

Agenda Report

July 10, 2017

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW OF A NEW MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT AT 83 NORTH LAKE AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION:

This report is intended to provide information to the City Council, no action is required.

BACKGROUND:

The applicant, Pacific Design Group, has submitted a Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR) application to redevelop the property at 83 North Lake Avenue. The property is an irregularly shaped lot, with frontages on Hudson Avenue to the west, Union Street to the north, and Lake Avenue to the east.

The site is currently improved with three, one-story commercial buildings totaling approximately 15,300 square feet, and surface parking lots. The project would demolish the existing commercial buildings and parking lots, to allow for the construction of a new 216,100 square-foot mixed-use project consisting of 97 multi-family units; a 139-room hotel; a total of 7,055 square feet of retail commercial space; and a total of 10,300 square feet of restaurant commercial space. The building is proposed to vary from five- to seven-stories, and measure 68'-6" to 88'-6" in height. Three levels of subterranean parking are proposed with 492 parking spaces.

The PPR process is established in Section 17.60.040.C of the City's Zoning Code as a process by which better projects can be achieved through early consultation between City staff and applicants. The process coordinates the review of projects among City staff, familiarizes applicants with the regulations and procedures that apply to the projects, and avoids significant investment in the design of a project without preliminary input from City staff. It also helps to identify issues that may arise during application processing such as community concerns and achieving consistency with City regulations and policies.

Projects that meet the threshold of "community-wide significance" (greater than 50,000 square feet in size with at least one discretionary action, 50 or more housing units, or

any project that is deemed by the Director of Planning & Community Development Department to be of major importance to the City) are presented to the City Council as a way to inform them and the public of significant projects.

This report provides a project description, identifies the entitlement and environmental review processes, and important topic areas that staff will focus on during case processing.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The subject site is an irregularly-shaped parcel of land, with frontages on Hudson Avenue to the west, Union Street to the north, and Lake Avenue to the east. The 70,132 square-foot site is located in the CD-5 (Central District, Lake Avenue subdistrict) zoning district. The project includes:

- Demolition of three, one-story commercial buildings totaling 15,300 square feet;
- Construction of a five- to seven-story, 216,100 square-foot mixed-use building consisting of:
 - 97 multi-family units;
 - a 139-room hotel;
 - 7,055 square feet of retail commercial space;
 - 10,300 square feet of restaurant commercial space; and
 - three levels of subterranean parking with 492 parking spaces.

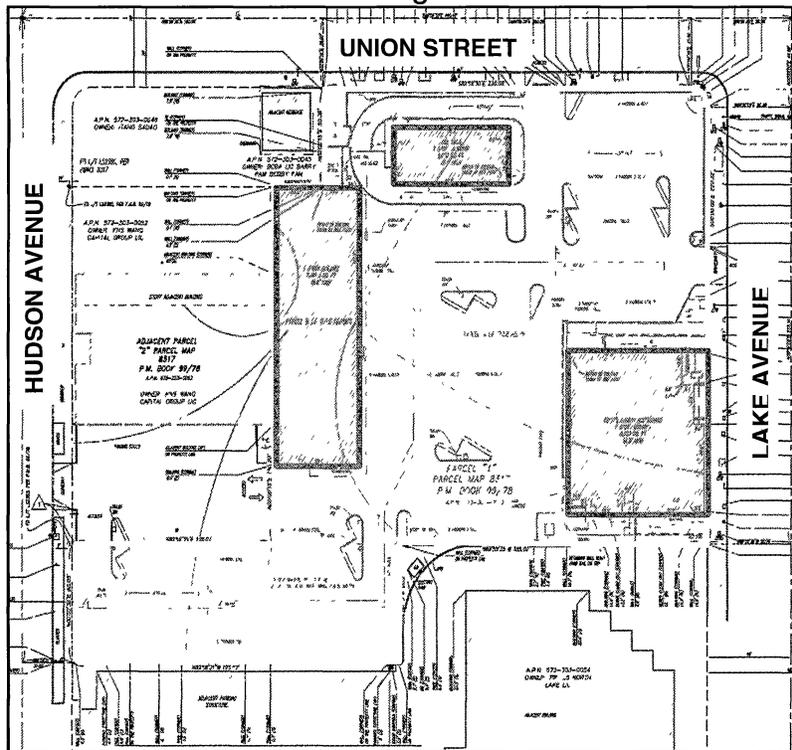
From the submitted plans, the proposed project consists of one structure. The Zoning Code defines a mixed-use building as “the combination of commercial and residential uses in the same structure, where the residential component is located either above (vertical mixed-use) or behind (horizontal mixed-use) the nonresidential component. Nonresidential uses are typically commercial uses.”

Within mixed-use buildings, commercial uses shall be located along street frontages and have a minimum depth of 50 feet. As proposed, no commercial uses are proposed along the Hudson Avenue frontage, and the proposal is not in compliance with the commercial frontage requirement for mixed-use buildings.

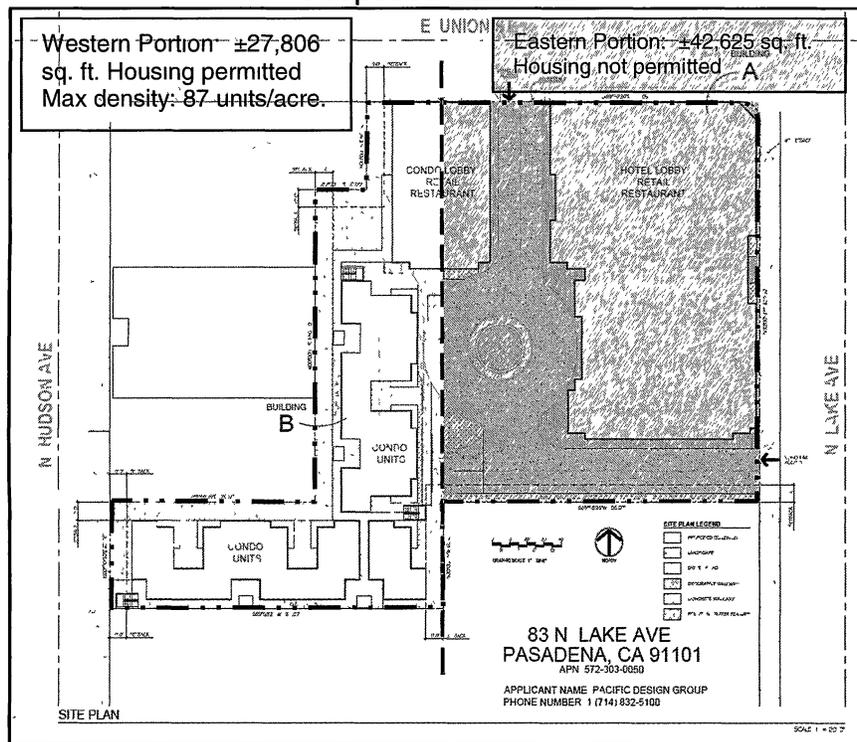
If the project were to be redesigned so the residential units were located within a separate building from the proposed hotel and commercial uses, then the residential structure would be subject to the Urban Housing development standards. The comments provided herein are based on a single, mixed-use project.

The survey of the existing site and the proposed site plan are shown below:

Existing Site



Proposed Site Plan



Project Statistics:

Zoning Designation:		
CD-5 (Central District, Lake Avenue subdistrict)		
General Plan Designation:		
High Commercial (0.0-3.0 FAR)		
Lot Size:		
70,431 square feet		
Density:		
Maximum Permitted		Proposed
West	87 units / acre or 59 units	62 units
East	none	30 units
Floor Area Ratio:		
Maximum Permitted		Proposed
3.00		3.08
Building Size:		
Maximum Permitted		Proposed
211,293 square feet		216,084 square feet
Parking Requirement:		
Residential: 1.5 to 1.75 spaces / unit > 650 sf.	97 units: 146 min to 170 max spaces	
Residential Guest: 1 spaces / 10 units	97 units: 9 spaces	
Retail: 2.4 to 2.7 spaces / 1,000 sf. of gfa	7,055 square feet: 17 min to 19 max spaces	
Restaurant: 8 to 9 spaces / 1,000 sf. of gfa	10,307 square feet: 82 min to 93 max spaces	
Hotel: 0.8 to 0.9 space / guest room	139 rooms: 111 min to 125 max spaces	
Total Required: 365 min to 416 max	Total Proposed: 492 spaces	
Building Height :		
Maximum Permitted		Proposed
75' (90' with height averaging)		88'-6"
Setbacks:		
Required		Proposed
Hudson Ave: build to property line		10'
Union St: none to 5' max		0'
Lake Ave: build to property line		0'
Side and Rear: none		varies

Discretionary Entitlements:

Based on the information submitted, the project would require the following entitlements:

Conditional Use Permit

- o For the construction of a new mixed-use development with more than 25,000 square feet.
- o For the establishment of a Hotel Use.

Design Review:

- For a project with new construction that exceeds 5,000 square feet in size.
- Height Averaging for a project that exceeds 75-feet in height.

Because the nonresidential portion of the proposed project exceeds 75,000 square feet, the Planning Commission is the review authority for the Conditional Use Permit applications along with the appropriate environmental review documentation. The Design Commission is the review authority for Design Review. As the project evolves, additional entitlements may be required.

PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY:

Zoning Code:

The project site is located within the CD-5 (Central District, Lake Avenue subdistrict) zoning district and within the Central District Transit-Oriented Area (Figure 3-5 of the City's Zoning Code). The proposed project is subject to, including but not limited to, the development standards of the following Zoning Code Chapters or Sections:

- Chapter 17.30 – Central District Specific Plan
- Chapter 17.46 – Parking and Loading
- Section 17.50.160 – Mixed-Use Projects
- Section 17.50.340 – Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

Density and Housing: Pursuant to Figure 3-4 of Section 17.30.030 of the Zoning Code, housing is permitted on the western portion of the site; however housing is not permitted within the eastern portion of the site. The maximum permitted residential density on the western portion of the site is 87 dwelling units per acre, and residential uses are not allowed on the eastern portion of the site.

The total lot size is 70,132 square feet, with the western portion measuring approximately 27,806 square feet, and the eastern portion measuring approximately 42,625 square feet. A maximum of 59 units are permitted within the western portion, and no units are permitted within the eastern portion.

The density bonus section of the Zoning Code (Section 17.43.040) permits a maximum of 35% increase in the number of units permitted on the site, without discretionary approval, provided a specified percentage are designated as affordable units. In this case, the maximum number of units permitted on the western portion of the property under the base zoning is 59 dwelling units, and a 35% increase would allow a maximum of 80. Based on the submitted application material, it does not appear that the project currently includes any such requests. As such, the project exceeds the maximum permitted density on the western portion, and contains residential units on the eastern portion. These elements do not comply with the zoning code.

Height: Pursuant to Figure 3-8 of Section 17.30.030 of the Zoning Code, the maximum building height limit is 75 feet (or 90 feet when the project utilizes height averaging). The submitted plans indicate that portions of the building would have a height of up to 88'-6". If the project pursues height averaging, it must comply with the following standards.

- a. Additional building height is permitted over no more than 30 percent of the building footprint on a development parcel, provided that the average height over the entire footprint does not exceed the otherwise required maximum permitted height.
- b. Height averaging shall not be applied to parking and/or accessory structure.
- c. The additional height allowed through height averaging shall require Design Commission approval.

The purpose of height averaging is to counterbalance additional height by lower heights across or elsewhere on a development site to:

- Achieve an economically viable project that also protects view corridors and/or historically or architecturally significant building, structures, or landscapes; a visual transition in height and massing may be achieved through height averaging; and
- Punctuate important intersections or other prominent locations; which contributes to a more visually compelling skyline.

Height averaging is a discretionary approval and requires approval of the Design Commission. The Design Commission may impose additional conditions related to site planning, architectural design, as well as requiring public amenities, including public outdoor space and pedestrian paths.

Floor Area: Pursuant to Figure 3-9 of Section 17.30.030 of the Zoning Code, the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) allowed for the subject site is 3.00. Based on the submitted information, the project site measures 70,132 square feet and therefore the maximum permitted building size is 210,396 square feet.

FAR is calculated utilizing gross floor area. Gross floor area is defined as the total enclosed area of all floors of a building measured to the inside face of the exterior walls including halls, stairways, elevator shafts at each floor level, service and mechanical equipment rooms and basement or attic areas having a height of more than seven feet, but excluding area used exclusively for vehicle parking or loading.

As currently designed, the proposed project would have a floor area of 216,084 square feet, or an FAR of 3.08, which exceeds this requirement.

Vehicle Parking: The provision of off-street parking is subject to Sections 17.46.040 (Parking and Loading) and 17.50.340 (Transit-Oriented Development) of the Zoning

Code. If more than one use is located on a site, including multiple uses under single ownership, the number of off street parking and loading spaces to be provided shall be equal to the sum of the requirements identified for each individual use. Because the project site is located within the Central District Transit Oriented Area (as shown in Figure 3-5 of Section 17.30.030 of the Zoning Code) the parking requirements from 17.46.040 have mandatory reductions as explained below.

Per Section 17.46.040, commercial parking shall be provided in compliance with Table 4-6. A retail use is required to provide parking at a ratio of 3 spaces for every 1,000 square feet of floor area; a restaurant use is required to provide parking at a ratio of 10 spaces for every 1,000 square feet of gross floor area; and a hotel use is required to provide one parking space per guest room. Per Section 17.50.340.D.1, nonresidential uses in a transit-oriented area shall reduce the minimum amount of required off-street parking by 10 percent, with an optional reduction up to 20 percent. The 10 percent reduction shall be the maximum allowed number of parking spaces.

The residential parking requirement for projects located within the Transit Oriented Development Area is one parking space for each unit less than 650 square feet. If a unit measures more than 650 square feet, then a minimum of 1.5 spaces up to 1.75 spaces are required (Section 17.50.340.3). Additionally, one guest parking space is required for every 10 residential units.

The proposed building would consist of 7,055 square feet of retail area; 10,307 square feet of restaurant area; 139 hotel rooms; and 97 residential units. The maximum required parking is 440 spaces and the minimum required parking is 362 spaces. The proposed plans indicate that 492 parking spaces would be provided in a three level subterranean garage. The number of parking spaces provided would have to be reduced by 76 spaces to comply with the maximum permitted.

General Plan:

According to the General Plan Land Use Diagram, the subject property is designated as High Commercial (0.0-3.0 FAR) which is characterized by a wide range of regional commercial uses fostering regional office and incidental retail uses.

The General Plan provides the following policies that are relevant to the proposed project:

Policy 2.5 – Mixed Use. Create opportunities for development projects that mix housing with commercial uses to enable Pasadena's resident to live close to businesses and employment, increasing non-auto travel, and interact socially.

The proposed project incorporates housing and commercial uses into the overall development. These uses are located within walking distance of retail and restaurant uses as well as corporate employment centers along Lake Avenue and Colorado Boulevard.

Policy 2.6 – Transit-Related Land Uses. Promote the development of uses that support and capture the economic value induced by the presence of transit corridors and stations.

The proposed project site is located within ½ mile from the Metro Gold Line stop at Lake Avenue. This proximity to light rail allows for increased density along a major corridor and a mix of land uses all of which are walkable. Because the Gold Line connects to Union Station this also gives travelers to the hotel portion of the proposed project, the option of taking the Fly Away service offered by Metro from Los Angeles International Airport.

Specific Plan:

The proposed project is located within the Central District Specific Plan area. The Central District is divided into smaller subareas. The project is located in the Lake Avenue District within the Colorado/Lake Node. The emphasis of this area in the specific plan is on Office and Mixed-Use corridor uses that encourage commercial development and employment.

“Colorado / Lake Node Precincts encompass significant multi-story office developments along Lake Avenue. Development in this area should strengthen Pasadena’s position as a corporate hub for the region.”

The proposed development is not entirely consistent with these goals. While it does stand to provide a diversified mix of employment activities, those activities are unlikely to reinforce the area as a corporate hub for the region.

Housing: Section 4 of the Central District Specific Plan, the District-Wide Land Use Concept, includes District-wide Map 12: Housing / Ground Floor, which shows where housing is and is not permitted, and if permitted, whether it can be located on the ground floor of a proposed development. As shown on this map, the subject property is divided such that on the eastern half of the subject property housing is not permitted, while on the western half of the subject property, housing is permitted. As proposed, the inclusion of housing units on the eastern half of the site does not comply with ‘District-wide Map 12: Housing / Ground Floor’ of the Central District Specific Plan.

Design & Historic Preservation:

Design Review: Design Review is required, per Section 17.61.030 of the Zoning Code, as the project exceeds 5,000 square feet in size, with the Design Commission as the review authority.

The project was reviewed by the Design Commission through the Preliminary Consultation process on September 13, 2016. The Commission provided the comments below on the preliminary design:

1. In general, the logic of the massing and articulation of the building is unclear and appears to be inconsistent with design guidelines. Based on the site and floor plans, the building appears to be a vertically extruded building footprint with little relief in the building walls. Explore ways to provide greater articulation of the building massing and create more significant separations between portions of the building that differ in character, such as the rounded, curving components and the framed components along Union Street. Consider step-backs or other treatment at the corner of Lake Avenue and Union Street to avoid overpowering the corner with extruded building massing.
2. While contemporary buildings with large areas of glazing can be designed to be consistent with the design guidelines, generally a more balanced proportion between solid walls and openings, with a clear fenestration pattern, is more appropriate. Solid walls on the body of the building should also be aligned with solid pilasters at the base. For an example of a successful contemporary building that responds to Pasadena's character, look to the City National Bank Building at 840 E. Green Street.
3. Height averaging is proposed and the use of this flexibility in the Central District Specific Plan should be carefully studied. As currently designed, it is unclear how the additional height responds to the required findings for height averaging, particularly "finding a", which states, "The additional height allows for preservation of vistas and view corridors, and/or a more sensitive transition to an adjacent historic structure, and/or provides for a more interesting skyline."
4. The building incorporates, along Union Street, repeating framing elements that emphasize a vertical dimension, which, for taller buildings, is discouraged in the design guidelines.
5. A large portion of the ground floor of the site is devoted to a vehicular circulation and should be further studied to identify ways to lessen the vehicular focus of the project and possibly provide an opportunity for grade-level open space, which is lacking in the project design. Explore ways to make this area more pedestrian-focused and inviting while allowing the necessary vehicular functionality. Consider an open-air lobby entry to encourage pedestrian movement.

6. Along Hudson Avenue, an articulated entrance to the condominiums (either a secondary lobby or direct entry to the street-facing ground-level unit) at that location should be provided, closer to the street.
7. The southerly driveway is proposed adjacent to a large expanse of driveway on the adjacent site to the south, creating a large vehicular access interruption in the pedestrian environment along Lake Avenue. Explore options to either relocate this driveway or to share access with the adjacent site to the south.
8. The Design Commission has seen many examples of the use of large-scale thin framing devices and long, unbroken balconies or railings in contemporary designs and these are generally not considered favorable design elements. In general, extensive studies should be conducted to demonstrate how this building is compatible with the architectural character and legacy of Pasadena.
9. The materials used on the building should contribute to its compatibility with Pasadena's general character and should unify the building. The overall palette, as well as the proportions of each material specified, should be further studied to ensure that they respond to these directives.
10. In the next submittal, verify that the plans and elevations agree, particularly regarding window sizes and placement. The current plans appear to reflect portions of the building having a punched window character, while the elevations show glass-curtain walls.
11. There should be greater contrast or differentiation between the hotel portion of the project and the residential portion, while maintaining compatibility of these two differing components of the project. The design should reflect a calm and sophisticated modulation of the design vocabulary. Look to some of the earlier design sketches, which, in general, tend to be more cohesive and unified and also more clearly showed the expressive character of the structural concrete, which should be pushed further. Also look to the "Dancing House" or "Fred & Ginger Building" in Prague by Frank Gehry for an exploration of expressive concrete construction with two contrasting yet compatible components.
12. There should be a greater level of pedestrian permeability through the site, responding to the City's tradition of alley walkways and passages as well as the project's proximity to the Playhouse District. Consider including a pedestrian pathway through the site from Lake Avenue to Mentor Avenue. Look to the site design of the Plaza las Fuentes project, which includes features of the exterior open spaces continuing into the interior lobby as well as a smaller, more urban drop-off zone.
13. Any further design development of rooftop open spaces should not further accentuate the height and massing of the building.

14. Future submittals should clearly demonstrate the connection between the stated design concept and the actual building design. There appears in the current submittal to be a disconnect between the two. Take advantage of the concrete structure to create contrast between heaviness and lightness, which may improve the overall feeling of lightness that is stated in the design narrative as an important element of the building's design.
15. Consider whether balconies are appropriate along Lake Avenue, a major thoroughfare with a high level of traffic. Balconies may be more appropriate facing interior courtyard spaces.
16. Further study the relationship of the ground floor to the rest of the building. The ground floor appears overly heavy in the current design.
17. Discuss with the Department of Transportation the interface between this project and the proposed cycle track along the south side of Union Street.
18. The building has been designed from the inside out and should be approached in the opposite way, considering how the building functions could follow the building form. Explore how the building molds around the courtyard spaces and pay attention to views of on-site courtyards and pedestrian passageways that are under your control (rather than views to adjacent sites that are likely to be developed with similarly scaled buildings in the future).

Environmental Review:

Pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an environmental review of the project will occur to analyze the project's potential environmental impacts, as identified by State and local environmental guidelines. At this time, it is not known what level of review will be required.

NEXT STEPS:

Public hearings before the Planning Commission and Design Commission are necessary in order to carry out the proposed project. In addition, an environmental review will occur consistent with the requirements of CEQA. The following identifies the steps in the review process:

- Environmental Review;
- Planning Commission Public Hearing review of the Conditional Use Permits, and to consider adoption of the environmental review; and
- Design Commission reviews (Concept and Final).

FISCAL IMPACT:

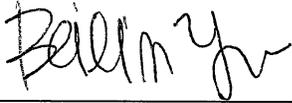
This report is for information only and will not result in any fiscal impact.

Respectfully submitted,



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Development

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Attachment A – Predevelopment Plan Review Plans