

Architectural Review Board Meeting: March 15, 2021

Agenda Item: 7.2

To: Architectural Review Board

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

Subject: 21ARB-0006 & 0007 to approve the landscape plans for the adjacent multi-unit buildings at 858-860 3rd Street.

Address: 858-860 3rd Street
Applicant: 858 3rd Vila A. LP

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board approve application 21ARB-0006 and 0007 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

Executive Summary

Proposed is approximately 7,000 SF of updated landscaping across two adjacent properties with approximately 1,200 SF of landscape visible from the street at 858 3rd Street, approximately 1,700 at 860 3rd Street, a corner property, and approximately 2,000 SF within the interior courtyard.

Project / Site Information

The project site is located on two adjacent parcels at the northwest corner of 3rd Street and Idaho Avenue. The subject multi-unit buildings were built with a small shared courtyard in 1954. The immediate neighborhood is predominantly developed with 2-5 story multi-unit residential buildings with similar amounts of landscape along the front and side setback conditions.

The following table provides a brief summary of project data:

Zoning District	Medium-Density Residential (R3)
Parcel Area (SF):	22,500 SF
Parcel Dimensions:	150' x 150
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	28 Residential Units (1954)
Historic Resource Inventory Status	Existing building is not listed on the HRI.
CEQA	Exempt pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3)

Adjacent Zoning & Use:	North: R3 –Multi-unit residential South: R3 –Multi-unit residential East: R3 –Multi-unit residential West: R3 –Multi-unit residential
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Analysis

The site is currently developed with four “L” shaped buildings nestled within one another to create a primary courtyard accessed from 3rd Street with two smaller landscaped walkways Idaho Avenue and from the north setback of the north property. Existing site landscape consists primarily of turf grass with large hedges and banana plants adjacent to the building. The proposed landscape includes much greater depth in species type than the existing with a variety of textures, sizes, and colors. Starting at Third Street the landscape starts with sparse plantings of native grasses and low shrubs over decomposed granite, moving closer to the building the variety, density and height of the plants increases as it meets the wall with a hedge of brightly colored *Russelia equisetiformis* (Firecracker Plant) and a few *Olea europaea* (Swan Hill Olive).

Along Idaho the planting follows a similar pattern with low grasses along the sidewalk and taller shrubs against the building, but the setback is narrower. To create a more vertical landscape *Acacia iteaphylla* (Willow Acacia) are proposed as well as *Ficus pumila* (Creeping Fig) on the wall along Idaho.

Within the courtyard, not visible from the street, existing leafy plants will be removed to allow more light into the space. An *O. europaea* (Swan Hill Olive) will be centered in the courtyard, however the majority of plants will be moved to the building edges opening the space up to become more usable as a gathering space for the residents. *F. pumila* (Creeping Fig) is used within the courtyard to soften the building edges.

Plants proposed for the parkway are primarily grasses and succulents, however modifications to the parkway require review and approval separately by the Public Works Public Landscape Division.

Impact on Historic Resources

The existing property is not listed on the HRI.

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 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 landscape in terms of general landscape design and proposed plants.

FINDINGS:

- A. The plan for the proposed landscape 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 building is a fully three-dimensional design with forms that will provide visual interest. Its design is further enhanced by high quality materials and simple color palette. The building architecture is further supported by a drought tolerant plant palette that enhances the visual interest from the public right-of-way and usability of the outdoor spaces.
- B. The proposed landscape 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 plants proposed are appropriate to their locations, adequately irrigated, and incorporated into the design as detailed in the application submittal and as presented to the Architectural Review Board will be used.
- C. The proposed design of the landscape is compatible with developments on land in the general area in that the project's design is complementary to the surrounding neighborhood through the use of drought tolerant plants of various heights, colors and textures.
- 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 landscape and structures are involved. Specifically, the location and appearance of the landscape in relation to the plants 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. 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, unless appealed, this approval shall expire within 48 months pursuant to the Twenty-Eighth Supplement to the Executive Order of the Director of Emergency Services Declaring the Existence of a Local Emergency adopted on November 24, 2020 if the authorized work is not commenced. Should the applicant be unable to comply with this restriction, an extension may be granted pursuant to Section 9.56.250 for an additional 180 days maximum. The applicant must request such an extension prior to expiration of this permit. After that time, the applicant will be required to return to the Commission for approval. In addition, this Certificate of Appropriateness shall expire if the authorized work is suspended for a 180-day period after being commenced.
- 2. 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.

3. 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.
4. 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 SMMC9.61.100.

Attachments

- A. Applicant's Submittal Material