

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: MAY 1, 1998

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: APPEAL OF DESIGN COMMISSION DECISION REGARDING A REQUEST FOR MAJOR REVISIONS TO A CONSOLIDATED DESIGN REVIEW APPLICATION FOR THE COMMERCIAL PROJECT (FAIR OAKS RENAISSANCE PLAZA) AT 655 NORTH FAIR OAKS AVENUE

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

Find that, according to Section 17.80.050.B of the Pasadena Municipal Code, this project with the conditions outlined below, conforms with the City-wide Design Principle and Criteria and the Purposes of Design Review and that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the modification of the original approval.

1. Approve the change of exterior materials on the east elevation of the building from concrete masonry unit (CMU) block walls to stucco and glass fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC) relief to stucco with the understanding that

- The stucco shall have a sand float finish, not a medium-dash finish as shown on the material sample board, which exhibits a high level of quality. *The Design Principles and Criteria in the General Plan (1992; p.62) state, "The basic qualities of buildings and places that are inviting and sustain attention include.... well-crafted and durable materials.*
- The off-white color shall be darkened to reduce the contrast between the stucco and concrete masonry units along the east elevation. Suggested colors could include but are not limited to light browns or grays. The revised color shall be submitted to staff for review and approval prior to application. *As proposed the off-white color of the stucco produces a stark contrast with the CMU that is visually unsettling. A lighter shade of gray or brown would compliment the other colors on the building and result in a color palette similar to the color palette approved at consolidated design review.*
- The stucco on the arched lintels and the columns at the pedestrian arcade shall have a smooth, steel-troweled finish. The steel troweled finish will provide a surface texture similar to the precast GFRC material (introduced at this location) approved at consolidated design review. *The Design Principles and Criteria in the General Plan (1992; p.62) state, "The basic qualities of buildings and places that are inviting and sustain attention include.... well-crafted and durable materials.*

2. Confirm the conditions of Consolidated Design Approval, specifically

- Complete construction of the the pedestrian trellis and wall recesses along the north elevation that were previously proposed for this elevation to reduce the scale of the walls and to add some form of pedestrian amenity and visual interest. The trellis should be integrated into the design of the landscaped area along the elevation (Condition No. 7 of the Consolidated design review approval granted October 28, 1998) .

3. Delegate final review and approval of the sign program to the Design Commission with the understanding that this review shall be completed at the meeting the Commission meeting on May 11.

- Affirm the Design Commission's decision to resolve the design issues outlined in the decision letter dated April 28, 1998 (See Attachment A) regarding the sign program at the May 11, 1998 Design Commission meeting.

DESIGN COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council:

- (1) Affirm the Commission's decision to deny the request for major changes to final design review approval and that the proposed project shall comply with all of the conditions of Consolidated Design Review approval granted by the Design Commission on November 6, 1996 (See Attachment A). The change of exterior materials, i.e., installing stucco in place of the concrete masonry units (CMU) and the GFRC lintels and columns, the color change of the CMU, and the introduction of a new color to the stucco are not consistent with the consolidated design review approval and therefore **not approved**. In addition, if a condition of design review approval is unacceptable to an applicant, the City's appeals procedure is available to resolve the dispute. The applicant did not appeal the conditions of consolidated design review approval within the appeal time frame. Therefore, the conditions of approval stand as approved.
- (2) Review of the sign program is continued to the May 11, 1998 Design Commission meeting to allow the applicant to submit additional information and to address the following concerns:
 - a. *The same **color neon** (light source) should be installed within the individual channel letters to achieve a consistent color of halo illumination. As proposed, the submitted drawings indicate the use of white and red neon for illumination. Installing the same color of illumination will provide a consistent visual appearance to the signs.*
 - b. *All **exposed conduit** for the exterior light fixtures used to illuminate the wall signs should be concealed from public view (Design Guidelines for Signs and Awnings). The design of the exterior lighting fixtures and their locations shall be reviewed by Design and Historic Preservation staff as an over-the-counter review.*
 - c. *The trimcaps and returns of the individual channel letters should be either the color of the plex face.*
 - d. *The "VONS FOOD & DRUG" **walls signs** located on the east and north elevations should be reduced in size so that the letters are not flush with the accent bands of the CMU. There should be a minimum of 12 inches between the letter and the accent band. The 12 inches above and below the sign will allow the sign to "visually float" within the wall area. As proposed the top and bottom edge of the VONS FOOD & DRUG signs fits flush with the CMU accent bands and appears visually crowded on the building wall. (Design Guidelines for Signs and Awnings).*

- e. *Submit drawings which clearly illustrate the location (on the trellis) and design of the **sign cabinets** for the secondary tenants. The drawings should clearly indicate the size and location of the copy (letters). In addition, the copy of the secondary tenant signs should be centered within the **sign cabinet**. The copy is shown centered on the sign cabinet on one drawing and justified on the sign cabinet on another drawing. The revised drawings shall be submitted to staff for review and approval prior to installation.*
- f. *The exterior finish (color and texture) of the **monument sign** cabinet should match the finish of the stucco on the main building.*
- g. ***Submit a scale drawing showing the locations of the proposed signs on the building.** This drawing shall be prepared for the north and east elevations.*

ANALYSIS / DISCUSSION

Changes to Consolidated Design Review

Section 17.80.050.B of the Pasadena Municipal Code states, "Prior to approval of a modification, the decision maker must make the findings required for the original approval, and the additional finding that there are changed circumstances sufficient to justify the modification of the original approval."

1. Change of exterior materials

The major change is the introduction of stucco along the east elevation of the building, in place of the CMU. Staff has been informed that VONS requested the stucco to visually soften the appearance of the store (in keeping with their corporate image) and avoiding a "warehouse" appearance. Staff finds the introduction of stucco acceptable. However, the off white color of the stucco creates a strong visual contrast against the CMU. Applying a darker color to the stucco will lessen the contrast and be consistent with visual appearance of the original approval. In addition, a sand-float finish (in place of the medium dash finish) should be applied to the stucco. Finally, a steel-troweled finish should be applied to the arched lintels and columns at the pedestrian arcade to create a finish similar to the finish of the GFRC approved at final design review.

2. Compliance with consolidated design review conditions of approval

The revised drawing of the north elevation (Orange Grove Blvd.) does not comply with Condition #7 of the Consolidated Design Review approval which states, "**Reintroduce the pedestrian trellis and wall recesses** along the north elevation that were previously proposed for this elevation to reduce the scale of the walls and to add some form of pedestrian amenity and visual interest. The trellis should be integrated into the design of the landscape area along the elevation." The Commission identified the treatment of the north elevation of the building especially important given that there are residences located to the north across Orange Grove Boulevard.

3. Design Commission review of the sign program

The Design Commission concurred with the design issues (i.e. the location of the signs, the color of neon, construction details, and the exterior finishes) identified in the the staff report. The commission continued the review of the sign program to their May 11, 1998 meeting to enable the applicant to resolve the identified issues and provide the additional information needed to complete the review.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

- *Description* - New construction of an 80,303 sq. ft. neighborhood commercial development. The development is bounded on the north by Orange Grove Boulevard, on the south by Peoria Street, on the east by Fair Oaks Avenue and on the west by the U.S. Postal Service.
- *Building Design* - Contemporary.
- *Developer* - Pasadena Commercial Development Co.
- *Architect* - Jenkins Gales/Martinez Inc.
- *Parking* - On-site,- 323 surface stalls.
- *Site Design* - The main building is located along the western portion of the site. A future restaurant (satellite building) is located at the northeast corner of the site. Parking is located between the main building and N. Fair Oaks Blvd.
- *General Plan Consistency* - The project was found to be consistent with the General Plan on April 27, 1994.
- *Environmental Status* - An environmental impact report for the Fair Oaks Avenue Redevelopment Project was certified by the Community Development Committee on July 7, 1986.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

- *Site* - Vacant.
- *General Plan Designation* - Specific Plan (within proposed Fair Oaks/ Orange Grove Specific Plan area).
- *Zoning* - CG (general commercial)
- *Design Guidelines* - The Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Master Development Plan, the Fair Oaks Avenue Redevelopment Project/ Design for Development standards, the City-wide Design Principles and Criteria and the Purposes of Design Review.
- *Surroundings* - Residential and commercial, mixed architectural styles.

BACKGROUND

On October 28, 1996 the Design Commission approved (with conditions) an application for Consolidated Design Review to construct the project. The applicant did not appeal this decision. On April 27, 1998, the Design Commission reviewed an application for a major revision to the approved design. The Commission decided that the visual success of the proposal depends upon following the previously approved conditions, specifically the use of various high quality exterior materials i.e., CMU block, precast GFRC and metal trellises. It decided that introducing stucco as a new exterior material and omitting the trellis along north elevation of the building seriously compromises the overall appearance of the building and the building's most prominent elevations. Finally, the Commission expressed concern that work (stucco preparation) on this project had proceeded without approval from the Commission.



FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact resulting from this recommended action.

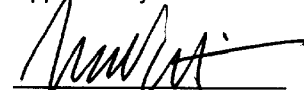
RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,


CYNTHIA J. KURTZ
Acting City Manager

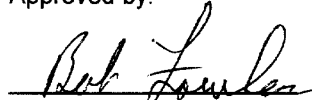
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