



# Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: June 8, 2020

Agenda Item: 7.4

To: Architectural Review Board

From: Grace Page, Senior Planner

Cc: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design & Historic Preservation Planner  
James Combs, ARB Liaison  
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Subject: 20ARB-0040 to approve the building design, colors, materials, landscape plans, and sign program for a new four-story, 36-foot high, mixed-use building with 183 residential units, approximately 8,473 square feet of ground floor commercial space, two levels of below grade creative office and residential amenity space, and three-level subterranean parking garage.

Address: 3030 Nebraska Avenue  
Applicant: WS Communities

## Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board approve application 20ARB-0040 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

## Executive Summary

The proposed Tier 1 project is a four-story, mixed-use building containing 105,968 square feet of floor area and 70,576 square feet of below-grade space (not included in FAR). The project consists of 183 residential units, 8,473 square feet of commercial space, two below-grade levels of creative office and residential amenity space, and three levels of subterranean parking garage. The project is conceived as four building forms organized around two separate courtyard spaces activated with stairs and bridges. Staff recommends approval of the building design, landscape plans, and sign program with specified conditions.

## Background

### Preliminary Design Review

The mixed-use project received preliminary design comments from the Architectural Review Board on May 21, 2018.



*Preliminary Rendering of Project Proposal – As reviewed by the ARB on May 21, 2018.*

The Board was critical of the concept and provided the following comments:

- Architectural Concept
  - Project appears to be an anathema of the Bergamot Area Plan and soulless.
  - Project appears as a mega-development and is generic in its appearance.
- Site Design
  - The use of underground space is clever and the project is ambitious.
  - Concern that the underground courtyard spaces are situated 30 feet below grade and 70 feet from the top of the building will not have sufficient access to natural light.
  - Subterranean commercial space will not activate the street.
  - Project should look to provide more connections across the site (north/south, east/west).
  - Berkeley (east edge) is designed as a service corridor.
- Mass and Scale
  - Residential units appear to hover over canyons and the project lacks a ground plane.
  - In exchange for the space gained below grade, the massing above grade should be loosened with more variation, push and pull of planes, or open conditions at the corners.
- Open Space
  - Residents of the project are deprived of open space, and balcony designs have tight conditions.

#### Planning Commission, Development Review Permit

On December 4, 2019, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing to consider the Development Review Permit of the Tier 1 mixed-use project, which had been substantially modified from the design reviewed by ARB at Preliminary Review, noted above. While the Commission voiced frustration with the Bergamot Area Plan's limitations and need for revisiting the policies and/or development standards, the Housing Accountability Act compliant project was approved with the following ARB related conditions:

The ARB shall pay special attention to:

- Subterranean landscaping to ensure successful growth and scale
- Open space design (landscape/hardscape) along Nebraska Avenue with and without the Shared Street design concept
- The site’s pathways that facilitate cross-connections through the site
- Signage, lighting, and wayfinding on the property
- Enhancements to the design that reveal the inner courtyard activity with the street level

In response to the above conditions, the design includes wider views to the courtyard leading from the primary open space on Nebraska to the oversized staircase leading downstairs and The project includes multiple paths, opening, and views throughout the building and inner courtyard as well as cross connections. An additional open plaza on Berkeley filters to an inner open space and another staircase leading into the below grade courtyard with additional staircase from south side of the building. The submitted plans depict the additional open spaces and open to sky spaces provided in the current proposal compared to the plans submitted for the ARB Preliminary Review. There is more than twice the open area provided in the current plan on the ground floor with approximately 6,000 more square feet from above that is open to the sky. Sheets A.6 - A.14 illustrate the porosity of the site in diagram and perspectives views.

Continued coordination with Public Works and City Planning Divisions to ensure design continuity of the walkway and improvements that interface with Nebraska Avenue is necessary to meet requirements. In addition, the planters for the shrubs are providing 18” of depth and the planters for the trees are 8’ x 8’ wide depressed for a total of 36” soil depth. The Planning Commission required 9 feet of depth for the trees and as such, the tree location and/or design require revision. Project lighting fixtures include in-grade lighting, cove lighting (columns), recessed linear lights, pathway lights, and illuminated handrails as depicted on Sheets LT-01. A sign program is included in the submittal for ARB consideration.

**Project / Site Information**

The proposed four-story mixed use development is located on the south side of Nebraska Avenue extending the entire length between Stanford and Berkeley. Surrounding uses include a mix of creative offices, café, light industrial buildings, and schools. The site is currently improved with one and two-story commercial industrial buildings and surface parking spaces that are proposed to be demolished. The site is located within the Bergamot Area Plan’s Mixed Use Creative District and Pedestrian and Retail Priority Overlay areas.

The following table provides a brief summary of the project site data:

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	MUC-BAP, Mixed Use Creative – Bergamot Area Plan (Pedestrian Priority Corridor and Retail Priority Overlays apply along Nebraska Avenue)
Parcel Area (SF):	74,185 SF

Total SF (above grade) Total SF (below grade, exempt from FAR)	105,968 square feet 70,546 square feet
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	One and two-story commercial-industrial buildings and surface parking areas
Historic Resource Inventory Status	See Impact on Historic Resources Section of Report
CEQA	Exempt pursuant to Section 21155.1 as a Transit Priority Project
Adjacent Zoning & Use:	North: Conservation Creative Sector/MUC East: Mixed Use Creative/MUC South: Mixed Use Creative/MUC West: Mixed Use Creative/MUC



Proposed Project Rendering – View from Nebraska and Stanford

## Analysis

### Building Design/Architectural Concept

The contemporary project is comprised of four rectilinear building masses connected by open walkways and designed around two openings overlooking a below grade courtyard space. The permeable street façade featuring one primary open plaza and smaller secondary plaza supports the pedestrian orientation of the ground floor and emphasizes the segmented building massing into three separate building forms along Nebraska Avenue. The building design is intended to promote the energetic mix of uses with at-grade commercial, above grade residential units, an activated rooftop, and two below-grade levels of creative office and residential amenities. The open courtyards and walkways allow a high level of interaction within and around the project. The project design also incorporates sustainable strategies and anticipates a LEED Platinum certification.

### Site Planning

The project site is a large 74,185 SF parcel with approximately 375 feet of street frontage along Nebraska Avenue. As prescribed in the Bergamot Area Plan, the Pedestrian Priority Corridor & Retail Priority Overlays apply to Nebraska Avenue and approximately 8,500

SF of commercial ground floor is oriented towards the street. One primary public plaza and a secondary plaza are integrated at-grade for an open and engaging space. The existing driveways with access easements (not public streets), commonly referred to as Berkeley Road and Stanford Court, are situated on the east and west sides of the property, respectively. The BAP street design network suggests a Complete Street (Berkeley) and Shared Street (Stanford) design along the existing private drives but are not required of Tier 1 projects. Vehicular access to the subterranean parking garage and utility functions are located on the east side of the property along Berkeley Road, and both private drives have access to a standard 40' x 12' loading space. A comparison of the preliminary and current building footprint is depicted in the following diagrams.



*Preliminary Footprint vs Open to Sky, May 21, 2019*

*Proposed Footprint vs Open to Sky, June 1, 2020*

The revisions results in more gracious openings from Nebraska Avenue and meaningful openings to the sky to improve access to light and air within the site.

Building Mass and Scale

The project is comprised of four building masses connected by open walkways and designed around two openings overlooking a below grade courtyard space. The massing along the north elevation is successfully segmented by the primary open space plaza (2,515 SF) and a second smaller plaza integrated mid-block between two building masses. When viewed from Nebraska Avenue three distinct building forms punctuate the frontage and are further distinguished in materiality and fenestration.



The roofline of the project site is relatively static with some minor variation of the height and steel canopy structures and elevator towers located on the rooftop. The ARB encouraged greater variation for a more dynamic and articulated roofline consistent with the BAP Building Height Design Guidelines; however modulation standards are only required for Tier 2 and 3 projects. As a Tier 1 project the upper level massing designed at the maximum 36-feet in height along the entirety of the site complies with the Bergamot Area Plan Development Standards.

### Landscape Design

The proposed landscape design softens the street frontage and creates a welcoming park-like presence with lawn and patio spaces defined by cast-in-place concrete seat walls, IPE deck paving and concrete paving. Western Sycamore and Saucer Magnolia trees will introduce a light canopy for a comfortable pedestrian experience. An assortment of shrubs, vines, and groundcover include mat rush, sage, rosemary and soft leaf yucca plants for low scale texture in the planter areas along the building and sidewalk interface. Additional raised planters and self-watering vessels are situated in several residential seating areas. Below grade, the large courtyard space mimics the street's park like ambiance with trees (Japanese Maple, Sweet Shade, Chinese Fringe, and Saucer Magnolia) and smaller scale plants, such as Snake Plants, Split Leaf Philodendron, and Cast Iron plants that can thrive in the open but indoor-like setting.

The rooftop is dedicated to solar collection and residential amenity spaces. The proposed landscape creates an ambiance and doubles as a buffer for the specific activities or solar arrangement from the recreational activity spaces. Trees are strategically located and sized not to interfere with solar collection arrangements on the roof. A roof top herb garden and community vegetable garden also add an interactive planting experience. The playground area with a grouping of Desert Museum Palo Verde trees is centered on the roof area to lightly shade and properly contain the children's activities far from the building perimeter.

### Design and Detailing

The rectilinear building forms are expressed with either smooth trowel stucco white walls or contrasting dark corrugated metal panel system as detailed on Sheet A-55. The upper level building forms are supported with smooth canted concrete columns along the periphery at the ground floor and within the project's courtyard space. The canted columns break the uniformity of the rectilinear angles of the design adding visual interest in front of a large span of storefronts windows. The smooth stucco volumes are punched with recessed balconies overlooking the street and the dark metal clad volumes are treated with floor to ceiling glazing also characterized by corner windows. The variation and the proportions of the balcony openings eastern buildings are complementary with the glazed areas on the western portion. However, the façade along Berkeley Road is a challenge due to the required services and could be enhanced with landscaping. A perforated metal guardrail with posts and a top rail or Glass guardrail with similar posts and top rail used on the residential units as depicted on Sheet A-56. A glass guardrail is used throughout the common areas of the building. The window selection for the residential units consists of silver vinyl frame glass Mi window (or similar) achieving an aesthetic and rating that is favorable for energy efficiency.

<b>DESIGN ELEMENTS</b>	<b>PROPOSED EXTERIOR MATERIAL, FINISH AND COLOR</b>
Façade	Stucco, smooth trowel, white Concrete, smooth, grey Metal panels, corrugated, slate grey
Windows	Aluminum storefront frames, anodized with clear glass MI Homemaker Windows (or similar), grey frame with clear glass
Doors	Aluminum storefront frames, anodized with clear glass
Balcony/guardrails	Laminated tempered glass, 1" square profile cap rail Laminated tempered glass, 2" square top rail + square posts Perforated metal panel, 2" square top rail + square post
Roof	Thermoplastic membrane, white Pedestal system, pavers and IPE, brown
Awning	Aluminum awning, anodized, grey
Lighting	In grade uplight, LED, white Column cove light, LED, white Illuminated hand rail, LED, white
Perimeter wall	Concrete, smooth, grey (southern edge of property only)

Sign Plans / Sign Program

The sign program establishes one primary project identification “3030” pylon sign and considers retail tenant options for pedestrian oriented projecting signs. The program limits the retail tenants to one line of text/copy + optional logo and identifies practical locations for installing the signs. Directional loading signage is also proposed to direct delivery vehicles. The proposed signage is appropriate in size and placement with the exception of the “3030” pylon sign proposed in the public right-of-way. A condition has been added to relocate the pylon sign on the subject parcel.

<b>SIGN AREA CALCULATIONS</b>	
Multi-tenant Building	Yes
Permitted Sign Area	375 SF
Total Sign Area Upon Completion	10.5 SF of project identification pylon sign 7.56 SF of projecting parking sign (condition for 4.5 SF max) 125 SF for 5 tenant signs (25 SF each) 24 SF for 6 projecting tenant signs (4 SF each)
Total Number of New Signs	1 building ID sign 11 tenant signs
Compliance	All tenant signage must comply with size requirements outlined in the Santa Monica Municipal Code. Convenience signs such as directional loading signs shall be limited to 2 square feet.

Project Pylon Sign “3030”

Proposed Sign Type: Pylon sign with vertically stacked dimensional numbers “3030”

Proposed Dimensions (Area): 7' x 1.5' = 10.5 square feet

Proposed Colors: Mirror finish on all sides

### Individual Tenant Signs

Proposed Sign Type: Individual channel stainless steel or reverse channel letter installed below canopy

Proposed Sign Type: Logo, 1.5' x 1.5' Max

Proposed Sign Type: Projecting sign, varied, 4.5 SF Max

Proposed Dimensions (Area): Varied length. Maximum 1'-2" in height. 25 SF Max

Proposed Colors: Stainless steel or white acrylic face

### Impact on Historic Resources

The Landmarks Commission voted to designate the building at 3030 Nebraska Avenue as City Landmark on February 11, 2008. The decision was appealed to the City Council and in September 2009, the City Council voted to not designate the building as a Landmark noting that the building had undergone significant alterations and did not adequately represent the symbolism associated with John F. Dresher, Ray Kappe, and SCI-Arc. The demolition permit application has since lapsed and will need to be re-applied for in order to proceed with demolition.

As presented during the Planning Commission's DRP hearing, an October 2019 historic resource assessment report, prepared by the City's consultant, Historic Resources Group (HRG), independently analyzed the site's current conditions. The report concluded that the building has undergone extensive alterations such that it no longer retains sufficient integrity to convey any potential significance for its association with SCI-Arc. The report further determined that the subject property is not eligible for listing at the local, state, or national level, and does not warrant further consideration or additional analysis as a historical resource as defined by CEQA.

### **Code Compliance**

In the processing of the project's development review permit, staff conducted extensive preliminary review for compliance with the Bergamot Area Plan and Zoning Code including BAP development standards. There do not appear to be outstanding issues that could potentially affect the plans and result in significant changes to the project's design. A complete code-compliance review will occur when 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 Planning Commission determined that this project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 21155.1 of the CEQA Guidelines, which exempts a special class of Transit Priority Project (TPP) determined to be a Sustainable Communities Project (SCP) by the local jurisdiction. The proposed project meets all of the necessary requirements set forth in Section 21155.1 as a Sustainable Communities Project and, therefore, is exempt from CEQA.

### **Summary**

The project design has progressed since preliminary review by the Board. The revised design presents a massing strategy that is conducive to enhancing the pedestrian experience at the street with plazas open to the sky with ease of circulation, connectivity

and access to light and air throughout the project. A variety of open spaces are integrated on all levels of the building with multiple residential amenity options throughout the project, including the unique below-grade levels. The mixed-use project allows for a welcoming orientation with public and semi-public spaces in and around the site. The Tier 1 project fulfills the residential, retail, and creative mix envisioned for the Bergamot Area Plan. The proposed design is recommended for approval subject to the findings for approval a below, and subject to the conditions outlined, including the submittal of more complete landscape plans.

## **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 its design is conceived of as four rectilinear building forms organized around two main courtyard spaces, creating an engaging and porous frontage, pedestrian-oriented ground floor commercial space, and uniquely activated below-grade space. The design employs a palette of high quality materials and varying forms that are appropriate for the mix of commercial, residential, and creative offices uses.
- 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 the building will use high quality material such as smooth concrete, corrugated metal panels, smooth stucco, and outdoor open spaces that exceeds requirements, as detailed in the application submittal and as presented to the Architectural Review Board.
- C. The proposed design of the building or structure is compatible with developments on land in the general area in that the Tier 1 project at 36 feet in height structure will be constructed in an area with structures as tall as 47 feet (Tier 2) and 57 (Tier 3) and compatible with the existing lower scale structures in the immediate area. The building is consistent with the Tier 1 requirements of the Bergamot Area Plan.
- 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 the issuance of a sign permit, the “3030” pylon sign be located/identified on the parcel/property and all projecting signs shall comply with dimensional and size requirements in SMMC Section 9.61.

2. Prior to plan check submittal off-site improvements and interface sidewalk interface along Nebraska Avenue design continuity and cohesiveness shall be approved by Planning and Public Works Divisions.
3. Prior to plan check submittal, provide additional landscaping and vines along the southern half of the frontage along Berkeley Road
4. Prior to plan check submittal, location and design of all fences and gates shall be reviewed and approved by staff.
5. Prior to plan check submittal, typical and unique details shall be reviewed and approved by staff including: window details, railing details, parapet and roof trellis details, detail at edge of floor openings, corrugated metal details at corners, planter details and stair details, particularly exterior stairs.
6. The fenestration pattern including size and placement of windows, corner windows balcony size and placement are important to the project design.
7. 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.
8. 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 50% of the total landscaped area may be reviewed and approved by the Staff Liaison to the Board.
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.

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 9.61.100.

### **Attachments**

- A. Applicant's Submittal Material