

Agenda Report

January 24, 2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

**SUBJECT: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SCEA) FOR CENTRAL PARK APARTMENTS PROJECT
86 SOUTH FAIR OAKS AVENUE**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that, following a public hearing, the City Council:

1. Adopt the Resolution in Attachment A approving the Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) (SCH # 2021030197), adopting findings, and adopting the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP); and
2. Direct the City Clerk to file a Notice of Determination with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The applicant, Architectural Resources Group, Inc., has proposed a new development project, including the demolition of the existing surface parking lot, residential amenity space and advertising billboard on the approximately 0.74-acre project site and construction of a new mixed-use building with subterranean parking and landscaping. The proposed building would include 6,200 square feet of ground-floor retail space and restaurants, four work/live units, approximately 1,300 square feet each, and 84 residential units, including eight on-site residences for very low-income residents. A Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) was prepared for the proposed project. The Draft SCEA was released on March 8, 2021 and the comment period concluded on May 6, 2021. All impacts studied in the SCEA were found to be less than significant or less than significant with mitigation. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21155.2(b)(6), the legislative body of the lead agency (the City Council in this case) is the review authority for review and approval of a SCEA.

BACKGROUND:

The project site is located at the northeast corner of South Fair Oaks Avenue and Dayton Street in the Central District and within the Old Pasadena Historic District (non-contributing property). The main project site encompasses 32,362-square feet (.74 acre) and is currently used as a surface parking area and outdoor recreation space serving the adjacent Green Hotel Apartments building at 50 E. Green Street, in addition to an outdoor advertising billboard and landscaping.

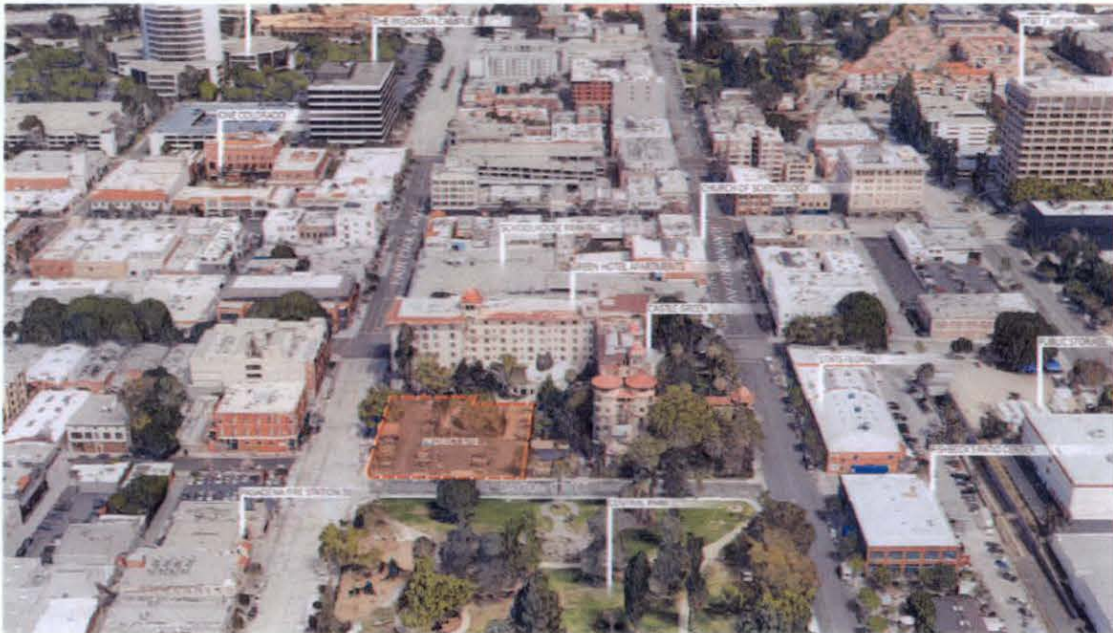


Figure 1 – Project Site

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The applicant, Architectural Resources Group, Inc., has proposed a new development that includes the demolition of the existing parking and other facilities on the site and construction of a new mixed-use building with subterranean parking and landscaping. The proposed building would include 6,200 square feet of ground-floor retail space and restaurants, four work/live units, approximately 1,300 square feet each, and 84 residential units, including eight on-site residences for very low-income residents. All parking for the proposed project would be located in four levels of underground parking, including replacement of existing parking spaces for the adjacent Green Hotel Apartments. Access to and from the proposed project site would be along Dayton Street on the southeast corner of the proposed project site. The types of housing units would be intermixed on each level and would consist of 24 studio units, 40 one-bedroom units, and 20 two-bedroom units.

The project is in compliance with Zoning Code requirements and does not require any Zoning entitlements. As such, design review by the Design Commission is the only

discretionary action required for the project to be constructed. The Design Commission conducted a Preliminary Consultation for the project on October 24, 2017 and provided a series of design comments to the applicant team at that time. A public hearing on a pending application for Concept Design Review will be scheduled if the City Council approves the SCEA as recommended by staff in this report. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21155.2(b)(6), the legislative body of the lead agency (the City Council in this case) is the review authority for review and approval of a SCEA. This section also authorizes a Planning Commission to conduct the public hearing if local ordinances allow a direct appeal of approval of a SCEA to the legislative body subject to a fee not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500). Because the City's appeal fee is higher than \$500, the City Council must conduct the public hearing under state law. However, the Council may choose to continue this hearing to request a recommendation from the Planning Commission prior to taking action on the SCEA.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

In accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) was prepared to identify and analyze the project's potential impact on the environment.

SB 375 provides CEQA streamlining opportunities for Transit Priority Projects that are "consistent with the use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in either a sustainable communities strategy or an alternative planning strategy, for which the ARB has accepted a metropolitan planning organization's determination that the sustainable communities strategy or the alternative planning strategy would, if implemented, achieve the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets established by ARB (see Public Resources Code, § 21155 (a))."

Transit Priority Projects

SB 375 provides CEQA streamlining opportunities for certain Transit Priority Projects (TPPs). A TPP is a project that meets the following three criteria:

- A. Contains at least 50 percent residential use, based on total building square footage and, if the project contains between 26 percent and 50 percent nonresidential uses, a floor area ratio of not less than 0.75;
- B. Provides a minimum net density of at least 20 units per acre; and
- C. Is within one-half mile of a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor included in a regional transportation plan.

The proposed project is a mixed-use development consisting of 84 apartment units of varying types and sizes, including eight on-site residences for very low-income residents. The residential component of the proposed project encompasses

approximately 54,448 sf of the project's total 93,355 sf of floor area, or 58 percent of total floor area. As such, the proposed project would be consistent with Criterion A. The proposed project site is approximately 0.74 acres. With 84 residential dwellings, the proposed project would have a density of approximately 113 units per acre. As such, the proposed project would be consistent with Criterion B. The proposed project is located within a High Quality Transit Area (HQTa) as defined by SCAG and a transit priority area as defined by SB 743. The project site is located within one-quarter mile of the Metro Del Mar Station and within one-half mile of the Memorial Park Station. As such, all development on the project site is within one-half mile from the light rail station. The L Line (formerly Gold Line) provides service intervals less than 15 minutes during peak commute hours. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with Criterion C. Based on this analysis, the proposed project is consistent with all three criteria and is considered a Transit Priority Project.

Consistency with Sustainable Communities Strategy

On May 7, 2020, SCAG's Regional Council approved Connect SoCal (2020 – 2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy) for conformity purpose by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). On September 3, 2020, the Regional Council formally adopted the Connect SoCal plan to provide a roadmap to expand transportation options, improve air quality and bolster Southern California's long-term economic viability.

As described in Section 3.0 of the SCEA, the proposed project would be consistent with the land use patterns promoted by the Connect SoCal Forecasted Regional Development Pattern. The project site, which is within one-half mile from a major transit stop, is in an area that is considered by SCAG as a Priority Growth Area. Furthermore, the project would not be located in any absolutely constrained areas such as on agricultural land, open space, or tribal lands.

SCEA Analysis

The SCEA was prepared to analyze the potential environmental impacts of a project proposing 84 residential dwelling units, four work/live units and 6,200 square feet of commercial space. The SCEA analyzed the potential impacts to Aesthetics, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems and Wildfire. Of these twenty areas, the SCEA found there would be potentially significant impacts related to Cultural Resources, Noise and Tribal Cultural Resources. The SCEA found that mitigation would reduce all potential impacts to less than significant levels. All other impacts were found to be less than significant.

Comment Period

On March 8, 2021, the Draft SCEA was made available for review during a 30-day public comment period that was originally set to close on April 6, 2021. The comment period was extended by public request and officially closed on May 6, 2021.

SCEA Comments

During the comment period, staff received written comments from a total of three state and local agencies, eight organizations, and 45 individuals. Public Resources Code Section 21155.2(b)(4) requires the City to consider all of the comments received prior to taking action on the SCEA. In order to aid the City Council in considering the comments received, the City's consultant, Impact Sciences, and City staff have prepared master responses to similar comments received, which are included in Section 7.0 of the SCEA (see Attachment B).

The SCEA was revised in response to comments that were raised. The revisions include typographical errors and corrections, are minor in nature, and do not affect any of the analysis or conclusions in the document. Edits made after circulation of the draft SCEA are noted in strikeout and underline format within the document.

Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) describes procedures that would be followed to implement mitigation measures adopted in connection with the approval of the proposed project and the methods for monitoring such actions. A MMRP is necessary only for impacts that would be significant if not mitigated. The MMRP table consists of the mitigation measures required for the project and specifies the timing of the measure, the responsible entity for mitigation monitoring, and provides an entry to record when the mitigation measure was completed and measures its effectiveness. The MMRP is included as Attachment C.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The approval of the SCEA would support the development of the proposed project, which is consistent with Guiding Principle 1 of the General Plan Land Use Element by targeting new development to the Central District, which is intended to provide diverse housing stock, job opportunities, exciting districts with commercial and recreational uses, and transit opportunities. The project also supports Guiding Principle 2, which encourages new construction to be compatible with, and differentiated from, historic resources; Guiding Principle 3 which encourages a mix of jobs and services as well as affordable housing; Guiding Principle 4, which promotes safe and sustainable communities; Guiding Principle 5, which encourages circulation without cars; and Guiding Principal 7, which encourages public participation in the planning process.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The applicant, consistent with the adopted Fee Schedule, would pay the cost of the project reviews and permits to the City. The project would generate income to the City through property tax and sales tax revenue.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION:

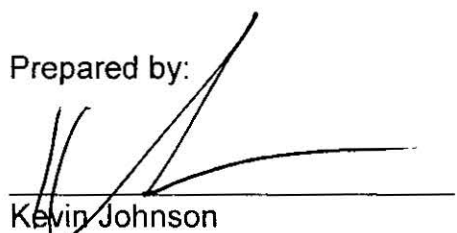
The City Council may also refer the SCEA document to another commission for an advisory review prior to taking any formal action on the document.

Respectfully submitted,



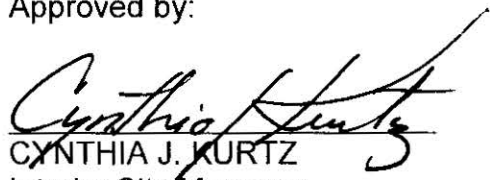
DAVID M. REYES
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Prepared by:



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CYNTHIA J. KURTZ
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Attachments:

Attachment A: Resolution Approving the SCEA for the Central Park Apartments Project
Attachment B: SCEA
Attachment C: Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program