

Agenda Report

DATE: October 24, 2005

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CYNTHIA J. KURTZ, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: CALL FOR REVIEW OF DESIGN COMMISSION DECISION FOR
CONSOLIDATED DESIGN REVIEW AT 635 SOUTH LAKE AVENUE

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

Environmental Determination

1. Find that the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan designation, with the General Plan goals and policies for the site, and with the applicable zoning designation and regulations; and that, the project site has no value as habitat for endangered or threatened species, and can be served by utilities and public services.
2. Find that approval of the project will not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality or water quality.
3. Acknowledge that none of the buildings on the property meets the criteria for designation as landmarks, historic monuments, or for listing in the California or National Registers.
4. Conclude, therefore, that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under §15332, (Class 32) "in-fill development projects."

Findings under Tree Protection Ordinance (Ch. 8.52 P.M.C.)

Acknowledge that none of the trees identified for removal on the project site qualify as native, landmark, or specimen trees, and are, therefore, exempt from the protection of the tree ordinance.

Findings of Consolidated Design Approval

1. Find that the design of the project complies with the City-wide Design Principles in the Land-use Element of the General Plan; City of Gardens Architectural Standards, and the Design Guidelines for Windows in Multi-unit Residential Projects and includes:

- a. highly visible and distinctively unique street elevations (*Citywide Design Criteria, residential street environment*);
 - b. visual appeal and a domestic scale for the enjoyment of its inhabitants (*Citywide Design Criteria, residential dwelling design*);
 - c. rich visual detail and a craftsmanship feature constructed with unusual skill and care (ornamental metalwork on front fence and gate) (*Pasadena Design Qualities, building design; City of Gardens section S.1*);
 - d. at least two "Pasadena" building elements with local references (the crafted ironwork, the garden gazebo, and water gardens) (City of Gardens section S.2).
 - e. Outdoor Rooms: A site should have places amenable to outdoor activity and use. Human Occupation: A site should include amenities for comfortable social interaction. (Courtyard is accessible to all residents). *Citywide Design Criteria*.
 - f. Neighborly Streets: A residential street should be a sociable place that offers a sense of security, with a layered transition from dwelling to street. (Building entrances and orientation toward street. Public views into courtyard).
2. Based on these findings sustain the decision of the Design Commission to **approve** the application for Consolidated design Review with the condition that the roofing material be slate.
 3. The Design Commission also adopted a recommendation to coordinate with the adjoining property owner to remove the Eucalyptus globulus along the west property line and replace with four 36-inch box California Sycamore trees to match the existing landscape, or others as agreed upon by the tree owners. A progress report of this request shall be submitted to staff during building plan check.

ZONING CODE COMPLIANCE

- The project is compliant with the newly adopted Zoning Code, effective 2/26/05
- The project is compliant with the City of Gardens Standards
- No Zoning entitlements are requested
- Design Review and Building Plan Check are the only discretionary actions required
- Zone: RM-32
- Lot Size: 19,473 SF
- Setback: Front yard—20'-0" Side yard—3'-8" to 7'-8" Rear yard—5'-0" to 6'-6"
- Allowable Height: 60% of the site permits 24'-0" and rear 40% permits 36'-0"
- Unit Size: 1,891 SF to 2,456 SF
- Unit Type: 12-Units; Eight 3-bedroom; Four 2-bedroom; 3-1/2 baths each
- Private elevator in six units
- Parking Type: Semi-subterranean 24-spaces plus 1-guest space
- Total Garden Area Provided: 6,311 SF (6,231 SF required)

BACKGROUND

The Design Commission first reviewed the application for Consolidated Design Review on February 28, 2005. The Commission heard presentations from City staff, the design architects, the developer, as well as comments from the public. The public comments were from the nearby residents and focused primarily on the massing at the west edge of the building (three-story component). The Commission continued its review at that time citing the following concerns about the original design: articulate a true mansard roof, simplify the use of applied ornamentation, and explore the viability of modifying the building footprint to retain the American Sweetgum in the front yard. The applicant redesigned the project to address the Design Commission's concerns with the exception of modifying the footprint of the building to retain the tree. They contended that retaining the tree will be detrimental to the front units and overall project design. Following this meeting, the Commission held six interim advisory reviews of the project to evaluate the progress of the revised design. On September 12, 2005, the Design Commission approved the application for Consolidated Design Review with one condition of approval that the roofing material consist of slate as had been previously proposed by the applicant.

Included with this report are the following attachments:

- Attachment A The Developer's Arborist Report Dated 01/27/05
- Attachment B Plans and Elevations Approved by Design Commission on 9/12/05
- Attachment C Alternative Site Plan Prepared by Design Commissioner, Don Barker at the request of Council Member Sid Tyler

ANALYSIS

Surroundings

The 0.45-acre site is located along South Lake Avenue, south of California Boulevard. Existing land uses include retail uses to the north, multi-family and single-family residential uses to the south, east, and west. A retail commercial building and parking lot is located immediately to the north of the site. A new five unit Spanish Revival two-story condominium is under construction immediately south of the site. Directly across the street are three-story apartment buildings. The proposed design is in scale with the majority of the block.

Tree Removal

At the request of City staff, an arborist report evaluated the impact of the new development on two existing non-protected trees, a Blue Gum straddling the west property line and an American Sweetgum in the front yard (see Attachment A, Arborist Report). The arborist report estimates the height of the Blue Gum at approximately 85 feet and assigns an overall health rating of D: declining health due to extended drought and insect invasion. Due to its declining health, the arborist report recommends removal of the tree. The Design Commission adopted a recommendation to encourage the applicant to replace this tree with four, 36-inch box California Sycamore trees to match the existing landscape, or others as agreed upon by the tree owners.

The American Sweetgum is located approximately 17 feet west of the sidewalk in the front yard. The tree is approximately 58 feet tall with a 50-foot spread. It exhibits previous pruning damage from topping and wounds with decay in surface structural roots. The overall rating for this tree is B: in good condition.

As designed, the new development will encroach within three feet of the tree trunk of the American Sweet Gum. It will unavoidably cause major root loss unless the footprint of the building and the subterranean garage is changed. The arborist report recommends removal of the tree and replacement with new trees of appropriate species. The landscape design proposes four, 24" box Jacaranda trees to be planted within the 20-foot front setback. The replacement canopy volume will meet or exceed the canopy volume of the tree to be removed in approximately five to ten years.

Siting and Orientation

As required by code, the proposed building has a 20-foot front setback similar to the existing buildings in the area. The building also maintains a side yard setback ranging from 3'-8" to 7'-8", and a rear yard setback ranging from 5'-0" to 6'-6". Pedestrian access occurs from the main garden and perimeter walkways. All units have private street-facing balconies and/or courtyard entrances.

The subterranean parking level is developed to the northerly and southerly property lines of the site, while maintaining a 5' setback along the rear yard and a 20' setback along South Lake Avenue, allowing for the installation of at-grade plant material. A single-lane driveway allows access into the 25-space subterranean parking garage from the southerly most edge of the site along South Lake Avenue.

Height, Massing and Modulation

The architectural style of the proposed new twelve-unit development is a contemporary interpretation of French Renaissance Revival. The height and massing of the building comply with the zoning code. The City of Gardens standards only permit a third-story to be located in the rear 40% of the site to reduce the mass and bulk of the buildings from the street. In compliance with this requirement, the proposed building volume along the west elevation (rear yard) is setback from the property line; this elevation is primarily two-stories tall and bracketed at each end of the building with a three-story module. This approach visually mediates the appearance of a three-story volume across the entire length of the building. This configuration does not maximize the allowable third story by approximately fifty-seven percent.

Solid-to-Void Relationships

The arrangement, proportion, and solid-to-void relationships of the windows enhance the level of articulation and detail of the building. The windows allow for a high degree of transparency throughout the project; in addition, the window openings are expansive within the courtyard elevations.

Landscaping

The townhouse-style building frames a central courtyard. The landscaped courtyard is detailed as a viewing garden with contemplative seating areas including a garden gazebo, meandering paths, metal arbor, water-cascade and pond. Two 24-inch box ornamental pears are planted within tree wells, allowing the trees to fully mature.

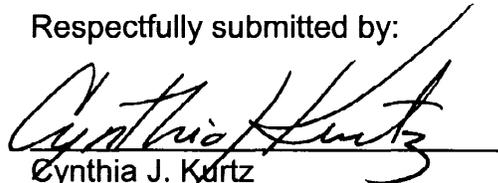
Materials

Finish materials include aluminum-clad wood windows, brick cladding, steel-troweled cement plaster walls, slate roof tiles, and cast concrete trim.

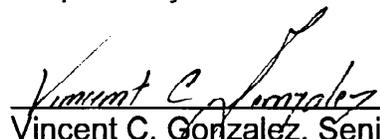
FISCAL IMPACT

The developers will pay fees for the required discretionary applications. The project will also generate plan check permit fees and construction tax. Once constructed, the project will generate increased revenues from property taxes.

Respectfully submitted by:


Cynthia J. Kurtz
City Manager

Prepared by:


Vincent C. Gonzalez, Senior Planner
Design and Historic Preservation Section
Planning & Development Department

Approved by:


Richard J. Bruckner, Director
Planning & Development Department

ATTACHMENT A
Developer's Arborist Report

**CRAIG CROTTY
ARBOR CULTURE**

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January 27, 2005

To: Mr. Michael Hajar
Chateau De Lis, LLC
277 Pleasant St., #204
Pasadena, CA 91101
Tel. 626 577-6065

Re: Chateau De Lis, Condos
647 South Lake Ave., Pasadena

Subject: 1) West Neighbor's Eucalyptus
2) Frontyard Liquidambar

1) Blue Gum, *Eucalyptus globulus*

Assignment: I was asked to identify and evaluate a Eucalyptus tree located near the west property line of 647 South Lake Avenue, Pasadena.

Observations: A very large, two-trunk Blue Gum, *Eucalyptus globulus*, is located on or very near the west property boundary of 647 South Lake Ave. This tree is in a non-irrigated and un-maintained landscape setting. The upper crown has significant dead branches. Evidence of significant damage from insects was observed, Eucalyptus Longhorned Borer and Tortoise Beetle (see Field Data Sheet).

The tree is situated near targets of frequent human-use areas and property. Proposed construction of condominium units with subterranean parking are to be placed within the tree dripline, close to the trunk.

Discussion: This tree is in poor condition. It is in poor health due to extended drought and insect invasion. It is a severe risk tree due to condition and location near targets. It is not on the list of City-protected species.

The tree may be wholly owned by the neighbor to the west, or jointly owned with property owners at 647 South Lake.

Proposed excavation for subterranean parking would certainly impact tree roots in a negative manner, causing destabilization of tree structure (possibly causing catastrophic failure) and degrading health (possibly killing the tree).

Since this tree is currently in poor condition, obviously un-maintained, a heightened risk to nearby persons and property, not a City-protected species, and in conflict with proposed construction, a good solution would be to remove and replace this tree with new tree of appropriate species.

If the tree is approved for removal and replacement by the City of Pasadena, written permission of any and all owners of the tree is necessary prior to removal.

Recommendation: Remove and replace this Blue Gum tree with new trees. Replacement trees could be offered to the tree owner on the west adjoining property. Appropriate replacements could include four to five 36-inches-box California Sycamore trees to match existing landscape, or others as agreed upon by the tree owners.

2) American Sweetgum, *Liquidambar styraciflua*

Assignment: I was to evaluate impact of proposed construction on the health and structure of a Liquidambar tree located in the front yard at 635 South Lake Avenue in Pasadena.

Observation and Discussion: A mature, large stature Sweetgum tree, *Liquidambar styraciflua*, is located in the front yard setback of a proposed condominium project (see Field Data Sheet for individual characteristics). Evidently, excavation for subterranean parking will occur 20 feet west of the City sidewalk. The approximate center of the tree trunk is 17 feet west of the sidewalk. Thus, construction will be placed within three feet of the tree trunk on the west side.

This Liquidambar will sustain major root loss due to proposed construction. Large structural roots will be cut. Wounds on large roots located near the base of the tree, structural roots, will open routes of decay that can undermine structural stability. Disease organisms are invited to enter through root wounding. The wounds to roots created at this distance from the trunk are likely to lead to structure and health problems.

Recommendation: If construction is approved as proposed, this tree should be removed and replaced with new tree of appropriate species for allowed growing space.



Craig Crotty, Consulting Arborist

Supplemental Information:

Two Field Data Sheets
Photos A and B

JAN / 25 / 05

CRAIG ROTTY, CONSULTING ARBORIST Pasadena

FIELD DATA SHEETS / VISUAL INSPECTION FROM GRADE

TREE NUMBER	1								
TRUNK DIAMETER (INCHES)	34, 22								
CROWN SPREAD (NS X EW) (FEET)	55 X 50								
HEIGHT (ESTIMATED) (FEET)	85								
PHYSICAL CONDITION									
TRUNK LEAN									
TRUNK CAVITY									
TRUNK WOUND									
EXPOSED STRUCTURAL ROOTS									
DAMAGED / DEAD STRUCTURAL ROOTS									
FILL SOILS AT ROOT CROWN									
WEAK TRUNK / BRANCH ATTACHMENTS	X								
PREVIOUS FAILURES									
BRANCH CAVITY									
BRANCH WOUND									
POOR TAPER									
EXCESSIVE END WEIGHT	X								
DEAD & BROKEN BRANCHES / HANGERS	X								
THIN FOLIAGE									
TIP DECLINE									
LEAF COLOR									
PRUNING DAMAGE									
INSECT DAMAGE IN CROWN	X								
BORERS / TERMITES									
MUSHROOMS / CONKS									
CANKERS / GALLS									
TRUNK BLEEDING / OOZING	X								
RECOMMENDATIONS									
REMOVE	X								
CONSTRUCTION IMPACTED	X								
RELOCATE ON SITE									
UNSUITABLE FOR RELOCATION									
PEST / DISEASE TREATMENT									
RESTORE ORIGINAL GRADE									
ADJUST IRRIGATION / UNDERSTORY PLANT									
AERATE / APPLY MULCH									
MAINTENANCE PRUNING									
RISK LEVEL									
RISK									
SEVERE RISK	X								
CRITICAL RISK									
RATING									
HEALTH	D								
STRUCTURE	C-D								
AESTHETICS	C-D								
OVERALL RATING	D								

SPECIES / COMMENTS A-EXCELLENT B-GOOD C-FAIR D-POOR/DECLINING F-DEAD
 TREE NO. 1 BLUE GUM, Eucalyptus globulus Two-trunks 34" N, 22" S
 TREE NO. ° this is a severe risk tree located near people and property targets
 TREE NO. ° large amounts of dead wood in upper crown
 TREE NO. ° suspected drought damage (un-irrigated) weakened this
 TREE NO. tree; followed by insect attack by Euc. Longhorned Borer
 TREE NO. and Tortoise Beetle
 TREE NO. ° No regular maintenance pruning (other than line clearing)
 TREE NO. NOTE: Base and roots of tree were not observed and are not included in this evaluation.

FIELD DATA SHEETS / VISUAL INSPECTION FROM GRADE

TREE NUMBER	2								
TRUNK DIAMETER (INCHES)	27								
CROWN SPREAD (NS X EW) (FEET)	52 X 45								
HEIGHT (ESTIMATED) (FEET)	58								
PHYSICAL CONDITION									
TRUNK LEAN									
TRUNK CAVITY									
TRUNK WOUND									
EXPOSED STRUCTURAL ROOTS	X								
DAMAGED / DEAD STRUCTURAL ROOTS	X								
FILL SOILS AT ROOT CROWN									
WEAK TRUNK / BRANCH ATTACHMENTS									
PREVIOUS FAILURES									
BRANCH CAVITY									
BRANCH WOUND	X								
POOR TAPER									
EXCESSIVE END WEIGHT									
DEAD & BROKEN BRANCHES / HANGERS									
THIN FOLIAGE									
TIP DECLINE									
LEAF COLOR									
PRUNING DAMAGE	X								
INSECT DAMAGE IN CROWN									
BORERS / TERMITES									
MUSHROOMS / CONKS									
CANKERS / GALLS									
TRUNK BLEEDING / OOZING									
RECOMMENDATIONS									
REMOVE	X								
CONSTRUCTION IMPACTED	X								
RELOCATE ON SITE									
UNSUITABLE FOR RELOCATION									
PEST / DISEASE TREATMENT									
RESTORE ORIGINAL GRADE									
ADJUST IRRIGATION / UNDERSTORY PLANT									
AERATE / APPLY MULCH									
MAINTENANCE PRUNING									
RISK LEVEL									
RISK	X								
SEVERE RISK									
CRITICAL RISK									
RATING									
HEALTH	B								
STRUCTURE	C								
AESTHETICS	B								
OVERALL RATING	B								
SPECIES / COMMENTS	A-EXCELLENT B-GOOD C-FAIR D-POOR/DECLINING F-DEAD								
TREE NO. 2	Liquidambar styraciflua - American Sweetgum								
TREE NO.									
TREE NO.	• 20ft setback west of SW requires excavation within								
TREE NO.	3 ft of tree trunk west side								
TREE NO.	• pruning damage - previously topped								
TREE NO.	• wounds w/ decay in surface structural roots								
TREE NO.									
TREE NO.									