

ATTACHMENT B
PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION DESIGN REVIEW COMMENTS



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING DIVISION

November 14, 2019

Keven D. Doherty
Summerhill Apartment Communities Investments, LLC
3000 Executive Parkway, Suite 450
San Ramon, CA 94583

NOTICE OF DESIGN COMMISSION COMMENTS

Application for Preliminary Consultation

444 N. Fair Oaks Avenue

Case #: PLN2019-00427

Council District 5

Dear Mr. Doherty,

On November 12, 2019, at a public meeting at the Pasadena City Council Chambers, the Design Commission, acting under the provisions of Section 17.61.030 of the Pasadena Municipal Code, reviewed your application for Preliminary Consultation of a proposed 206-unit multi-family residential project. The design guidelines applied to this review were the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the design guidelines in the Fair Oaks-Orange Grove Specific Plan, and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Districts. The Commission agreed with the comments in the staff report, which are reiterated below, and provided additional comments on the preliminary design, also listed below:

1. Although broken up by large second-level courtyards along its west and south sides, the massing of the building appears substantially larger and bulkier than immediately adjacent surrounding properties, particularly at the southern end of the Fair Oaks Avenue frontage, along Villa Street, and adjacent to lower-scaled existing development to the east. Review the bulk and mass of other more recently approved or constructed development projects nearby, as well as the scale of the buildings in the surrounding context, and explore ways to further break down and rearrange the massing of the building in a manner similar to these other projects, and in response to the surrounding lower-scaled context. Consider creating more distinct and narrower building masses along the Fair Oaks Avenue frontage and creating narrower and more frequent breaks, cut-outs and view corridors in the building wall along the street to accommodate pedestrian access into the site at multiple locations. Develop a massing and architectural vocabulary that creates the appearance of multiple buildings. The Fair Oaks Court project at the southeast corner of Fair Oaks Avenue and Peoria Street may be a useful example to explore for massing and frontage inspiration. Recently approved projects at the Parsons site (100 W. Walnut Street) or 690-700 N. Orange Grove Boulevard may also be useful to study. In addition, explore ways to work more closely with the sloping conditions of the site to create massing and roofline variation.

2. On Raymond Avenue, the townhouses building is substantially taller and less articulated than most of the existing buildings along that street, with the exception, from a height perspective, of the four-story Villa Raymond building at the southwest corner of Raymond Avenue and Villa Street. The design of the new building volume at this location should respond more clearly to the size, mass and articulation of the majority of the other properties along Raymond Avenue.
3. The northwest corner of the building at Fair Oaks Avenue and Villa Street should be carefully studied to respond to the prominence of the street corner and to be more cohesive with the overall building design. Stepping the building down and creating a small arcade at this location may not be the most appropriate response to the prominent corner. Additional building mass and height could be supported at this location. Consider relocating the ground-level program at this location to the southern end of the site, which could help create variation in the design and relate better to Old Pasadena and to the termination of Eureka Street at that location.
4. The current design includes a substantial amount of at-grade parking, which is negatively impacting the project's connections and circulation, both to the public realm and internally. The circulation pattern of the site should engage courtyard spaces and provide more direct, clear pathways from the parking area to the residential units, particularly the Raymond Avenue townhouses, which should also incorporate underground parking. Future design review submittals should clearly outline the intended pedestrian circulation to, from, and within the site. The project's proximity to Old Pasadena and other new developments in the vicinity, such as the Parsons project, should be celebrated in the site design and parking should be entirely subterranean to allow for improved access and reduced bulk and mass overall. If courtyards remain proposed at the podium level, consider creation of portals, stairs, and views from Fair Oaks Avenue.
5. Consider providing a more centralized courtyard or repositioning the opening to the northerly courtyard to face north along Villa Street or to the east to relate better to adjacent lower-scaled residences, rather than along Fair Oaks Avenue. The building facade along Fair Oaks Avenue should maintain a strong street wall and have smaller interruptions for pedestrian access rather than a large courtyard opening.
6. The proposed accessibility ramp transition and art wall along Fair Oaks Avenue should be reconsidered. The ground level of the building should align with, or be slightly above, street grade, working with the existing natural grade, and should better engage the pedestrian environment. Necessary transitions in elevation should occur within the interior of the site and building. Ground-level units should have direct access to streets and courtyards onto which they front.
7. The compatibility of the proposed architectural presentation of the building with the surrounding neighborhood should be clearly articulated during the design review process. As currently designed, the project appears to have little architectural relationship to its surroundings, to the City as a whole, to its solar orientation or to the use of the building as residential dwelling units. While surrounding buildings along Fair Oaks Avenue are not architecturally significant, the design should strive to relate to other similarly sized buildings found traditionally in Pasadena and to create a compatible

streetscape. The Main Street Commercial style described in the appendix to the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts may be an appropriate design reference to consider. A contemporary design may also be appropriate in this location, provided its architectural logic and compatibility with its surroundings are clearly described and evident in the design. In general, the residential use of the building should be more clearly expressed in the design, as it currently has an institutional appearance.

8. The proposed Raymond Avenue townhouses are particularly incompatible with adjacent properties and the Raymond-Summit Historic District on the opposite side of the street. Consider incorporating a lower-scale, two-story element at the eastern end of the Raymond Avenue townhouses, as well as architectural treatments that better relate to the existing character of the street. The fenestration should be further studied to provide larger openings facing the street, as well as a prominent street-facing entrance within a frontage element. In general, this portion of the project should strive to elevate the existing charm of the neighborhood and celebrate its existing character.
9. Ground-level units at the street edge should engage the street and provide for entry patios and should be architecturally differentiated from common/leasing spaces. Consider placing residential units along Villa Street at the ground level in conjunction with the potential relocation of the leasing office and amenity spaces at the southern end of Fair Oaks Avenue, as suggested in comment #3 above.
10. The project courtyards should be placed in locations that will ensure their usability by the project residents. The courtyards should be designed to include useful amenities and features such as shading devices appropriate to their solar exposure, seating and cooking facilities, water features, etc. The landscape and hardscape design should reflect the local climate and landscape traditions and should also relate to the design of the building.
11. The materiality of the building will be an important consideration in the design review process and will be crucial to its compatibility with its surroundings. The applicable design guidelines encourage use of high-quality, durable materials that are consistent with the design of the project. Any proposed masonry or stone should be detailed as bearing walls. Windows should be recessed to create a feeling of depth and solidity and should be arranged in a clear pattern on the facade.
12. Consider in the design the response of the building to the termination of Eureka Street at Fair Oaks Avenue at the southern end of the project's Fair Oaks Avenue frontage.
13. Use caution in taking the inspiration images provided in the design drawings too far. Rather than using large glazing elements, more inspiration should be taken from the Villa Raymond, Herkimer Arms, the building at the southwest corner of Raymond Avenue and Villa Street and other buildings in the surrounding neighborhood without mimicking their designs.
14. Consider placement of landscape along the Fair Oaks Avenue frontage to alleviate the mass and bulk of the building.

15. Further consider the solar orientation of the building in the design. A north-south orientation would be the most appropriate for residential units and at least 60% of the units should face this direction. West-facing units would be the most difficult. Consider a three-bar configuration at the northern and southern ends and the middle of the site with lower-scaled connecting volumes and courtyards between them and along Fair Oaks Avenue.

NEXT STEPS

This completes the Preliminary Consultation process. As your project moves forward to Concept Design Review, the new building design should endeavor to address and respond, in writing and/or graphically, to the comments above. If the comments are not satisfactorily addressed, revisions to the submitted plans may be required and the approval process for your project may be delayed.

Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter.

Sincerely,



Kevin Johnson
Senior Planner
Design and Historic Preservation Section
Tel: 626-744-7806
Email: kevinjohnson@cityofpasadena.net

cc: Tidemark; Address file

ATTACHMENT C

PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE OF DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

PROJECT SUMMARY	
Zoning Designation 444 North Fair Oaks Avenue: FGSP-C-3b (Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan - Limited Commercial District 3, Subdistrict "b") 425 North Raymond Avenue: RM-12 (Multi-Family Residential, Two Units Per Lot)	
General Plan Designation 444 North Fair Oaks Avenue: Medium Mixed Use (0.0-2.25 FAR, 0-87 DU/acre) 425 North Raymond Avenue: Low-Medium Density Residential (0-12 DU/acre)	
Proposed Development Standards	Zoning Code Requirement
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	
FGSP-C-3b: 2.79 (226,411 sf) RM-12: 1.25 (12,432 sf)	FGSP-C-3b: no max RM-12: 35% of the lot size + 1,000 square feet (4,479 sf)
Height	
FGSP-C-3b: 76' RM-12: 48'	FGSP-C-3b: 36' RM-12: 28'
Density	
73 du/acre*	FGSP-C-3b: 32 du/acre RM-12: 2 units per lot
Setbacks	
FGSP-C-3b: Fair Oaks Avenue: 10' Villa Street: 5' Side: 15' Rear: 5'	FGSP-C-3b: Fair Oaks Avenue: 15' Villa Street: 5' Side: 15' and not within the encroachment plane Rear: none required
RM-12: Raymond Avenue: 28' Side: 5' Rear: not referenced	RM-12: Raymond Avenue: blockface average, but not less than 25' Side: 6' Rear: 10'
Parking	
245	252

*Base density proposed for project site before application of density bonus