



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: August 17, 2020

Agenda Item: 7.1

To: Architectural Review Board
From: Scott Albright, Senior Planner
Cc: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design & Historic Preservation Planner
James Combs, ARB Liaison

Subject: 19ARB-0560 to approve the building design, colors, materials, landscape plans, sign plans, and a sign program for a new eight-story (84 feet), 89,593 square-foot, mixed-use building with 140 residential units, ground floor commercial space, and a three-level subterranean parking garage.

The application was last reviewed on February 18, 2020.

Address: 601 Colorado Avenue
Applicant: WNMS Communities

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board approve application 19ARB-0560 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

Executive Summary

Proposed is a new eight-story mixed-use building with ground floor commercial space, residential units primarily on the upper floors, and a three-level subterranean parking garage. Building and landscape design and materials, as described in this report, are of high quality and comply with the design review findings. A sign program is also proposed that identifies the size, placement, and design for the building identification signage as well as any allowable signs for the future retail tenant spaces. Staff recommends conditional approval of all project components.

Board Comments and Applicant Response

During its deliberation on February 18, 2020, the Board engaged in discussion regarding the project design and expressed appreciation for the significant improvements that the design has undergone since it was last presented during Preliminary Review, and supported the massing and overall project design. Board members found the building to be handsome, the openings in the bridges to also be very positive, and the design and program of the courtyard and plazas also being well received.

While there was positive consensus about the broad concept and the overall design direction, the Board concluded that adjustments and changes to the plans would produce a better project. The Board's primary comments included the blankness of the façade at

the north elevation and concern that the landscape required a stronger concept. The project review was continued to provide the applicant an opportunity to address the following concerns raised by the Board:

Concern: The proposed north elevation with its extensive use of white stucco creates an overall massive appearance. The elevation is flat with little articulation other than a rectilinear pattern of expansion joints. Consider the addition of windows or better articulation methods.

Response: The revised north elevation has a simplified pattern of reveals and expansion joints that is reflective of the fenestration pattern found on the other street facing elevations. The flatness of the elevation is relieved with canted panels that have a slight projection giving the elevation some texture and three-dimensional quality. The images below demonstrate the change.



Rendering of North Elevation – Previously considered on February 18, 2020



Rendering of North Elevation – As currently proposed

Concern: The landscape design is underwhelming and needs a big design idea. Since the courtyard and plazas are important focal points of the project, the landscape design should be a priority, and the plant palette must be appropriately scaled to the size of the building .

The landscape design offers a counterpoint of curvilinear forms against a rigorously orthogonal building. The design draws inspiration from the coastal bluffs, with a layered approach creating berm-like areas to enable 36” box trees in the podium courtyard.

In order to address the concern of the scale of the proposed plant palette relative to the size and height of the proposed project, the sizes of the prominent tree species have increased in size at the time of installation. The proposed Acacia and Lemon trees will be 24-inch box, while the Gingko, Fruitless Olive, and the American Sumac will be 36-inch boxes. Typically, the larger the box size, the larger the specimen.

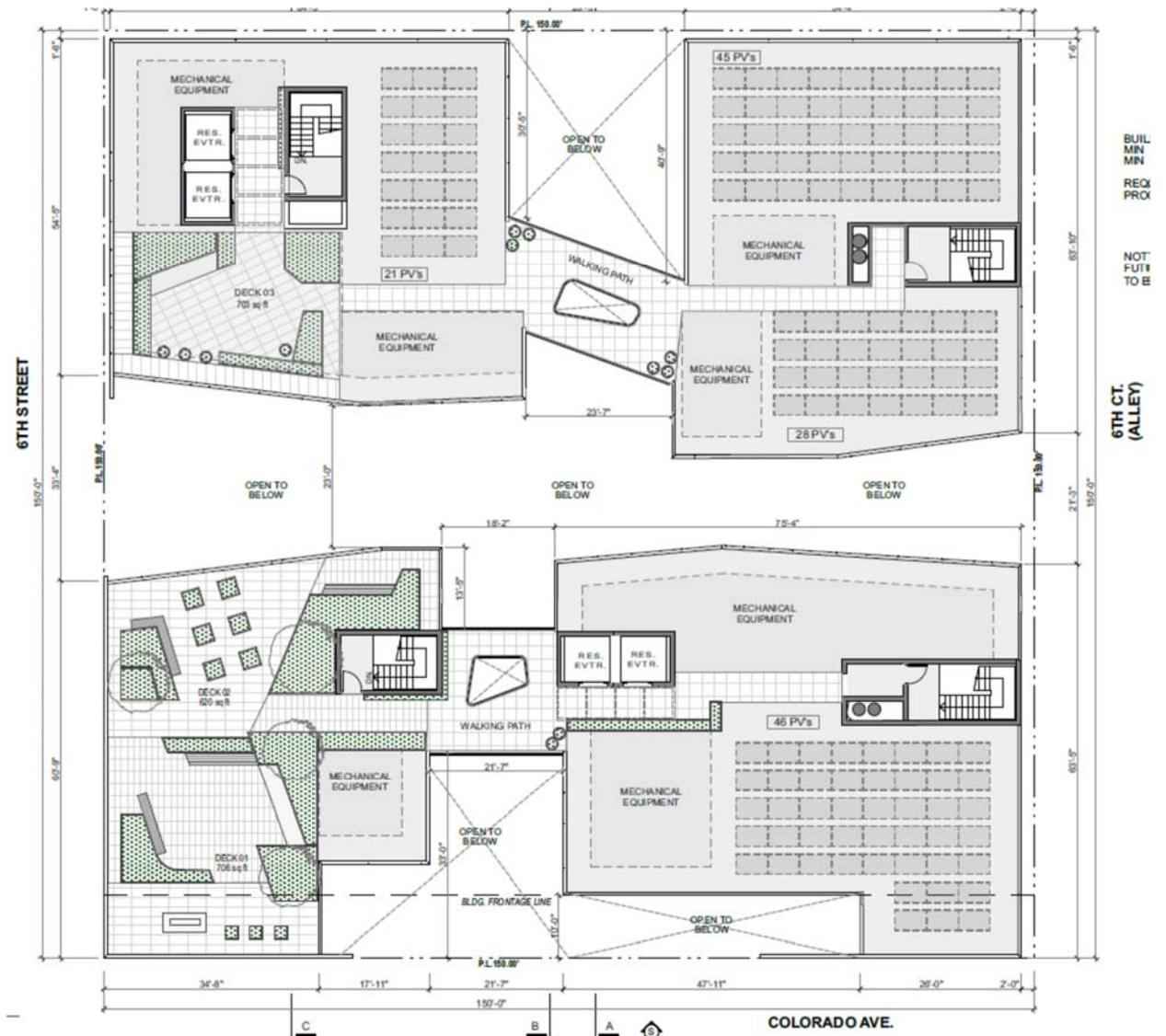
Concern: Convenient access to the rooftop amenity space is not uniformly provided to residents. The design should provide additional rooftop amenity space that will be convenient to residents in all building clusters.

Response: The proposed rooftop has been redesigned to include a 703 square foot deck space that provides passive seating and gathering space in a landscaped setting. The space is located within the northern building cluster and is situated

on the western edge of the building, affording residents sunset views toward the Pacific Ocean. The images below provide the before and after comparison of the proposed roof plan.



Roof Plan – As previously proposed on February 18, 2020.



Proposed Roof Plan – 703 square feet of additional rooftop amenity space included in north building cluster.

Sign Plans/Sign Program

The applicant is requesting approval of sign plans and a sign program (for future retail tenants) for the project. All of the signs are appropriately sited, generally above the main residential entry, the garage entry, and the planned retail storefronts. 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.

Initially the design of the address sign (a ground monument sign) was interpreted to be non-compliant relative to the requirements specified that prohibit any airspace between the ground and the sign face. After further consideration of past practice and interpretation of other similar signs, it was determined that the sign does indeed comply with the requirements.

SIGN AREA CALCULATIONS	
Multi-tenant Building	Yes.
Existing Sign Program	No.
Permitted Sign Area	300 square feet Each retail tenant may utilize a maximum of 32 square feet
Existing Sign Area (signs that will remain)	New Construction
Proposed Sign Area (this application)	Sign ST1: "601" address ground monument = 20 SF (exempt) Sign ST2: parking entrance/exiting = 20 SF (exempt) Sign ST3: passenger loading= 4SF (exempt) Sign ST4: "Leasing Center" = 2.5 SF Sign ST5: "601 Residents" = 1 SF (exempt) Signs C1 (7 signs): Tenant sign (25 square feet max each) = 175 SF Signs C4 (6 signs): Tenant Blade sign (4 SF max each) = 24 SF
Total Sign Area Upon Completion	246.5 SF (45 square feet of which is exempt) 201.5 SF commercial sign area
Total Number of New Signs	18
Compliance	Yes

Sign ST1 – "601"

Proposed Sign Type: Ground, monument sign, channel letters, illuminated
 Proposed Dimensions (Area): 4' X 5' (20 SF)
 Proposed Colors: brushed stainless steel

Sign ST2 – parking entry/exit

Proposed Sign Type: Stainless steel cabinet with attached aluminum letters
 Proposed Dimensions (Area): 12" X 20' total
 Proposed Colors: metallic

Sign ST3 – passenger loading

Proposed Sign Type: 1/8" painted aluminum panel with graphics
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 2' X 2' total
Proposed Colors: white/metallic

Sign ST4 – “Leasing Center”

Proposed Sign Type: brushed stainless steel lettering
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 6" X 5' total
Proposed Colors: metallic

Sign ST5 – “601 residents”

Proposed Sign Type: brushed stainless steel lettering
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 3" X 3' total
Proposed Colors: metallic

Signs C1 (7) – “Future Tenant”

Proposed Sign Type: Canopy sign, channel letter, illuminated
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 18' maximum cap height, 25 square feet maximum
Proposed Colors: brushed stainless steel, white acrylic face push through lettering

Signs C4 (6) – “Future Tenant”

Proposed Sign Type: Projecting Blade, non-illuminated
Proposed Dimensions (Area): 4 square feet maximum
Proposed Colors: TBD

Impact on Historic Resources

The subject property is not listed on the City’s Historic Resources Inventory.

Code Compliance

In the processing of the project’s development review permit, staff conducted extensive preliminary review for compliance with the Zoning Code, including the base district’s development standards as specified in the Downtown Community Plan. 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 proposed project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15182, which exempts projects that are consistent with a specific plan adopted pursuant to Title 7, Division 1, Chapter 3, Article 8 of the Government Code.

Summary

In conclusion, the proposed design for this eight-story, mixed-use building follows through on a consistent concept that creates a structure that will create a unique building form on this prominent site along Colorado Avenue and the Expo (E Line) light rail transit line. The building massing is broken into four independent vertical elements that appear to float above the ground surface. The buildings have a uniform yet elegant appearance with a

horizontal orientation that offsets the verticality of their eight-story height. The building elevations are modulated with recessed windows and corner balconies. The building form creates commercial space that enhances the pedestrian experience and residential units with high quality amenities to serve the residents, including attractive and usable courtyard and rooftop outdoor living areas. The landscape design presents a strong concept with curvilinear features that act as a counterpoint to the rigorous modern design. The proposed design is consistent with the City's criteria for design as described in the Downtown Community and approval is recommended. The proposal includes sign plans that comply with code requirements.

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 a complete architectural concept expressed through a strong vertical forms connected with open space, differing window sizes, and pedestrian-oriented ground floor commercial space. The design employs a palette of high quality materials and varying forms that are appropriate for the mix of commercial and residential 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, glass and mesh railings, a combination of decorative metal materials, and outdoor living area 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 it is similar in height and massing to other area developments along Colorado Avenue and 6th Street. The building is consistent with the design and use objectives articulated in the Downtown Community Plan for the Transit Adjacent district in which it is located.
- 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 submittal for plan check, the applicant shall work with staff on plan revisions to address the following:
 - Windows shall be Mi HomeMaker 3 White/Silver product or equal;

- In order to provide for flexibility for retail tenants, appropriate proportions of solid areas on the street facing elevations at the ground floor level should be incorporated in a manner that is consistent and complementary with the building design;
 - Soften the blankness of the ground floor level of the 6th Court elevation;
 - Equipment associated with the children's play area on the podium level shall be complementary to the design.
2. Reconsider the landscape design at the ground floor, podium, and rooftop levels with particular attention to creating space for social interaction and a big idea commensurate with the building design. Recessed planters should be provided to maximize planting depth for long term success and health and to as not to negatively impact the space. Sections through planters demonstrating planter depth, and details of the planters, seat walls, and built-in furnishings shall be provided for staff's review and approval prior to plan check submittal.
 3. 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.
 4. 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.
 5. 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.
 - Any alterations to the fenestration pattern, including louvers and sunshades, must maintain the design intent and provide a similar (or greater) amount of light and air by maintaining a similar amount of window area and number of operable panels. Louvers shall be metal, railings shall be plaster and glass.
 - Awnings should be maintained as designed, or if modified, provide the same design intent and relationship to the ground floor retail.
 - Any alterations to the curvilinear floor openings in the bridges shall maintain their design intent and be of a similar size and form.
 - Plaster shall be smooth finish.

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 including Landscape Design Concept Description

C:\Users\scott.albright\Desktop\19ARB-0560 (601 Colorado Avenue) New MU 140 Unit 2nd Hearing August 17, 2020.docx