



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: August 17, 2020

Agenda Item: 8.1

To: Architectural Review Board

From: Rathar Duong, Associate Planner

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

Subject: Preliminary Review of a proposed Tier 2, three-story, 22,342 square-foot mixed use building consisting of approximately 3,600 SF of ground floor retail/restaurant space and 18,742 SF of creative office space on the first, second and third floors situated above a subterranean parking level for 61 spaces. The project site is located in the Mixed Use Boulevard Low (MUBL) district and is associated with several entitlement applications including 20ENT-0104 (DRP), 20ENT-0105 (CUP for creative office) and 20ENT-0106 (MUP for restaurant).

Address: 1640-1644 14th Street
Applicant: 1640-1644 14th Street Owner, LLC

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board review the project design and provide preliminary comments to assist in the development of the project prior to approval of a Development Review Permit (DRP), Conditional Use Permit (CUP), and Minor Use Permit (MUP) applications by the Planning Commission.

Executive Summary

Proposed is a new 22,342 square-foot, 36-foot high mixed-use building on an approximately 15,000 square-foot lot on two adjoining parcels located directly across from Memorial Park. The design features an all-glass façade punctuated with steel elements, concrete, and wood. The open and transparent appearance stands out from the existing neighborhood context of mostly one- and two-story brick and concrete buildings with industrial aesthetic. The contemporary building features a flat roof that includes a roof terrace, shade structures, landscaping, and sculptural roof projections. A simple yet modern material palette is proposed, including extensive steel frame curtain wall system with operable pivot window panels and sliding glass doors, exposed concrete floor, and concrete. Primary pedestrian access will be from 14th Street with a secondary vehicular access from the rear Euclid Court (alley).

Pursuant to the SMMC Section 9.40.020 (A)(1), any project that exceeds Tier 1 maximum limits requires a Development Review Permit (DRP). A preliminary design review by the Architectural Review Board is also required to provide design recommendations prior to the issuance of an approval. The project will return to the Board after the DRP application is approved for final design review.

Project / Site Information

The project site is located midblock on the west side of 14th Street between Olympic Boulevard and Colorado Avenue and directly across from Memorial Park within the Mixed Use Boulevard Low District. The site was formerly a tow yard with an existing 550 SF one-story building that was developed in 1923 and will be demolished.

With the exception of the recreation facilities/open space across the street (Memorial Park), the project site is surrounded by a variety of commercial uses along 14th Street and industrial/manufacturing, and creative offices to its rear (west) on properties within the Industrial Conservation (IC) district. The parcel is also within close proximity to the Expo Line on Colorado Avenue, a short walk north of the site as well as the commercial corridors and residential neighborhoods along Santa Monica and Pico Boulevards.

The following table provides a brief summary of project data:

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	Mixed Use Boulevard Low (MUBL)
Parcel Area (SF):	Approximately 15,000 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	150' W x 100' D
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	One-story approximately 550 SF commercial building (1923) – to be demolished
Historic Resource Inventory Status	Existing building is not on the HRI
CEQA	Exempt pursuant to Section 15183.3
Adjacent Zoning & Use:	North: MUBL – Self Storage Facilities South: MUBL – Retail (Snyder-Diamond) East: OS – Memorial Park West: IC – Various Industrial/Manufacturing Uses and Creative Offices

Analysis

Site Planning

The in-fill parcel is an approximately 15,000 square-foot interior lot created by combining two adjoining lots to create the project site. The site is located between Olympic Boulevard and Colorado Avenue on the west side of 14th Street across from Memorial Park within the MUBL district. Along the rear is Euclid Court (alley) and across the alley is the Industrial Conservation (IC) district. The proposed three-story building is rectangular in shape and generally extends to the property lines with minimal setback from the front and rear property lines. The building placement is consistent with existing development pattern along 14th Street. By design and intended future uses, the proposed building achieves connectivity to the street and pedestrian realm spanning between Colorado Avenue and Olympic Boulevard more successfully than the existing buildings around it. As explained and illustrated by the contextual drawing dubbed the “Garden Spine” on Sheet 6, the building’s orientation, courtyard and landscape design will further support and enhance the connectivity to a network of future and existing pedestrian passages and green spaces all around the project site.

Building Design/Architectural Concept

The proposed design can be described as a glass-clad C-shaped building punctuated by a wide opening leading from the sidewalk to a landscaped courtyard. The street-facing elevation is entirely clad in an aluminum curtain wall system with pivot windows offering transparency into and out of the building. With the exception of the northwest elevation facing the side property line, the southeast (courtyard) and southwest (alley) elevations create a similar sense of openness that connect the interior-exterior for a seamless experience. This aesthetic is a departure from the adjoining building typology of a by-gone era that appear impenetrable including Snyder-Diamond appliances, plumbing and hardware store and a self-storage facility. This neighborhood is in transition as similar buildings/design are in the planning and entitlement stages within the same zoning district and on properties to its west in the Industrial Conservation district.

The design is informed by the intended future occupants that include creative offices and retail/restaurant tenants as well as its location along 14th Street and Memorial Park across the street and offer wide open, bright, spaces that embrace the street and outdoors. The roof is highlighted by an interesting roofline interspersed with sculpturally shaped skylights, trellises and rooftop terrace as illustrated on Sheets 29-36.

Mass and Scale

The surrounding context consists of older and refurbished buildings ranging from one- to two-story commercial, office and industrial buildings as illustrated on Sheet 4. While the siting of the building is similar to the existing development pattern, the mass and scale is decidedly different between the proposed and existing concrete- or brick-clad buildings in the vicinity that lend to a more solid and massive appearance in comparison. To that end, the proposed building, although taller, is similar to the new and proposed buildings in the area. The three-story building with courtyard open to the street is appropriate in mass and scale for the area.

The front and rear facades are most visible and are primarily treated with aluminum curtain wall system that open to the street and alley as is the southwest elevation facing the courtyard. The southeast (side) elevation is a solid wall of board-formed concrete, but is least visible to the street or alley since it adjoins a neighboring building. The building footprint and punched opening to the interior courtyard further minimize the appearance of a taller/larger building from the pedestrian perspective.

The glazing pattern of horizontal and vertical mullion complement the more pronounced horizontal exposed concrete slab of the second floor and thick fascia of the roofline. These elements help de-emphasize the three-story height and focus on the horizontality to further reduce the perceived mass of the building. The extensive glazing throughout the project provides visual transparency into and out of the interior spaces.

Design, Details and Materials

The building's contemporary design and lightness is a departure from the existing older building typology of the surrounding area that is attributed to its close proximity to the Industrial Conservation (IC) district located directly to the west of the site. The IC district is characterized by utilitarian buildings that were intended for industrial and manufacturing uses. For this reason, the contemporary glass-clad building is a newer type of design that

is uncommon within the existing context. However, this area is in the midst of transformation by a number of similar projects either through façade renovation or redevelopment for new uses. Over time, there will be more architectural consistency among these buildings than differences observed today.

The proposed design and treatment of the façades make use of its site design and surrounding context, such as the park and connection to nearby neighborhoods. The clean and simple design is intended to blur the line between indoor-outdoor and public-private spaces while allowing the maximum amount of light and air to flood the interior for a more attractive and inviting spaces. The building C-shape footprint embraces the social spaces and landscape courtyard along the southeast elevation similar to how its front façade addresses the street and park across the way. The rear elevation appears most conventional and is adeptly designed through its use of materials and overall composition. Care should be given to important details including where different materials meet and terminate. The material and color palette are complementary, high quality, and support the overall building architectural concept. These finishes are depicted on Sheet 9 and include aluminum curtain wall system, bonderized metal panels, board-formed concrete, perforated metal and wood.

Landscaping

The project's landscape design concept features two primary areas as illustrated on Sheets 10, 12 and 22, located on the ground floor and the roof deck. A secondary landscape feature is in the parking level. The ground level incorporates a courtyard/paseo that connects to the sidewalk and features a "social stair" as its defining element. This area will be integrated with seating and open spaces for social interaction and informal gatherings. The roof terrace is another landscaped social space interwoven with the skylights and sculptural roof projections. This outdoor space will provide additional seating under a shade structure integrated with solar panels and will be completely surrounded by landscape as depicted by Sheet 15. The third landscape area is located in the garage level closest to the stairwell where dapple lighting can filter through. As illustrated on Sheet 10, the various landscape areas proposed in the garage level, courtyard/ground level, and rooftop terrace will be defined by various themes identified as tropical, Spanish, desert, and native gardens to achieve a different sensory experience in each space. A similar landscape idea will be extended to the rear alley elevation for a cohesive design throughout the project. The landscape plans and associated plant palettes for each garden are shown on Sheets 21-26.

The landscape design is unique by incorporating a thematic approach to each area to create a varied experience. The applicant should consider providing appropriate lighting in each garden, including the alley elevation to help create a welcoming arrival experience. The Board may wish to suggest ways landscape and lighting design can complement the building design, features and scale.

Potential Impact on Historic Resources

The subject property is not listed on the City's Historic Resources Inventory. Demolition of the existing building on site was reviewed by the Landmarks Commission and the 75-day waiting period has ended.

DISCUSSION

The proposed contemporary three-story, creative office and retail/restaurant mixed use building is a redevelopment of a site formerly occupied by a tow yard. The project is located mid-block on the west side of 14th Street between Olympic Boulevard and Colorado Avenue and the Expo Line. The contemporary design and its all-glass façade is a departure from the surrounding building typology and uses that are defined by opaque concrete or brick buildings that generally accommodate industrial or manufacturing uses due to its proximity to the Industrial Conservation (IS) district. However, this area is undergoing transition due to its accessibility to transit, particularly the Exo Line. A number of parcels are being redeveloped or in the entitlement phase to accommodate new uses, including creative office buildings of similar contemporary design.

The proposed project responds to its connections to the neighborhood by way of its site planning and design features. The project takes full advantage of the open space (Memorial Park) across the street by incorporating meaningful and usable open spaces throughout its design in different ways. Further, the visually transparent glass façade facilitates the indoor-outdoor experience seamlessly while maximizing light, air, and circulation to improve the quality and usability of the interior spaces. The design of the building and its simple material palette connect the project to the public realm and highlight its transparency into and out of the building.

Staff suggests that the Board may wish to also consider the following with regards to design:

- Does the project have a clear architectural concept?
- Is the architectural concept sufficiently expressed around the building?
- Does the use of materials create an integrated approach that enhances the design concept?
- Do all the design elements work well together to enhance the project design?
- How can landscaping re-enforce the design, usability/programming courtyard, roof terrace, and transition between private and Public Right-of-Way?
- Is the overall configuration appropriate to the project site and surrounding context? Specifically, is the design in its expression and perceived scale appropriate to the neighborhood and existing buildings?
- Does the design of the ground floor promote connectivity and pedestrian activity?
- Is the rooftop/mechanical equipment and solar panels attached to the pergola sensitively integrated into the roof design?

Attachments

A. Applicant's Submittal Material