



October 1, 2018

Mayor Tomek and City Council Members
City of Pasadena
100 North Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, California 91101

RE: Predevelopment Plan Review of a Mixed-use Development at 141 South Lake Avenue

Dear Honorable Mayor and members of the City Council:

Pasadena Heritage is concerned about the proposed mixed-use project at 141 S. Lake Ave. We believe that the project, as proposed, is incompatible with its surroundings, especially the adjacent former First City Bank (currently Fidelity Investments), which is individually eligible for listing on the National Register, as well as other historic buildings within its vicinity, particularly the postwar-era buildings along S. Lake Ave.

We urge the Council to ask the applicant to thoughtfully redesign the project, especially the primary (west, or S. Lake Ave.) elevation, to ensure compatibility with its architectural context and especially the adjacent First City Bank.

On June 12, we expressed our concern in writing to the Design Commission when it reviewed the project through the Preliminary Consultation process. We fully concurred with the staff report's findings and recommendations, as well as the Design Commission's comments, particularly those pertaining to the project's lack of responsiveness to its surrounding context. We would like to reiterate our comments, summarized below for your consideration.

Specific Concerns and Comments

- As proposed, the project is incompatible with the former First City Bank. This National Register-eligible building is significant, and important to us, because it is an excellent and intact example of a corporate International Style commercial building. The building was designed by architectural firm Ladd & Kelsey and constructed in 1960 by the Mandurbreh Co. Formed in 1958 by master architects Thornton Ladd and John Kelsey, well-known commissions of this firm include the Norton Simon Museum (1969) in Pasadena and the California Institute of the Arts (1971) in Santa Clarita.
- A clearer base, middle, and top, should be incorporated into the design of the proposed building, and exterior cladding materials should appropriately follow this hierarchy.
- The cantilevered office space on the second floor should be eliminated or more appropriately integrated into the design, as it overpowers the primary elevation.

- The applicant should study the feasibility of a symmetrical façade composition and setting back the floors above the roofline of the former First City Bank.
- The north (side) elevation of the proposed building is totally unresolved. A blank surface facing the former First City Bank is unacceptable, and this elevation, as proposed, is a missed opportunity to enliven the area between the project site and First City Bank. This elevation should include architectural features and detailing that appropriately respond to the former First City Bank.

Conclusion

The proposed project at 141 S. Lake Ave. is incompatible with its context and requires a thoughtful redesign. We hope that the applicant will put careful attention into the design to ensure that it appropriately responds to Pasadena's historic built environment.

Thank you for considering our concerns and comments.

Sincerely yours,



Susan N. Mossman
Executive Director



Adam F. Rajper
Preservation Director

Cc: Amanda Landry