



# Architectural Review Board Report

**Architectural Review Board Meeting: August 17, 2020**

**Agenda Item: 7.4**

To: Architectural Review Board  
From: Michael Rocque, Associate Planner  
CC: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design and Historic Preservation Planner  
Subject: 20ARB-0157 to approve the building design, colors materials, landscape plan and a sign program for the construction of a new 8-story, mixed use building with 1,018 square feet of ground floor commercial retail space, 50 deed restricted affordable residential dwelling units, and two levels of subterranean basement storage and utility area.  
Address: 1514 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Applicant: WS Communities

## **Recommended Action**

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) approve application 20ARB-0157 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

## **Executive Summary**

The proposal is an eight-story, 29,972 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 1,018 square feet of ground floor commercial space and 50 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 89 (11 short-term and 78 long-term) bicycle parking spaces. The project site is located along the west side of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and is currently a vacant lot. The design concept consists of two forms with a background mass of grey and a layer of white in front that becomes carved away to reveal recessed balconies. The proposal expresses a modern design that appears to be 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 front elevation should be simplified, and the material palette could be expanded.
- On a 50' wide street frontage breaking up the building into 3 vertical masses makes the façade on 7<sup>th</sup> street over-articulated and limits the design strategy. Providing a bigger site gesture at the front elevation would help improve the design.
- The balconies at the south elevation appear to be problematic and would be better if they were recessed to relate to the corner pieces.

- The landscape design concept should have an identity. Consider the possibility of providing more open space on the roof and to provide as much in ground planting as possible.
- Explore the possibility of providing an ocean view.

An application for an Administrative Approval was submitted on July 12, 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 vacant lot on the west side of 7<sup>th</sup> Street between Broadway and Colorado Avenue with alley (6<sup>th</sup> Court) access. The block is predominantly developed with multi-unit residential developments ranging from 3 to 4 stories in height. Located just north of the subject site, 626 Broadway is a four-story, mixed-use project containing 48 residential units completed in 2008.

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	DCP-TA, Downtown Community Plan – Transit Adjacent
Parcel Area (SF):	7,493 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	Approximately 50’W x 150”D
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	Vacant (demo permit 2007)
Project height / area / FAR	8 stories/ 84-feet 29,972 SF 4.0 FAR
Unit Mix / Affordable Housing	50 total Affordable Housing units only/ Receiver site for 1543 7 <sup>th</sup> (25 units) and 1425 5 <sup>th</sup> (25 Units) Studios: 0 units 1 BDRM: 33 units 2 BDRM: 10 units 3 BDRM: 7 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 – TA, 4-story mixed use development South DCP – TA, 2-story multi-unit residential East DCP – TA, 1-story commercial building (Vons Market) West DCP – TA, 2-story commercial (Hotel)

**Analysis**

Site Design

The project involves the construction of a new 84-foot tall mixed-use project comprised of ground floor commercial/residential and seven residential floors above. The project also includes two subterranean basement level 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 792 square foot commercial retail space with a recessed entry to the north side of the building frontage and an entry to a residential lobby, small leasing office along with three residential units located 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 47 residential units following generally the same building footprint throughout each of the floors.

While not required on a lot of this size, an ample amount of open space has been provided in the form of private balconies and common outdoor space. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor there is a 297 square foot outdoor terrace located along the northern side yard which is open to the sky to bring additional light and air to the building. Since the walkways are open-air, yet at times double loaded, it would be important for passive air flow to provide an operable window in the entry side of each unit. There is also a 225 square foot roof deck located at the 6<sup>th</sup> floor which is located along the southern side yard and wraps the corner of the building facing west towards the ocean which was enlarged and relocated from the 7<sup>th</sup> floor in the preliminary design. This area creates a potential social gathering space for residents and guests to enjoy.

In response to the Board comments on providing open space with an ocean view a 903 square foot deck at the 8<sup>th</sup> floor was relocated from the east end of the site overlooking 7<sup>th</sup> street to the west end of the building at the rear of the site overlooking the alley (6<sup>th</sup> court), creating an ample amount of gathering space with vast ocean views.

### Landscape Design

The plant palette consists of a variety of drought tolerant species that are provided at the ground level, terrace, 6<sup>th</sup> floor deck and 8<sup>th</sup> floor roof deck levels. The design of these common outdoor spaces, specifically at the terrace, 6<sup>th</sup> floor and 8<sup>th</sup> 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 design concept should have an identity. The variety of plants and organization work well together to provide a linear sensibility while softening the building and common open spaces.

At the ground floor along the street frontage in ground planting has been provided in every portion of recessed area along the street frontage. While not being counted as open space, at the ground floor lightwell (court) area along the southern side yard all three 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 more planting area or a vine covered site wall at the south end to provide more greenery to the space.

The fiberglass planters are proposed at all levels and the surface flooring material will consist of decorative paving, decorative tile paving and wood deck tiles as indicated on the landscape plans. The common open space decks at the terrace and eighth floor appear to have adequate seating areas, and planting, sheet L101 and L102 provide

reference. Currently there appears to be some inconsistency on the plans as to whether there is any outdoor furniture or seating areas proposed at the sixth-floor deck. The Board may wish to consider if additional built in seating or other outdoor furniture would be useful and integrated into the design for residents and guests. A condition has been added to clarify and further develop the landscaping at the lightwell and at the sixth-floor deck.

#### Building Design/Architectural Concept

The proposed building is a modern infill project that provides an active storefront at the street frontage along the 1500 block of 7<sup>th</sup> Street. The building is contemporary in design with the main façade along 7<sup>th</sup> Street being separated into two main volumes that come down to street level and are punctuated by recessed balconies expressed as shifting voids carved into and projecting from the larger volumes. In response to feedback from the Board, the design concept consisting of the two massing types has relatively remained the same with the major revisions being the overall color scheme and carved out area of the recessed balconies shifting to the center of the building.



While the applicant has made substantial revisions since their preliminary review there are still concerns as to the overall design strategy at the front façade. It appears to be a challenge to break up a façade on a 50-foot wide lot into several different components.

The Board may wish to consider or suggest for the applicant to explore the possibility of further simplifying the front façade, and/or modifying the staggered profile of the recessed balconies. The Board may also wish to consider how the concept is carried around the building for a three-dimensional solution.

### Mass and Scale

As an infill project, the immediate context of mass and scale is established by the neighboring 3 and 4-story structures. Further, there is an approved development project located directly across the street at 1543 7<sup>th</sup> which is proposed to be at 8 stories and 84' 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 while also providing modulation expressed by enlarged roof decks and recessed balconies. However, the tri-partite expression of the street facing elevation may accentuate the height of the building.

At the ground floor, the storefront glazing maximizes visual permeability. The addition of a horizontal canopy projection above the proposed retail storefront provides pedestrian scale and The Board may wish to consider if this may be a logical location for signage rather than proposed wall signs at the storefront.

Along the side elevations, the project coloration is carried throughout with both projecting and recessed balconies. The south elevation will be in full view due to the adjacent two-story building, while the north elevation is adjacent to an existing five-story building. The south façade mirrors the front elevation by providing a carved-out area of the recessed balconies in the middle of the elevation making for a simple, horizontally tiered parti. Conversely, the north facade reads more vertically and is comprised of four tall slender forms: the light grey masses at the ends and the two dark grey stair towers with an open corridor in the middle. Since the north elevation is more solid due to functionality and proximity to the property line, it is a challenge to provide the same level of modulation as on other elevations. However, due to color variation and reveal patterns it appears to have sufficient visual interest.

At the rear, the same materiality and coloration is provided, and the rhythm is carried down to the base of the façade. Due to the relocation of the 8<sup>th</sup> floor roof deck at the west end of the site the covered trellis and clear glass guardrail has been removed to eliminate the previous towering effect and the revised roofline creates a more simple and clean integration into the building design at the front façade.

### Design, Details and Materials

The project will primarily be clad acrylic plaster in different colors with a smooth finish on all exterior walls, with medium grey metal panels located in the carved-out area of the front elevation and trellis. A condition has been added to ensure the transition of materials is properly detailed, particularly at outside corners. The balcony edges are detailed as metal panel with concealed fasteners. This should be of a sufficient gauge to prevent "oil-canning". A condition of approval has been included.

At the street frontage, a clear glass medium grey 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 medium 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. Balcony railings will typically consist of a medium grey metal rail throughout the project. A building materials detail is illustrated on Sheet A203 of the applicant's submittal.

The lighting plan has an overall soft appearance and provides adequate light that relates well to streetscape. Light fixtures include surface mount linear fixture mounted in cove up lighting ceiling, decorative pendant at retail entry, wall mount fixture with up/down light and recessed downlights.

DESIGN ELEMENTS	PROPOSED EXTERIOR MATERIAL, FINISH AND COLOR
Façade	Acrylic Plaster, smooth finish (light cream and light and dark grey) Metal Panel-aluminum (medium grey)
Windows	Aluminum and vinyl /Glass, dark grey (clear)
Doors	Aluminum and vinyl /Glass, dark grey (clear)
Roof	Bitumen roofing, smooth finish (TBD)
Balcony guardrails	Metal rails (dark grey)
Mechanical Screening	Metal (TBD)
Refuse Screening	Metal roll up door, painted (grey)
Conceptual Lighting Plan	Surface mount linear fixture mounted in cove up lighting ceiling, decorative pendant at retail entry, wall mount fixture with up/down light and recessed downlights.

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. The Board may wish to consider the sign for the commercial spaces to be located at the awning rather than at the wall.

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	New Construction
Proposed Sign Area (this application)	Sign ST1: "1514" address sign centered horizontally on wall above residential entry =3.75 SF (exempt) Sign C1: Tenant Sign = 25 square feet max (X 1) = 25 SF
Total Sign Area Upon Completion	28.75SF (3.75 square feet of which is exempt) 25 SF commercial sign area

Total Number of New Signs	2
Compliance	Yes.

Sign ST1 – “1514”

Proposed Sign Type: Address sign centered horizontally on wall above residential entry, aluminum cut mounted to wall, (non-illuminated)

Proposed Dimensions (Area): 3’ X 1.75’ (3.75 SF)

Proposed Colors: Aluminum letters to be powder coated white

Signs C1 (1) – “Future Tenant”

Proposed Sign Type: Mounted brushed stainless-steel letters Halo illuminated

Proposed Dimensions (Area): 1’-0” 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**

The proposal is a new, 8-story, 29,972 square foot mixed-use building with approximately 1,018 square feet of ground floor commercial space and 50 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 1500 block of 7<sup>th</sup> Street. The proposal expresses a contemporary that appears to be compatible with the mixed-use developments in the immediate area. 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 7<sup>th</sup> Street that is separated into two main volumes that come down to street level and are punctuated by recessed balconies expressed as shifting voids that are carved into and projecting from the larger volumes 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, metal panels to enhance the formal geometry with metal guardrails, aluminum storefront system 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 for review and approval by staff prior to plan check submittal:
  - a. The patios at the ground floor shall have access to lightwell
  - b. Provide vines at the south end to provide more greenery to the space
  - c. Clarify and refine the design of the sixth-floor deck
- 2. The dark 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 submittal.
- 3. Prior to plan check submittal, provide operable windows at the entry side of all units wherever possible.
- 4. The balcony edge details shall be metal panel with concealed fasteners as shown. Metal shall be a gauge sufficient not to “oil-can”.

5. All proposed vinyl windows shall provide details, cut sheet and sample to ensure high level of quality.
6. All material transitions should be carefully detailed, with particular attention at outside corners.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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

12. 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