



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: June 15, 2020

Agenda Item: 7.6

To: Architectural Review Board

From: Michael Rocque, Associate Planner

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

Subject: 20ARB-0130 to approve the building design, colors, materials, landscape plan and sign program for the construction of a new Tier 2, 6-story, mixed-use building with approximately 2,703 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 94 SRO units and 26 residential units over four levels of subterranean parking.

Address: 1338 5th Street

Applicant: WS Communities

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) approve application 20ARB-0131 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

Executive Summary

The proposal is a Tier 2, 6-story, 52,446 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 2,703 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 94 SRO units and 26 residential units on a 14,985 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes four levels of subterranean parking levels with 116 non-required parking spaces and (19 short-term and 159 long-term) bicycle parking spaces. The 15,000 square foot site is located along the west side of 5th Street and is currently developed with a surface level parking lot. The main façade along 5th Street presents a modern design that provides a smaller-scale pattern of vertical and angled balconies that corresponds and draws from its immediate context by incorporating large scale horizontal bands at a 2-story urban base that is compatible with the mixed-use developments in the immediate area.

Background

On February 3, 2020, 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 two-story datum needs to carry through more strongly, particularly since the ground floor is retail and the second floor is residential. Consider a stronger two-story base that has a larger scale that relates better to the larger scale adjacent buildings that creates a grander gesture.

- The balconies are quite small and to consider the angle of the balconies and revising the window wall open to extend into the living space providing greater functionality.
- Consider the balcony design on all elevations and if it needs to be the same all the way around the building.
- The outdoor spaces on the roof takes the place of the community rooms at the 4th 5th and 6th floors. Consider adding amenities and features such as heaters and wind screens to make them more useable.



Project Rendering-ARB Preliminary Review

An application for an Administrative Approval was submitted on December 12, 2019 with final approval granted on April 3, 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. Due to the on-going public COVID-19 pandemic the final ARB determination date has been revised to August 1, 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 parcel developed with a surface parking lot. The site is located on the west side of 5th Street between Santa Monica Boulevard and Arizona Avenue with alley (4th Court) access. The 1300 block of 5th Street consists of a mix of buildings and uses including mostly one- and three-story commercial office buildings on the east side of 5th Street, and directly north and adjacent to the site is a large city owned surface level parking lot which is a pending Development Agreement mixed-use project, The Plaza at Santa Monica. Also, located across the street, east of the subject site is a pending Administrative Approval mixed-use project with the same ownership group consisting of 41 SRO units and 11-market rate units at 1323 5th Street.

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	DCP-NV, Downtown Community Plan – Neighborhood Village
Parcel Area (SF):	14,985 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	Approximately 50'W x 150'D
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	Surface level parking lot
Project height / area / FAR	6 stories/ 60-feet 52,446 SF 3.5 FAR
Unit Mix / Affordable Housing	120 total Housing units 94 SRO units <u>26 Tier 2 Market rate units</u> Studios: 0 units 1 BDRM: 16 units 2 BDRM: 6 units 3 BDRM: 4 units <u>19 Affordable units provided per settlement agreement</u> 20% of Market rate units: 26*.20=5 units 15% of SRO units: 94*.15= 14 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 – NV, city owned surface parking (Pending Development-Plaza at Santa Monica) South DCP – NV, 5-story-commercial (Office) East DCP – NV, 3-story commercial parking structure and pending 6-story AA mixed-use project West DCP – BC, Bank and commercial (retail)

Analysis

Site Design

The proposal is for a new six story, 60-foot tall mixed-use project comprised of ground floor commercial/residential and five residential floors above. The project also includes four levels of subterranean parking with, 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 116 spaces which is 42 additional spaces than the maximum allowed (74) per the settlement agreement.

The ground floor design is envisioned for 2,703 square feet of area in which 2,302 square feet will be comprised of two large commercial tenant spaces with recessed entries at the building frontage and a recessed entry to a 452 square foot lobby at the north end of the site. Two leasing offices and seven residential units are located around a 1,678 square foot courtyard towards the center of the site. At the rear of the site adjacent and to the alley is the required trash room along with the loading area, parking access ramp and other utility and transformer rooms. The upper floors consist of the remainder of residential units following generally the same building footprint throughout each of the floors.

At the ground floor there is a 1,678 square foot courtyard located towards the center of the site that extends into a portion of the southern side yard which is open to the sky. There is also a 405 square foot community room adjacent to the courtyard that has a folding glass wall that opens to the courtyard space. The courtyard space has been designed to allow for the maximum amount of useable area at the south end as it terraces and extends into the ground floor community room to form a bench, tying the two areas together (see A300, A110). Residential elevators are located at the south end 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 2nd and 3rd floors (community rooms) and on the roof which is designed and broken into three smaller roof deck areas at the east and west ends of the site and a section that overlooks the courtyard below. In response to the Boards comments about adding amenities and features to the roof deck area such as heaters and wind screens to make them more useable, the applicant has decided not to pursue this option and would like to keep the roof deck as proposed with the trellises to add shading for the residents and guests.

Landscape Design

The landscape design concept is intended to create clearly delineated social spaces through active, passive and dining spaces and the use of built-in planters throughout the site at the street frontage, courtyard 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 in-ground planters along ground floor building frontage and roof deck level. The designs of both the courtyard 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/stucco at the courtyard level and roof deck for more expansive sense of open space. The surface flooring material at the courtyard will be a topping slab paving pattern consisting of two different colors and finishes and the roof area will be a wood pedestal paving and pre-cast concrete pavers on pedestal system. A condition has been added to refine the

material of the planter walls. The common open space decks appear to have adequate light, space, seating areas, and planting, sheet G014 provides a view 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 design provides a modern infill project that activates the pedestrian frontage along the 1300 block of 5th Street with retail spaces and building entries. The main façade along 5th Street provides three-dimensionality expressed by projecting, angled private balconies at each level. In response to the Boards comments to consider a stronger two-story base that has a larger scale that relates better to the larger scale adjacent buildings, the concept had been revised creating a strong, 2-story base with a separate architectural language from the residential façade above. Due to the project's location between two larger buildings the projects context incorporates large scale horizontal bands at the two-story urban base. The project addresses its residential nature by creating a smaller-scale pattern of vertical and angled balconies that correspond directly to the unit interiors with the verticals acting to catch continuous walls of millwork, serving as external "chimneys" for mechanical exhaust, and as privacy between unit balconies. Sheet G013 has been provided for reference. The Board may choose to review if the overall design has improved with consistency around the entire building.



Mass and Scale

As noted above, the ground floor and second floor present an orthogonal geometry with a banding that frames the two-story volume at the north and travels over and onto the roof to separate the building into two distinct yet similar forms. The Board may wish to consider if the banding is a strong enough mechanism to integrate the orthogonal and angled geometries.

As an infill project, the immediate context of mass and scale is established by a few of the existing multi-story buildings located on the east side of 5th street and directly north and adjacent to the site which is a pending Development Agreement mixed-use project, The Plaza at Santa Monica which will be larger in mass and scale. Additionally, located across the street, east of the subject site is a pending Administrative Approval mixed-use project at 1323 5th Street which will also be 6 stories and 60 feet 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.

During Preliminary Design review, the Board noted that the balconies are quite small and to consider the angle of the balconies and revising the window wall open to extend into the living space providing greater functionality. In the current proposal the projecting balconies remain unchanged. The angled balconies are a prominent feature of the overall design concept and that the balconies are of sufficient size to be used as an extension of the interior space by the tenants.

Design, Details and Materials

The project will primarily be clad in various grey tones and white and acrylic plaster with a smooth finish on all exterior walls with light grey micro-ribbed fiber cement panels located at the insets of the private balconies along the front façade.

At the ground floor, the storefront glazing maximizes visual permeability, adding to the downtown pedestrian environment. At the street frontage, a clear anodized aluminum storefront system with clear glass from floor to ceiling is proposed. All other doors and windows throughout the entire building will be medium grey vinyl with clear glass. Details have been provided on sheets A900-A904 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 frameless railing. A building materials detail is illustrated on Sheet A220 of the applicant's submittal.

Along the side elevations, the project carries over the same design as the front façade creating a simplicity of a singular language for the entire residential façade. The south façade has an expanse of white and light grey acrylic "smooth" finish plaster that differentiates from the ground floor all the way up to the top of the building at the stair and elevator tower. The Board may choose to review if these elements should be further developed.

At the rear, the same materiality and colors are provided, and the rhythm is carried down to the base of the façade at the first two levels to provide some contrast.

The projects lighting plan has an overall soft appearance and provides adequate light that relates well to streetscape. Light fixtures include recessed mounted LED balcony unit lights, in-grade linear LED up light at the entry feature wall, suspended decorative LED pendant, recessed LED downlight at the canopy, and linear LED strip light at the planter edge.

DESIGN ELEMENTS	PROPOSED EXTERIOR MATERIAL, FINISH AND COLOR
Façade	Acrylic Plaster, smooth (Grey tones and white) Fiber cement panels, micro-ribbed (light grey)
Windows	Aluminum storefront (clear anodized) Vinyl (medium grey)
Doors	Aluminum storefront (clear anodized) Vinyl (medium grey)
Roof	
Balcony guardrails	Glass frameless railing (clear)
Mechanical Screening	Snap-on panels over steel
Refuse Screening	Metal roll-up door (dark grey)
Conceptual Lighting Plan	recessed mounted LED balcony unit lights, in-grade linear LED up light at the entry feature wall, suspended decorative LED pendant, recessed LED downlight at the canopy, and linear LED strip light at the planter edge.
Trellis/Awning/Canopy	

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	98.5 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: "1338" address sign vertical attached to building = 2.5 SF (exempt) Sign ST2: parking entrance/exiting = 36 SF (exempt) Sign ST3: Loading area identification=4 SF (exempt) Sign C1: Tenant Sign = 25 square feet max (X 2)= 50 SF
Total Sign Area	92.5 SF (42.5 square feet of which is exempt)

Upon Completion	50 SF commercial sign area
Total Number of New Signs	5
Compliance	Yes.

Sign ST1 – “1338”

Proposed Sign Type: Address sign vertical flush mount on wall, aluminum numbers painted on gray (non-illuminated)
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 5’ X 6’ (2.5 SF)
Proposed Colors: Gray

Sign ST2 – Parking entry/exit

Proposed Sign Type: Fabricated aluminum cabinet, with ½” thick routed and backed letters of white acrylic letters
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 1.5’ X 24’ (36SF) total
Proposed Colors: Light grey semi-gloss/ translucent white acrylic (illuminated)

Sign ST3 – Loading Area

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 digital graphics
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 2’ X 2’ (4SF) total
Proposed Colors: Gray semi-gloss/ white text and arrows

Signs C1 (2) – “Future Tenant”

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

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 proposal is a Tier 2, 6-story, 52,446 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 2,703 square feet of ground floor commercial space with 94 SRO units and 26 residential units on a 14,985 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes four levels of subterranean parking levels with 116 non-required parking spaces and (19 short-term and 159 long-term) bicycle parking spaces. The proposed building design provides a modern infill project that activates the pedestrian frontage along the 1300 block of 5th Street with retail spaces and building entries. The main façade along 5th Street provides three-dimensionality expressed by projecting, angled 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 around an open courtyard while also providing an active storefront at the street frontage. The main façade along 5th Street provides three-dimensionality expressed by projecting, angled 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, grey and white acrylic plaster with a smooth finish on all exterior walls, micro-ribbed finer cement panels, glass frameless railing 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. Architectural details which include, stucco banding, roof parapets, canopies/trellis, residential units, storefront head, and balconies shall 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. Planter material shall be revised from standard CMU/Stucco for a more finished material, to be reviewed and approved by staff prior to plan check submittal
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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

9. 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