



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: August 17, 2020

Agenda Item: 7.3

To: Architectural Review Board

From: James Combs, Associate Planner, ARB Liaison

Cc: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design & Historic Preservation Planner
James Combs, Associate Planner, ARB Liaison

Subject: 20ARB-0154 to review landscape, façade, and site upgrades as well as new signs and a sign adjustment for an existing hotel.

Address: 1707 4th Street

Applicant: Santa Monica Hotel Owner, LLC

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board partially approve ARB application 20ARB-0154 based upon the analysis and conditions provided within this report.

Executive Summary

Proposed is a façade, landscape renovation and 174 square feet of new signs at the existing Double Tree Hotel as it is rebranded to be a Hilton Hotel. A sign adjustment is required to allow a requested upper level sign that is prohibited per SMMC 9.61.180. Staff recommends approval of the façade improvements and code compliant signs but does not recommend approval of the sign adjustment.

Project / Site Information

The subject property is located at the southeast corner of 4th Street and Olympic Boulevard and consists of an eight-story hotel with underground parking and a pool deck above a porte-cochere along 4th Street. The existing building has 330 feet of frontage along 4th Street and approximately 155 feet of frontage along Olympic Boulevard. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is from 4th Street across from Civic Center Drive. Surrounding uses include Santa Monica High School, a multi-unit building, the new Early Childhood Development Center and Sports Fields, and the Civic Center parking structure.

The following table provides a brief summary of project data:

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	Healthcare Mixed-Use (HMU) District
Parcel Area (SF):	98,232 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	460 x 210 (irregular)
Existing On-Site Improvements	Eight story hotel
Historic Resource	Existing building is not listed

CEQA	Exempt pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3)
Adjacent Zoning & Use:	North: Olympic Blvd. / Santa Monica Freeway South: Santa Monica Highschool Football / Track Field East: Santa Monica Highschool Baseball Diamond / Multi-Unit Dwellings West: Civic Center Parking Lot

Analysis

Façade Remodel:

The renovation includes exterior painting, railing modifications, pool deck amenities, entry and port cochere modifications and new landscaping. The building will be painted medium beige (Balboa Mist) with light beige accents (White Dove). Balcony railings for each guest room will be painted a different shade of light beige, slightly warmer than the accents (Zemengtgreige). The balcony railings will be updated with the installation of clear glass panels on the inside of each existing guest railing for additional safety. The glass will be topped with a rounded, brushed stainless steel cap at 42 inches above the deck of the balcony, although the overall height of the pane varies depending on the balcony design. Existing railings at the stair tower along Olympic will be backed with a 3” by 1 – ½” wire mesh powder coated to match the rail.

Site improvements the pool deck above the porte-cochere include new wood cabanas are proposed, and the existing tile deck is proposed to be replaced. The renderings show wood decking while the plans call for new tiles; an example material has not been provided. A condition of approval requires that the decking material be reviewed for design and longevity of the material and approved prior to building permit submittal. Design and dimensions of the proposed cabanas will also need review and approval by staff prior to building permit submittal.

The main entry and the entire porte-cochere area will be redone with white-washed oak screens and columns to contrast with the proposed light gray and dark gray brick style pavers proposed for the driveway. An antique brass powder coated chandelier will be the primary lighting complemented with sconces and recessed lights in the porte-cochere roof.

Landscape:

The proposed landscape uses the soft colors and dramatic forms of various succulents and cacti to create a desert themed landscape primarily along Fourth Street and Olympic Boulevard. There are, however, locations where spined cactus and yuccas are proposed along the edges of sidewalks and walkways. A condition of approval has been included to relocate the *Opuntia Santa Rita* (Prickly Pear) along Olympic Boulevard, the *Yucca filamentosa* (Adam’s Needle) near the driveway, and any other similar plants away from walkways.

As conditioned, the proposed landscape has a well-designed and executed concept providing varied heights, colors, and textures while being drought tolerant.

Signs:

Proposed are seven signs to accommodate the rebranding of the subject hotel; a wall sign on the porte-cochere, a plaque near the entrance, two directional signs, an upper level sign and a ground sign. As proposed the upper-level sign requires a sign adjustment.

The wall sign (Sign A2), located approximately 30 feet from the property line at the corner, is proposed with 30-inch letters. The existing sign has significantly smaller letters, but the proposed copy will be shorter resulting in less total sign area. Given the distance from the street 30-inch letters seem appropriate. The proposed entry plaque (Sign B) will not be visible from the street and is meant to welcome guests at the main entrance. The three directional signs (D1, D2 and E) will likewise not be visible and explain parking regulations and guide guests onsite.

A ground sign proposed at the driveway entrance (Sign J) is a new sign location between the aisles of the driveway set back approximately 30 feet from Fourth Street. As proposed the sign does not meet Code as either a Pylon Sign or a Monument Sign. In order to be a Pylon sign the proposed may be no more than 30 inches wide and to qualify as a monument sign it must be wider than it is tall. A condition of approval has been included that the sign be modified to meet the definition of a Monument Sign not exceeding 40 SF on one face.

The final proposed sign is a 100 SF upper level sign on the rooftop mechanical penthouse facing north across the Santa Monica Freeway. Since upper-level signs are a prohibited sign type, findings for a sign adjustment are required for approval. Recent research into upper level signs throughout the City found no upper-level hotel signs with approved sign adjustments.

As a large site with ample sign area and locations for permitted signs with visibility from 4th Street and Olympic Boulevard, there are no unique physical or topographic circumstances preventing Code compliant signs from achieving similar sign visibility as neighboring uses. Additionally, as one of the tallest buildings in the area an upper-level sign at this location would afford the applicant a special privilege inconsistent with limitations imposed on similarly zoned properties and creating significantly more sign visibility than is afforded other buildings in the area. The approval of an upper level sign at the subject location may also set a precedent for similar signs on other tall buildings and hotels such as the Le Meridien Delfina, a 12-story hotel around the corner from the subject site on Pico Boulevard. As such, it does not appear that the required findings for a Sign Adjustment can be met:

Required Findings for Approval of a Sign Adjustment:

1. The strict application of the provisions of this Chapter would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships for the business or property owner which would be inconsistent with the purposes of this Chapter and which would arise from unique physical or topographic circumstances or conditions of project design;

2. The granting of the requested variance would not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with limitations imposed on similarly zoned properties or inconsistent with the purposes of the zoning regulations;
3. The granting of the requested variance would not be incompatible with other nearby signs, other elements of street and site furniture and with adjacent structures. Compatibility shall be determined by the relationships of the elements of form, proportion, scale, color, materials, surface treatment, overall sign size and the size and style of lettering;
4. The granting of the variance would not be inconsistent with the purposes of this Chapter.

SIGN AREA CALCULATIONS	
Multi-tenant Building	No
Permitted Sign Area	Appx. 465 SF (310' building address frontage x 1.5 for corner lot)
Existing Sign Area	None.
Proposed Sign Area	<i>Sign</i> <i>Type</i> <i>Dimensions</i> <i>Total (SF)</i>
	A2 Wall 2'-6" x 10' 2-3/4" 27.28
	B Wall 24" x 30" 5
	D1 Directional 20 -3/4" x 15" 2.17
	D2 Directional 20 -3/4" x 15" 2.17
	E Directional 4'-8" x 1'-8" 11.67
	I Upper Level 4'-9 3/8" x 19'-7 1/3" 100
	J Ground Sign 6'-0" x 4'-10" 42.93
Total:	191.22 SF
Total Number of New Signs	7
Compliance	No. As proposed Sign I is an upper-level sign and is not permitted, additionally Sign J does not comply with the allowed dimensions for either a monument or pylon sign and is therefore not permitted.

Staff recommends that the Architectural Review Board conditionally approve the sign request allowing staff to work with the applicant to determine an appropriately sized sign location along Olympic Boulevard that complies with the Code such as one to replace the existing sign at the corner of Olympic Boulevard and 4th Street shown as sign C on sheet 1 of the sign plans. Staff does not recommend approval of the requested Sign Adjustment.

Impact on Historic Resources

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

Code Compliance

This application has been preliminarily 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 categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15311 (a), Class 11, of the State Implementation CEQA Guidelines in that the project involves the construction or replacement of minor accessory structures to existing commercial, industrial or institutional facilities.

Summary

The proposed façade and landscape updates, as well as the wall, directional and ground are consistent with the zoning code, the total allotted sign area allowed by zoning code, and, as conditioned, are well integrated into the building design. Staff recommends that the façade and landscape updates as well as the six signs be approved. However, staff is unable to make the findings to allow the upper-level sign. Staff recommends that the Architectural Review Board provide direction to the applicant so that staff may work with them to modify the upper-level sign to be a similar size and in the same location as the former "Sign C".

CONDITIONS:

1. Prior to building permit submittal, the applicant shall seek staff review and obtain approval for a quality decking material to be used at the pool level.
2. Prior to building permit submittal, the *Opuntia santa-rita* (Prickly Pear) along Olympic Boulevard, the *Yucca filamentosa* (Adam's Needle) near the driveway, and any other similar spiked, spined, or pointed plants shall be moved away from walkways.
3. Prior to building permit submittal, sign "J" shall be modified so its measurements comply with the Code definition of a Monument Sign and shall have a single face area not to exceed 40 SF.
4. Prior to building permit submittal, applicant shall modify the sign plans to remove the upper level sign and to modify it to be a similar size and in the same location as the former "Sign C".
5. This approval shall expire in six months from the date of approval or six months from the date a certificate of occupancy is granted for construction-related projects. All conditions of approval and the final inspection process must be completed within this timeframe.
6. 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 300 square feet of area may be reviewed and approved by the Staff Liaison to the Board.

7. 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.
8. 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

[https://smgov365.sharepoint.com/teams/pcdsp/cityplanning/arb/stfrpt/sr20/20arb-0154 \(1707 4th st\)/20arb-0154 \(1707 4th street\) sign adjustment.docx](https://smgov365.sharepoint.com/teams/pcdsp/cityplanning/arb/stfrpt/sr20/20arb-0154 (1707 4th st)/20arb-0154 (1707 4th street) sign adjustment.docx)