



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: July 6, 2020

Agenda Item: 7.2

To: Architectural Review Board
From: Michael Rocque, Associate Planner
CC: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design and Historic Preservation Planner
Subject: 20ARB-0158 to approve the building design, colors materials, landscape plan and a sign program for the construction of a new 6-story, Tier 2 mixed use building with 1,543 square feet of ground floor commercial retail space, 37 deed restricted affordable residential dwelling units, and two levels of subterranean basement storage and utility area.
Address: 1238 7th Street
Applicant: WS Communities

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) approve application 20ARB-0158 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

Executive Summary

The proposal is a 6-story, Tier 2, 22,275 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 1,527 square feet of ground floor commercial space and 37 affordable residential units on a 7,493 square foot parcel in Downtown. The project includes two levels of subterranean basement storage and utility area with 69 (10 short-term and 59 long-term) bicycle parking spaces. The project site is located along the west side of 7th Street and is currently a vacant lot. The design concept expresses the floors as a series of stacked forms. This is most clearly expressed at the street where the forms are offset from one another at an angle creating a three-dimensional expression. The proposal expresses a modern design that is compatible with the mixed-use developments in the immediate area.

Background

On May 6, 2019 the preliminary design review of the project was conducted by the ARB. While the Board members supported the overall approach to the design, they provided suggestions to improve the project and noted concerns that needed further consideration:



Project Rendering-ARB Preliminary Review

- The project is a tenement typology and the liner banding doesn't appear to work and needs to be simplified.
- The project appears to be too bifurcated, and there's not enough room for the breaks in the massing.
- Consider the use of a different material or fabrication method that could help create an idea and hierarchy to the project.
- Landscape idea should be further developed and there should be attention to the open space- potentially providing more on the roof.
- Consider looking at an idea for the whole building and not just the front elevation.

An application for an Administrative Approval was submitted on July 3, 2018 with final approval granted on April 14, 2020. The Mobility and Resource Recovery & Recycling Divisions have also approved the submittal.

Project / Site Information

The project site is currently a mid-block lot developed with a one-story commercial office building on the west side of 7th Street between Arizona Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard with alley (6th Court) access. The block is predominantly developed with commercial buildings on the west side of the street ranging from 1 to 2 stories in height. Located on the east side of the street across from the subject site is 710 Wilshire an adaptive reuse of a City Landmark office building (Santa Monica Professional Building) and is a six-story 275-room hotel project that is currently under construction.

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	DCP-NV, Downtown Community Plan – Neighborhood Village
Parcel Area (SF):	7,486 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	Approximately 50'W x 150'D
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	One-story commercial office building (1976)
Project height / area / FAR	6 stories/60 -feet 26,008 SF 3.47 FAR
Unit Mix / Affordable Housing	37 total Affordable Housing units only/ Receiver site for 601 Colorado Studios: 0 units 1 BDRM: 24 units 2 BDRM: 8 units 3 BDRM: 5 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, 2-story-commercial office building South DCP – NV, 2-story-commercial office building East DCP – NV, 6-story adaptive reuse building (275 room Hotel) West DCP – NV, 2-14-story Multi-unit residential

Analysis

Site Design

The project proposal is construction of a new six-story 60-foot tall mixed-use project comprised of a ground floor commercial/residential and five residential floors above. The project also includes two subterranean basement levels that includes private 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, therefore no parking is being provided for the site.

The ground floor design includes a 1,178 square foot commercial retail space with a recessed entry and 121 square foot leasing office along with three residential units situated towards the center of the site. 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 the remaining 34 residential units following generally the same building footprint on each of the floors

While not required on a lot of this size, open space has been provided in the form of private balconies and common outdoor space. At the ground floor there is a 419 square foot lightwell located along the southern side yard which is open to the sky to bring additional light and air to the units. There is also a 254 square foot partially covered terrace located along the northern side yard which was relocated from the 2nd floor in the preliminary design. This area creates a potential social gathering space for residents and guests to enjoy.

Additional open space for residents is available on the 6th floor with approximately two 300 square foot decks situated at the south side of the building at both the front and rear of the site overlooking both 7th Street and the alley (6th Court). In response to Board comments about potentially providing more open space and landscaping at the roof deck level this area is being reserved for additional equipment, adding this feature could cause other programming issues for the applicant and they have chosen not to explore this option.

Landscape Design

The plant palette consists of a variety of drought tolerant species that are provided at the lightwell, terrace and 6th floor deck levels. The design of these common outdoor spaces, specifically at the terrace and 6th floor levels define distinct social spaces that will serve as a true amenity to the residents. As noted by the Board at the preliminary review, the landscape idea could be further developed. At the lightwell (court) area along the southern side yard two of the units private patios are situated adjacent to the space and it appears there may be an opportunity to open up the patios and have access to lightwell in addition to adding a vine covered site wall at the south end to provide more greenery to the space. A condition has been added to refine the landscaping at the lightwell at the south end of the property.

The planters are proposed as fiberglass pots at both levels and the surface flooring material at the ground floor court level will be integral color concrete paving while the terrace area at the ground floor will be a combination of precast concrete pavers (light sandblast finish) and the integral color pavers. At the 6th floor level both decks will consist of inter-locking rubber pavers. The common open space decks at the terrace and 6th floor appear to have adequate seating areas, and planting, sheet L101 provide reference. Currently there are no shading structures proposed at the 6th floor decks. The Board may wish to consider if a trellis or other type of shading structure would be useful and integrated into the building design which will help control sun and wind exposure for residents and guests.

Building Design/Architectural Concept

The overall building is contemporary in design with the ground floor façade along 7th Street being primarily glass activating the street frontage and providing a sense that the upper floors float above. In response to feedback from the Board, the design has been

revised as a series of stacked forms that rotate against each other in plan around a metal column that acts as the pivot point.



Mass and Scale

As an infill project, the immediate context of mass and scale is established by the neighboring 2-story structures. The project complies with the allowable development envelope and the upper levels provide modulation expressed by recessed balconies and a change in wall planes along the side elevations. Further, there is another development project located directly across the street at 710 Wilshire that is comparable to the massing of the subject proposal.

At the ground floor, the storefront glazing maximizes visual permeability at the commercial tenant space. In response to the Boards comments, the project massing has been revised to create a series of masses that shift side to side as they move up the facade, with dark stone tile for the mass behind which recedes visually and emphasizes the formal geometry.

Along the side elevations, the project carries over the same materiality and colors throughout with recessed balconies where possible. Both side elevations will be in full view due to the adjacent two story buildings. The south façade will consist primarily of different colors of smooth acrylic plaster (white, taupe and grey) with fiber cement paneling located at the front of the building characterized by open recessed balconies

with white acrylic plaster banding located between each floor line. Conversely, the north facade reads more vertically and is comprised of two large stair towers and an open corridor.

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.

Design, Details and Materials

The project will primarily be clad in white, taupe and dark grey acrylic plaster with a smooth finish on all exterior walls, with taupe fiber cement panel located on the side elevations near the front elevations. At the front dark stone tile is used to emphasize the shifting forms. A condition has been added to ensure the transition of materials is properly detailed, particularly at outside corners.

At the street frontage, a clear anodized aluminum storefront system floor to ceiling glazing 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 be a light 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-A901 for reference and a condition has been included to ensure consistency. In response to the Board’s comments to consider the use of a different material or fabrication method that could help create an idea and hierarchy to the project, the project design has added horizontal fiber cement panels and stone veneer create visual interest at the front façade and portions of the side elevations and 6th floor deck areas. Balcony railings will typically consist of frameless clear glass with metal rail welded wire panels to provide some variation to the materiality. A building materials detail is illustrated on Sheet A202 of the applicant’s submittal.

The projects lighting plan has an overall soft appearance and provides adequate light that relates well to streetscape. Light fixtures include surface mount ceiling fixtures at the balconies and wall/ceiling mount linear wall grazing fixtures. While the amount of light appears appropriate, the use of the surface mounted light at the balconies should be reconsidered in favor of a linear fixture at the balcony edge. A condition has been included to reflect this recommendation.

DESIGN ELEMENTS	PROPOSED EXTERIOR MATERIAL, FINISH AND COLOR
Façade	Acrylic Plaster, smooth finish (white, taupe and dark grey) Fiber Cement Panel (Taupe) Stone Veneer (Dark Grey)
Windows	Aluminum and vinyl /Glass, light grey (clear)
Doors	Aluminum and vinyl /Glass, light grey (clear)
Roof	Bitumen roofing, smooth finish (Grey)
Balcony guardrails	Frameless glass (clear) metal rail welded wire panels (black)
Mechanical Screening	Motorized roll-up door (Grey)
Refuse Screening	Metal roll up door, painted (blue)
Conceptual Lighting Plan	Stake-mounted LED accent lights at rooftop, recessed LED downlights at each unit balcony, and at entry soffit.

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 or near the main residential 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	No
Existing Sign Program	No.
Permitted Sign Area	50 square feet 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: "1238" address sign centered horizontally on wall =6 SF (exempt) Sign C1: Tenant Sign = 25 square feet max (X 1)= 25 SF Sign C1: Alternate Logo location (Blade)=4 SF
Total Sign Area Upon Completion	35 SF (6 square feet of which is exempt) 29 SF commercial sign area
Total Number of New Signs	3
Compliance	Yes.

Sign ST1 – "1238"

Proposed Sign Type: Address sign centered vertically on wall, aluminum cut mounted to wall, (non-illuminated)
 Proposed Dimensions (Area): 6' X 1' (6 SF)
 Proposed Colors: Aluminum letters to be powder coated white

Signs C1 (1) – "Future Tenant"

Proposed Sign Type: Mounted brushed stainless-steel letters LED illuminated
 Proposed Dimensions (Area): 1'-2" maximum cap height, 25 square feet maximum
 Proposed Colors: 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

Tier 2, 22,275 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 1,527 square feet of ground floor commercial space and 37 affordable residential units on a 7,493 square foot parcel in Downtown. The proposed building design provides a modern infill project that activates the pedestrian frontage along the 1200 block of 7th Street. The overall building is contemporary in design with the ground floor façade along 7th Street being primarily glass allowing the floors above it to take on a floating appearance. 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 7th Street that provides three-dimensionality by incorporating a series of stacked and rotated forms create a dynamic contemporary modern façade 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 finish acrylic plaster, stone veneer and fiber cement panel to enhance the formal geometry with frameless glass guardrails, metal rail welded wire panels 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. Landscaping should be further developed and refined at the lightwell along the southern site wall at the ground floor. The patios at the ground floor shall have access to lightwell in addition to adding a vine covered site wall at the south end to provide more greenery to the space, to be reviewed and approved by staff prior to plan check submittal.
2. The light grey 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.
3. All proposed vinyl windows shall provide details, cut sheet and sample to ensure high level of quality.
4. All material transitions should be carefully detailed, with particular attention at outside corners.
5. The use of the surface mounted light at the balconies should be replaced with a linear fixture at the balcony edge or another fixture that is better integrated into the building architecture.
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