

Agenda Report

July 9, 2018

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

SUBJECT: PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW OF A NEW MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT AT 740-790 EAST GREEN STREET, 118 SOUTH OAK KNOLL AVENUE AND 111 SOUTH HUDSON AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION:

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

BACKGROUND:

The applicant, Stanford Pasadena, LLC, has submitted a Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR) application to develop the properties at 740-790 East Green Street, 118 South Oak Knoll Avenue and 111 South Hudson Avenue. The project site consists of six legal lots (AINs: 5727-025-014, -024, -026, -027, -029 and -030), with a total site size of approximately 101,430 square feet or 2.33 acres. The site is currently occupied by five commercial buildings.

The proposed project consists of demolition of five existing commercial buildings and associated on-grade parking improvements to allow for the construction of a 304,836 square-foot, three- to six-story, mixed-use project containing 273, for-rent units (including 30 units designated for Very Low-Income households), 19,660 square feet of commercial use, and a two-level subterranean parking garage with 453 parking spaces. The project site is within the CD-4 (Central District, Pasadena Playhouse sub-district) zoning district. The applicant is proposing to establish a Planned Development zone for this project site.

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 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 Councilmembers and the public of significant upcoming projects.

This report provides a project description, identifies the anticipated entitlement and environmental review processes, and summarizes key areas of concern regarding Zoning Code and General Plan compliance.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The 101,430 square-foot subject site has frontage along East Green Street to the north, South Oak Knoll Avenue to the west, and South Hudson Avenue to the east. The site is currently developed with five commercial buildings and associated on-grade parking improvements. The project includes:

- Demolition of existing on-site commercial buildings and surface parking;
- Establishment of a Planned Development zoning district for the project site; and
- Construction of a 304,836 square-foot, three- to six-story, mixed-use project consisting of:
 - 273, for-rent, units (including 30 units designated for Very Low-Income households)
 - 19,660 square feet of commercial use
 - Two-levels of subterranean parking with 453 parking spaces
 - A 10,525 square-foot pocket park

The project site is zoned CD-4 (Central District, Pasadena Playhouse sub-district), with a maximum residential density of 60 dwelling units per acre and a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.0. The site is designated Medium Mixed Use in the General Plan Land Use Element, with a density of 0-87 dwelling units per acre and a floor area ratio of 0-2.25. The applicant is proposing a Planned Development application to provide 87 dwelling units per acre and an FAR of 3.0.

The applicant intends to use PMC 17.26.020.C.3.c(1) that allows the FAR of a PD to exceed the allowed FAR in the General Plan Land Use Element (0-2.25). The increase in FAR can only be approved by the City Council, and only as high as 3.0, when it can be shown the architectural design of the PD is contextual and of a high-quality. A PD is a legislative action and the Council has broad discretion when considering such a request.

An aerial map of the existing site and the proposed site plan and elevations are provided on the following pages.

Aerial Map – Existing Conditions



Proposed Site Plan – Ground Floor





Green St Elevation



Oak Knoll Ave Elevation



Hudson Ave Elevation



PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW ANALYSIS:

The PPR has been reviewed by staff from all applicable departments as well as the Design Commission. Complete comments from all departments are provided in Attachment A. Planning staff met with the applicant to clarify code requirements and discuss its concerns which are described below; Design Commission comments follow.

Context and Compatibility

Several development standards were determined to be inconsistent with the existing development regulations for the CD-4, Playhouse sub-district (Attachment B). Although a PD plan allows an applicant to prescribe its own development standards, it is recommended that the PD plan standards be similar to the existing development standards of the zone. The existing CD standards, for the Playhouse sub-district, reflect the existing and/or anticipated character for the specific area and is assigned a lower height limit and FAR as this area serves as a transition to lower scale residential neighborhoods to the south.

As proposed, the project would not be within the allowed and established development pattern for the area. The project would not comply and would exceed these key development standards:

Standard	Proposed	CD Requirement
Density	87 du/acre+(35% Density Bonus)	60 du/acre
FAR	3.0	2.0
Height	77'	35'-50'
Setbacks	5', 10' and 50'	Street setbacks: 0'-5' max

Massing and Scale

The projects proposed FAR is 3.0, while the CD maximum is 2.0 and the General Plan Land Use Diagram for the site is a range of 0-2.25. The FAR of a PD may not exceed the FAR established on the Land Use Diagram unless approved by City Council when it can be shown the architectural design of the PD is contextual and of a high-quality. As proposed, the FAR of the project is out of scale with the surrounding area. The project site is in an area that serves as a transition, from the higher intensity development along Colorado Boulevard and Lake Avenue, to lower scale multi-family residential neighborhoods to the south. Surrounding development, south of Green Street and west of Hudson Avenue, consists of primarily lower scale (1-4 story) commercial and residential development.

As it relates to height, in the Central District, a PD plan may not authorize a greater height than that permitted in the CD. The site is located within an area that establishes a height limit of 35' and up to 50' for the rear of the site. The project proposes heights of up to 77' and exceeds both permitted heights. The height of the project is out of scale with the surrounding area.

Density

The existing residential density for the site is 60 dwelling units per acre; up to 140 units for this site. The residential density range indicated by the Land Use Diagram for the site is a range of 0-87 dwelling units per acre. Although the proposed residential density is up to 87 dwelling units per acre (or 203 units) and within the residential density range allowed on the Land Use Diagram for the project site, the density is out of scale with the surrounding area.

Density Bonus

The project proposes a 35% increase in the density of 87 units per acre utilizing the State's Density Bonus provisions. The density bonus would result in 70 additional units for a total unit count of 273. The 35% density bonus would be achieved by providing 11% (30 units) of the base units as Very Low Income units.

Development Capacities

The 2015 General Plan established caps for residential and non-residential development in each of the specific plan areas. The original allocated development capacities for the Central District Specific Plan included 4,272 residential units and 2,112,000 square feet of non-residential development. As of March 22, 2018, the balance in allocated development capacities are 3,927 residential units and 1,890,809 square feet of non-residential development. The project proposes 273 residential units and 19,734 square feet of non-residential development which is within the remaining development intensities.

PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION COMMENTS:

The project was reviewed by the Design Commission through the Preliminary Consultation process on January 9, 2018. The Commission provided the comments below on the preliminary design:

1. Further study the building massing to avoid overwhelming adjacent lower-scaled buildings to the south, particularly along Oak Knoll Avenue.
2. The overall design lacks a strong connection to the architectural legacy of Pasadena and the representation in the design of the "style influence" imagery is unclear. Further study ways to respond more clearly to Pasadena's architectural legacy as the project develops further in the review process.
3. Review the solid-to-void proportions of the upper floors facing Green Street, portions of which have large blank walls with smaller openings than on the lower levels.
4. Explore ways to create a stronger, more expressive roofline to the buildings.
5. Work closely with the Department of Public Works to ensure that mature trees along Green Street are not adversely impacted by the project, at both the root and canopy zones.

6. Explore alternative locations/designs for the loading and mechanical spaces along Hudson Avenue. If possible, relocate these uses to the subterranean parking structure.
7. Ensure that stairwells are inviting for use and provide direct access to streets and communal open spaces at the ground-level. Similarly, ensure that ground-level units on the interior of the project have direct access to communal open spaces.
8. Review the logic of the application of exterior materials to ensure that they are applied consistently throughout the project and, where materials differ between the base and upper levels of the buildings, ensure that lighter materials such as wood and metal are applied at upper levels and heavier materials such as stone and stucco are applied at the base. More specifically, consider replacing proposed ground-level siding and stucco with a more solid, durable material such as brick or stone.
9. Explore the possibility of providing areas of natural ground beneath the proposed park to allow for in-ground plantings and support more substantial tree growth.
10. Consider whether a shade structure may be appropriate at the proposed park, particularly at the western end.
11. As noted in the attached comments from staff of the Current Planning Section, the Zoning Code prohibits proposed Planned Developments from deviating from the maximum height limits in the Central District Specific Plan area. Restudy the building heights to comply with the maximum height allowed on the site, which is 35' (no height averaging allowed) at the northern portion of the site and 50' or 65' with height averaging on the remainder of the site.
12. The design of the pocket park should be restudied to ensure that it provides amenities consistent with a public park space such as a community garden or a playground or other playful amenity, rather than being designed as a typical courtyard feature or pass-through space that would be provided in a new development project. In addition, the location should be restudied to ensure that it best serves the community and doesn't interrupt the retail continuity of Green Street, which should have building volumes at the street edge. Consider relocating it to the southwest corner of the site, which would also address other comments about the building height overwhelming the smaller scaled existing church building to the south.
13. The project is lacking an overall design concept and inspiration that would provide justification for all elements of the design. The façade diagrams provided seem to be serving as the design concept, but this has not resulted in a consistent, successful design. As the project moves forward in the review process, this should be further studied and more clearly articulated and all aspects of the design should respond to the defined concept.
14. The bicycle parking should be more easily accessible.

15. The context of the Playhouse District, as well as the specific site location and the larger orientation of the site to the mountains, climate, soil conditions and sun should be further reviewed and the project should more clearly respond to these existing conditions.
16. The Public Art Curator should be consulted as early as possible in the review process to ensure compliance with the public art requirement and integration of public art into the design.
17. Study ways to ensure that the circulation pattern from the parking structure to the buildings incorporates passage through common open space areas of the project.
18. Plans submitted for future reviews should indicate locations of controlled access and should be oriented with north at the top of the page.
19. Consider providing opportunities for public access around or through the site.
20. The “three bar” concept presented could be a powerful, innovative concept diagram for the project and should be further explored. As designed, the project has very vertical, relatively unarticulated buildings with deep wells between and this condition should be further studied to better distribute and articulate the building masses. Explore the idea of terracing to better distribute the massing and relate better to the context. Consider rotating the three bars such that they are oriented east-to-west rather than north-to-south, in conjunction with other comments regarding proximity of buildings to Green Street and relocation of the pocket park.
21. The proposed diagonal unit plans should be reconsidered and made more rectilinear.

The Preliminary Consultation process was completed by the applicant. As the project moves forward, the application for Concept Design Review would need to address and respond, in writing and/or graphically, to the comments above.

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT ENTITLEMENT PROCESS:

Discretionary Review Process:

Establishment of the project would require approval of a Planned Development (PD) application and the following reviews are required:

1. **Planned Development – Architectural determination of contextual and of high quality:** The Design Commission shall advise the Planning Commission and the Council as to whether the architectural design of the proposed PD is contextual and of high quality. This review would be required if the project continues to exceed the FAR indicated by the Land Use Diagram for the site of 0-2.25.

2. **Planned Development – Planning Commission:** The Planning Commission shall consider the application for reclassification to a PD zoning district and shall, at the same time, consider the proposed PD plan accompanying the application. The Commission shall make a written recommendation to the Council whether to approve, approve in modified form, or disapprove the proposed amendment.
3. **Planned Development – City Council:** Planned Developments are heard by the City Council. Upon receipt of the Commission's recommendation, the Council shall, approve, approve in modified form, or disapprove the proposed amendment
4. **Preliminary Consultation-Design Review:** This project must be reviewed by the Design Commission through the Preliminary Consultation process for preliminary advisory comments.
5. **Concept & Final-Design Review:** This project must be reviewed by the Design Commission through the Concept and Final Design Review process.

This project will be subject to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Additional environmental studies may be needed to determine what type of CEQA analysis is required for the project.

Public hearings before the Design Commission, Planning Commission, and City Council are required for the Planned Development application, with the Design and Planning Commissions acting as recommendation bodies and the City Council as an approval body. Furthermore, environmental review will occur consistent with the requirements of CEQA. Upon submittal of an official application, the steps included in the review process are as follows:

- Applicant submits Planned Development application;
- Conduct environmental review per CEQA;
- Conduct a noticed public hearing before the Design Commission;
- Conduct a noticed public hearing before the Planning Commission;
- Conduct a noticed public hearing before the City Council for: (1) review and approval of the PD district and the PD plan; and (2) consideration of adoption of the environmental determination; and
- Return to Design Commission for Concept/Final design approvals.

FISCAL IMPACT:

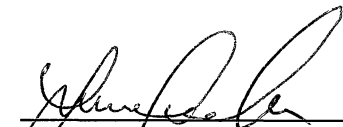
This report is for information only and will not result in any fiscal impact.

Respectfully submitted,



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Development

Prepared by and Concurred by:



Luis Rocha
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Approved by:



STEVE MERMELL
City Manager

Attachments (3)

Attachment A – Predevelopment Plan Review Comments to Applicant
Attachment B – Project Summary Table of Development Standards
Attachment C – Predevelopment Plan Review Plans