

# Agenda Report

**TO: CITY COUNCIL** **DATE: JANUARY 28, 2008**  
**FROM: CITY MANAGER**  
**SUBJECT: Call for Review - Application for Consolidated Design Review --  
New Construction of Twenty-one Unit Condominium at 229-247  
South Marengo Avenue**

## **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 area, and with the applicable zoning designation and regulations; and that the project site has no value as a 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, pursuant to the approval of the traffic assessment by the Department of Transportation on July 25, 2006;
3. Find that approval of the project will not result in any significant effects relating to noise, air quality or water quality;
4. 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 (and that the project will, therefore, have no effect on historic resources);
5. Conclude, therefore, that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under §15332, (Class 32) "in-fill development projects."

### **Findings for Removal of Specimen Trees and Replacement Trees**

1. Acknowledge that the new development will cause the removal of one protected tree, a Cinnamomum Camphora (camphor tree), with a 36-inch DBH (tree #6 on Sheet L-PD—ATTACHMENT B);
2. Approve the removal based on the finding that the canopy of the replacement trees (43 new trees @ 24" box or larger—tree legend, Sheet L-PD—

ATTACHMENT B) will result in a tree canopy coverage of greater significance than the tree canopy coverage being removed within a reasonable time after completion of the project (§8.52.075 A, finding #6, P.M.C.)

**Findings of Consolidated Design Approval**

Find that the design of the project complies with the City-wide Design Principles in the Land-use Element of the General Plan; the Multi-family Residential Development Standards in Ch. 17.22 of the P.M.C. ,and the Design Guidelines for Windows in Multi-unit Residential projects;

Based on these findings, affirm the decision of the Design Commission of November 26, 2007 to approve the application for consolidated Design Review for 229-247 South Marengo with the following conditions, subject to final review and approval by the staff:

1. The paving material shall relate to the base course cast-stone veneer represented on the elevations. The base course material shall be selected with special attention to the detailing of the corners and the interface with wood and stucco elements on the building.
2. The elevation drawings shall be revised to include wood facias on all eyebrow elements of the building.
3. The architect shall revise and coordinate the floor plans to reflect the final [approved] design.
4. The cast-stone cap detail on the balcony rail/parapet shall be included and shall reference the base material used on the building.
5. The corner element detail where two windows come together shall be reevaluated. (It may be wood or clear aluminum.)
6. The scale of the [pedestrian] entry gates shall be reinvestigated to consider making this element more substantial. The relocation of this element farther back from the street elevation shall be considered.
7. The dimension of the horizontal railings on the balconies shall be reexamined to insure that they are sturdy/strong enough instead of the half-inch dimension presented in the drawings.
8. The door selection (size and material) shall be reexamined on the front [street-facing] elevation.

**Decision of the Design Commission**

The Design Commission at its meeting on November 26, 2007 voted to approve the application for consolidated Design Review for 229-247 South Marengo Avenue (following four previous reviews during 2007) with the eight conditions of approval cited above (Attachment D).

**BACKGROUND**

The new construction is a 21-unit courtyard-style condominium with subterranean parking. The project, which is replacing 18 existing units on two parcels, is on a half-acre site on the west side of South Marengo Avenue—south of Cordova Street—and one block east of the Del Mar Station. A two-story multi-unit Colonial

Revival complex (1953, architect unknown, eligible for landmark designation) and a four-story residential building (under construction) are north of the site. A two-story Queen Anne style building (1893, Thomas Fellows/J.H. Bradbeer, listed in the National Register) borders the site to the south, and a collection of bungalows, traditional style buildings, and 1980s-era townhouses are east of the site.

Organized around a rectangular interior garden, the new building has two three-story wings set back 25 feet from the property line. It has flat roofs, protruding canopies, horizontal groupings of windows, and plaster-coated walls, accented with redwood siding. Designed to comply with the development standards for a RM-48 zoning district, the building has three entrances facing the street. It also has a 15-foot opening, screened by an ornamental gate, with views into the interior garden. Perimeter walkways surround the garden, which lead to unit entrances for the remainder of the building.

The subterranean parking level extends the development to the property lines of the site. The concrete deck within the front yard setback is depressed 24-inches below the sidewalk elevation (as required by code) to afford adequate soil depth to accommodate new landscaping. A 13-foot wide driveway allows access into the subterranean parking garage from the northern most edge of the site along South Marengo Avenue.

Two private elevators lead to two penthouse-level units. These units as well as two street-facing units (#101 and #118) are accessible to people with disabilities. Several elevation changes occur in the courtyard. An accessible route through the main garden occurs along the south walkway and provides access to both elevators (see Sheets A1 and L-PD—ATTACHMENT B).

### **Landscaping**

The landscaped courtyard is a viewing garden with a stepped wall fountain. Three (of the six) 36-inch box California Sycamores are planted in tree wells, allowing the trees to fully mature. The landscape plan also indicates planting areas for trees, turf and shrubs within the front setback and provides a green buffer appropriate for this location. Much of the landscaping is in planters over a concrete podium that extends to the property line. Three 36" and four 24" box trees in this location will not fully mature above the podium deck.

### **REVIEWS BY THE DESIGN COMMISSION**

The design approval process for multi-family projects combines the two phases of design review (concept and final) into one step, Consolidated Design Review. The reason for the one-step review is that nearly all of the site design issues with new multi-family construction (e.g., footprint, height, setbacks, parking location, amount of garden space, etc.) are subject to a separate review and approval by staff (preliminary plan check) for compliance with the development standards in the code. Design review follows this process.

The subject building proposal has been before the Design Commission four times: January, June, October, and November 2007. In January 2007, citing concerns

about the scale and massing of the building, the Commission referred the project to a three-person subcommittee. Working with the subcommittee, the architect revised the materials, proportions, and modulation of the building. The Commission then reviewed a modified design at its meeting on June 11<sup>th</sup> and continued a decision on the application for a second time to allow time for the architect to work on additional design issues. The commission reviewed this project for a third time in August and once again continued the application to allow the architect to resolve more issues raised at this meeting. Following this meeting, staff worked diligently with the design architect to facilitate a fourth set of revisions to this project based on comments issued by the Commission. The Design Commission reviewed the final revisions to the project at its meeting on November 26, 2007 and unanimously approved the final iteration of this building proposal with eight conditions of approval. (see attachment D).

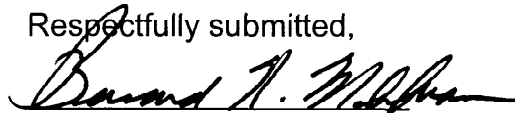
**Conclusion**

During the eleven months of design review of this project, the design architect has made revisions to address concerns raised by the Design Commission. In addition, specific zoning requirements regarding density (outlined in attachment C) and environmental standards for this site have been met. Finally, the negligible increase in density at this location has been further studied in the Transportation Department's 2006 assessment and it has been determined that the increase in traffic will be minimal (approximately .02 percent).

**Fiscal Impact**

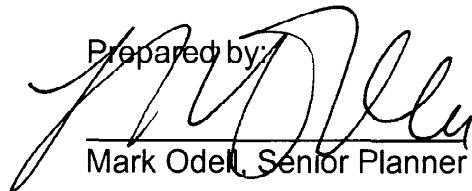
A decision on the design of the project will not affect revenues to the City. The City collects fees for design review and for other land-use entitlements as well as a construction tax, development-impact fees, and fees for building, electrical, and mechanical permits for new construction.

Respectfully submitted,



Bernard K. Melekian  
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Richard J. Bruckner, Director  
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## **ATTACHMENTS**

ATTACHMENT A: Application & Taxpayer Protection Amendment Form

ATTACHMENT B: Site Plans, Renderings & Elevations

ATTACHMENT C: Zoning Consistency and Adherence to Design Guidelines  
Overview

ATTACHMENT D: Decision Letter dated November 28, 2007

ATTACHMENT E: Issues Addressed in the Final Reworking of the Design Prior to  
Design Commission Approval