more prominent.
- The building must have its own design identity and the material should reinforce the project design. This building warrants a level of detail- use a different material for building volume or at a minimum provide accents in a different material.
- The courtyard placement and orientation in relationship to the adjacent building is very positive, however the courtyards are not actually aligned, and the offset arrangement can be modified and improved. Consider opening the building for additional light into the courtyard.
- Community spaces should have more windows, light and air. Community rooms should also be more useful and have more areas for people to congregate.

An application for an Administrative Approval was submitted on November 1, 2019 with final approval granted on February 13, 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 (701 Colorado) 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. Due to the on-going public COVID-19 pandemic the final ARB determination date has been revised to June 27, 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 corner lot developed with a one-story commercial office building and surface level parking lot at the rear of the site. The site is located on the northeast corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Colorado Avenue with no alley access. The 1500 block of 7<sup>th</sup> Street consists of a mix of buildings and uses including 4-5 story mixed-use residential apartment buildings, one and two-story commercial buildings, and a large grocery market. Located immediately north and east of the subject site are two other mixed-use projects with the same ownership group consisting of 100-market rate units at 1543 7<sup>th</sup> Street (pending) and a 56-unit mixed use project at 711 Colorado (approved by ARB on October 21, 2019).

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	DCP-TA, Downtown Community Plan – Transit Adjacent
Parcel Area (SF):	7,481 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	Approximately 75’W x 100’ D
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	One story commercial office building (1959)
Project height / area / FAR	8 stories/ 84-feet 29, 923 SF 4.0 FAR
Unit Mix / Affordable Housing	59 total Housing units 41 SRO units <u>18 Tier 3 Market rate units</u> Studios: 0 units 1 BDRM: 11 units 2 BDRM: 4 units 3 BDRM: 3 units <u>10 Affordable units provided per settlement agreement</u> 20% of Market rate units: 18*.20=4 units 15% of SRO units: 41*.15= 6.15 units

Historic Resource Inventory Status	Property is not listed on the Historic Resource Inventory
CEQA	Exempt pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3)
Adjacent Zoning & Use:	North DCP – TA, 4-story multi-unit and 1-story auto storage (Pending AA) South DCP – TA, 1-story industrial warehouse East DCP – TA, surface parking lot(Approved AA) West DCP – TA, 5-story commercial office 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 has two subterranean basement levels that includes storage, bicycle 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, therefore no parking is being provided for the site.



The ground floor design includes a 2,267 square foot commercial retail space envisioned for a restaurant-type use that wraps the corner at 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Colorado Avenue. A residential lobby is situated along Colorado Avenue at the building frontage line. The lobby area consists of a leasing office, residential elevator, mail room and package room. At the rear of the site adjacent to and along the 7<sup>th</sup> street frontage is the required trash room, transformer area, and loading zone. The upper floors consist of 59 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 an 866 square foot courtyard located along the eastern side yard which is open to the sky to bring light and air to the interior of the building. The location and design of this courtyard mirrors the courtyard on the adjacent site at 711 Colorado (see sheet a.120) and offers a unique design strategy to maximize the open space opportunity. In response to the courtyard not aligning, the buildings have been further articulated (with notches, recesses, and accentuated corners) to relate better to outdoor spaces at neighboring buildings (1543 7<sup>th</sup> and 711 Colorado). There is a 332 square foot community room adjacent to the courtyard that, in response to Board comments, now has a folding glass wall that opens into the courtyard space. The podium level community room accordion glass doors have also been expanded at the corner to create a better indoor-outdoor relationship. This will provide greater connectivity to the open space and result in more light and air for the community room. Additional open space for residents is available on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor with a community room situated at the center of the site, an 8<sup>th</sup> floor deck overlooking the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor courtyard and a roof deck which wraps the corner of the building at 7<sup>th</sup> street and Colorado.

### Landscape Design

The plant palette consists of a variety of drought tolerant species that are provided along the street corner at the ground floor at-grade and lobby entrance, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor (podium courtyard) common open space area, the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floor common areas and roof deck level. The landscape design of all the common outdoor spaces define a series of social spaces that will serve as a true amenity to the residents. Included are planters at the edge of the ground floor open space, which would also serve as required ABC railing. Vertical cable planting at the building corner is shown on the perspective for the ground level, while vines are shown at the 7<sup>th</sup> level which is meant to be compatible with vertical pilasters at the exterior elevations. The planters will be composed of pour in place concrete with the surface flooring material at the ground floor consisting of concrete pavers and the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor courtyard, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floor open spaces and roof deck level will consist of wood porcelain pavers.

Details and heights of planters are important to understand the open spaces, a condition has been added to ensure their inclusion, and consistency between architectural and landscape plans. Additionally, the Board may wish to consider if the flooring at the 7<sup>th</sup> floor community space (exercise area) be replaced with an alternative material such as a rubber floor. The common open space decks appear to have adequate light, space, seating areas, and planting, sheet G0.12 provides a solar study diagram for reference. Additional landscape elements include a stone-clad trellis design which is detailed at both podium and rooftop levels which will help control sun and wind exposure for residents



and guests. The Board may wish to consider if the landscape design concept needs to be further developed and include other opportunities for additional landscaping.

Building Design/Architectural Concept

The proposed building design provides a modern infill project that activates the northeast street corner at 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Colorado Avenue with a commercial space that wraps both street frontages. In response to comments by the Board, the building design has been significantly revised since the preliminary review. The massing has been stepped back at the corner having part of the elevation come down to the ground, achieving a less ‘top-heavy’ proportion. The main building concept is one of a relatively simple box with a layer of framed balconies added to the elevation. The frames are held back from the corner, and with the additional stepback at the ground and second floors gives the sense of a void at the corner. The Board may wish to consider if the design concept is appropriate to this important corner site.



### Mass and Scale

As an infill project, the immediate context of mass and scale is established by the existing multi-story building located across the street on the west side of the street and the other pending AA development projects located immediately north and east of the subject site which will be 8 stories and 84 in total height, matching the massing of the proposed building. The project complies with the allowable development envelope and the upper level step back requirements while also providing an open space at the east side of the building that opens to the adjacent project site at 711 Colorado.

At the ground floor, the storefront glazing maximizes visual permeability at the commercial tenant space that extends and wraps the corner. The Board may wish to consider if the commercial space should have a more unique identity. In response to the Board's concern that the project provide a strong corner, the void at the corner has been organized in a pyramidal shape, with a proportioned three-story elevation expression at the ground floor with exterior pilaster positions being reconfigured at the ground floor to define better the pyramidal corner element.

Along the street side elevations at both Colorado Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Street, framed elements have been added to create a well-defined shadow line and three-dimensionality to the building.

### 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. The only other notable material is the dark grey spandrel metal accent that is proposed at the corner elevations at the street facing front façades. The corner has been accentuated with full height glazing curtain wall with metal spandrel at the floor line. The frames have been detailed as plaster, with metal flashing extending beyond the floor line to provide a shadow line, with a metal reglet at the underside (1/A.901). The Board may wish to consider if the detailing enhances the overall concept.

At the street frontage, a dark bronze vinyl 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. All other doors and windows throughout the entire building will also be a dark bronze vinyl with clear glass. The Board may wish to consider the quality of the vinyl windows proposed. Details have been provided on sheets A900-A903 for reference and a condition has been included to ensure consistency. Balcony railings will typically consist of dark grey metal. 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 stake mounted LED accent lights at the rooftop and at vertical columns as part of the frame element, recessed LED downlights at the unit balconies and canopy. While the vertical LED fixtures appear integrated into the design, a condition has been added so the recessed downlights are replaced with a different fixture that better integrates into the balcony/frame elements while enhancing the resident experience.

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	175 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 1: "701" address sign = 6 SF (exempt) Sign 2: Loading area identification=4 SF (exempt) Sign C1: Tenant Sign = 25 square feet max (Corner)= 25 SF Sign C2: Tenant Sign = 25 square feet max (Hanging)= 25 SF
Total Sign Area Upon Completion	60 SF (10 square feet of which is exempt) 50 SF commercial sign area
Total Number of New Signs	2
Compliance	Yes.

### Sign 1 – "701"

Proposed Sign Type: Address sign centered vertically on pilaster (Colorado Elevation), mounted to wall, aluminum (non-illuminated)

Proposed Dimensions (Area): 6' X 1' (6 SF)

Proposed Colors: Semi-gloss finish white



Sign ST2 – Loading Sign

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

Signs C1 (1) – “Future Tenant”

Proposed Sign Type: Mounted aluminum face, LED front illuminated  
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 2' maximum cap height, 25 square feet maximum  
Proposed Colors: Dark Grey

Signs C2 (1) – “Future Tenant”

Proposed Sign Type: Stainless steel (hanging), LED internally illuminated  
Proposed Dimensions (Area): Circular-25 square feet maximum  
Proposed Colors: Dark Grey

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, 29,924 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 2,267 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 41 SRO units and 18 residential units on a 7,481 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes one subterranean basement level with 84 (11 short-term and 73 long-term) bicycle parking spaces. The proposed building design provides a modern infill project that activates the northeast street corner at 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Colorado Avenue with a commercial space that wraps both street frontages. 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 that activates the northeast street corner at 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Colorado Avenue and

provides three-dimensionality provided by framed elements void at the corner for design emphasis. The corner element has been organized in a pyramidal shape, with a proportioned three-story elevation expression at the ground floor.

- 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 quality material such as, smooth and light sand plaster, dark grey metal balcony railings 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. Prior to plan check submittal, architectural details which include, canopies/trellis, residential units, storefront head, and balconies shall be provided for staff review and approval.
- 2. Prior to plan check submittal, all proposed dark bronze vinyl windows shall provide details, cut sheet and sample to ensure high level of quality.
- 3. Prior to plan check submittal, the recessed downlights in the frame/balcony elements should be revised to a different fixture more integrated into the design that will enhance the resident experience.
- 4. Prior to plan check submittal, the applicant shall provide details of exterior metal frame elements material transitions (at corners, etc.) and other typical and unique details subject to staff review and approval.
- 5. Prior to plan check submittal, the applicant shall provide details and heights of the planters to understand the open spaces, and to ensure their consistency between the architectural and landscape plans.
- 6. 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.

7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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

11. 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