



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: February 16, 2021

Agenda Item: 8.1

To: Architectural Review Board
From: Scott Albright, Senior Planner
CC: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design and Historic Preservation Planner

Subject: Preliminary review of a proposed Tier 3, eight-story, mixed-use project with 296 residential units (including 90 deed-restricted affordable units), 99,085 square feet of commercial space (including a 63,500 square foot grocery store), and two levels of subterranean parking.

Address: 710 Broadway
Applicant: 710 Broadway, LLC, c/o Larry Wilkes

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board review the project design and provide feedback for the applicant team's consideration prior to Planning Commission review.

Executive Summary

The proposal is for the demolition of the existing Vons Supermarket and all related site improvements, and for the construction of a new eight-story, mixed-use building with 296 residential units, approximately 99,050 square feet of commercial space, and two levels of subterranean parking with space to accommodate 374 vehicles. A new 63,500 square foot state-of-the-art grocery store will operate on-site, along with a commercial gym and commercial restaurant space, including outdoor seating. The project scope includes the partial vacation and realignment of 7th Court service alley.

Project / Site Information

The project site is situated at the southwest corner of Broadway at Lincoln Boulevard, and also includes frontage along 7th Street. The 2.49 acre parcel is developed with an existing one-story, Vons grocery store with a large asphalt surface parking lot primarily along its Lincoln Boulevard frontage. A dedicated service alley (7th Court) bisects the combined parcels. The project is located within the Downtown Community Plan's Bayside Conservation District.

Proposed Site Plan – Lincoln Boulevard, at top; Broadway, at left.

The following table provides a brief summary of the project data:

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| Zoning District / Design Guidelines: | Downtown Community Plan – Lincoln Transition (LT) and Transit Adjacent (TA) |
| Parcel Area (SF): | 108,501 SF (combined) |
| Parcel Dimensions: | 340' W x 300' D (combined) |
| Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built): | 35,768 SF, two-story commercial building (1995) – all improvements to be demolished |
| Proposed Project height / area / FAR | <p>Lincoln Boulevard and east portion of Broadway frontages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-stories/60 feet • 153,315 SF of total floor area • 2.75 FAR <p>7th Street and west portion of Broadway frontages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8-stories/84 feet • 211,000 SF of total floor area • 4.0 FAR |
| Adjacent Zoning & Use: | <p>North: DCP - Neighborhood Village and Lincoln Transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1- 4-story office/1-2-story commercial and office <p>South: DCP – Transit Adjacent and Lincoln Transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-story mixed use commercial/residential <p>East: DCP – Lincoln Transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2-story commercial office, Bay Cities deli <p>West: DCP – Transit Adjacent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-story mixed use, 2-story residential |

Analysis

The proposed mixed-use building is contemporary in its design and incorporates commercial storefronts along the Lincoln Boulevard, Broadway, and a portion of the 7th Street building frontages. This allows for a primarily transparent pedestrian level.

- The project is a single building spanning the site with three separate design expressions around the building. As such, the design visually presents itself as smaller components that may help alleviate the massive size of the project. The three components that begin to distinguish themselves through unique geometry: “curvilinear” primarily along Broadway; “folded” along 7th Street; and, “wavy” along Lincoln Boulevard. These treatments in combination with material changes add visual interest and undulating visual movement to the design. Each component begins to make a distinct statement. Recesses are also introduced to further reduce the mass, However, staff is concerned that the building appears as a single building, with three different “wrappers”. The Board may wish to consider if the design would be stronger if the building were designed as three more distinct massing components.

- One of the potential advantages of the massing approach is that it enables the creation of a large open space in the center.
 - The significant size of the interior courtyard and the extent of the rooftop devoted to usable open space creates great potential for these spaces to be a true community amenities for the residents. Particular design attention to the spaces is critical so they become functional spaces that offer passive and active recreation, and community gathering, and do not only become landscaped circulation spaces.
 - In the past, the Board has requested and staff believes that it is important for this courtyard feature to be visually available to the public by creating significantly sized openings onto each of the adjacent public streets, but particularly to Lincoln Boulevard and 7th Streets. Larger breaks between buildings will create visual corridors that will add depth to project beyond the rigid street wall that is typically created along the sidewalks. This would allow the public to glimpse the activity and verdant qualities occurring within the interior of the project. This may have the additional benefit of breaking the massing in a more meaningful way.
 - The Board may consider providing guidance on strategies for making such a sizable courtyard inviting and a true amenity for the residents.
- Along Lincoln Boulevard, the project is less-playful and more rigid in appearance. Its fenestration appears somewhat relentless and too simplistic in its overall approach. The street itself presents a unique challenge and opportunity for the design. This high traffic volume street has been historically characterized as being auto-oriented, and developed as a highway commercial strip. However, development trends along the corridor are evolving as these former stand-alone highway commercial uses are phased out in favor of more pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use projects. This project is representative of this trend. The challenge is presenting design attributes that can balance the faster pace experiences of an automobile user and the detailing that a pedestrian slowly strolling along the sidewalk will experience.
 - Additionally, as Lincoln Boulevard is one of the widest boulevards in Santa Monica, the full project size and length will be made visible. The Board may wish to suggest strategies for breaking the massing and increasing the variety and visual interest of the project in an authentic manner.
- The verticality of the project is a reflection of the design standards prescribed by the Downtown Community Plan and the unique condition of having a building site split by differing zone designations and design standards. The eastern portions of the project (along Lincoln Boulevard and a portion of Broadway) extend 60 feet/five-stories above average natural grade, the maximum permitted by Code, while those remaining portions (primarily along 7th Street) allow a maximum of eight stories/84 feet. The height transition is abrupt and visually apparent in design particularly along the prominent Broadway elevation. However, the majority of the

project's height is visually influenced by the void space created by the interior open courtyard. This condition eases the height transition to these portions of the project, making the height difference less abrupt.

- The Board may wish to consider if a break in the building at the height transition is recommended.

In general, staff realizes that the overall benefits of this mixed-use project to the greater community are strong: it will provide a sizable amount of affordable housing and will offer a much-needed commercial service (a grocery market) to the greater Downtown community. This is a large development project, and its location is at an important corner of Downtown Santa Monica. This project will have significant influence in the development/redevelopment of Downtown in its entirety. These factors contribute to the import and specialty of this project. Staff believes that the design needs to reflect these considerations.

As currently presented, the design appears to have some favorable attributes, particularly the over-arching curvilinear design approach for some, but not all of the project. However, staff is particularly concerned with the massing strategy and the repetitive nature of the simple and lengthy elements. That given the size and influence that the building will have on the greater Downtown community, its design needs to make bolder, stronger, and original design statements.

DISCUSSION

Staff suggests that the Board may wish to consider the following:

- Is the design appropriate in the context of its prominent location in Downtown Santa Monica?
- Is the proposed massing of a singular building crossing two zoning areas an appropriate response for this prominent site?
- Is the overall configuration appropriate to the project site and surrounding context?
- Are the architectural concepts sufficiently expressed around the building?
- What areas of the project require further design study?
- Do materials and elements enhance the overall concept and represent a high quality project?
- Are there recommendations for landscape and open space design as the project develops?

Attachments: Applicant's Submittal Material