



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECORD OF DECISION

Meeting Date May 12, 2016

DRB Case No. PDR 1602161

Address 1100 North Brand Blvd.
 (1100-1108 North Brand Boulevard)

Applicant Aram Alajajian
 (Alajajian/Marcoosi Architects, Inc.)

PROPOSAL: To demolish the existing commercial buildings and construct a new six-story hotel project consisting of 85 hotel rooms and 85 parking spaces on a 15,500 SF lot, zoned C3 (Height District III). The project will include an on-site restaurant and hotel amenities.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Board Member	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Absent	Abstain
Charchian			X			
Benlian			X			
Malekian	X		X			
Simonian			X			
Mardian		X	X			
Totals			5			
DRB Decision		Adopt Mitigated Negative Declaration (by resolution)				

DESIGN REVIEW

Board Member	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Absent	Abstain
Charchian	X		X			
Benlian		X	X			
Malekian			X			
Simonian			X			
Mardian			X			
Totals			5			
DRB Decision		Approve with Conditions.				

CONDITIONS:

1. Revise the overall design to match Option B as presented to DRB to improve the mass and scale of the project.
2. Utilize the design for the north façade as shown in the street perspective rendering presented to DRB.
3. Submit details and cutsheet of the mesh screening for review and approval by staff prior to plan check submittal to ensure conformance with the design intent.
4. Provide a curb and sidewalk to replace the existing wide driveway on Brand Boulevard and use this area for passenger drop-off.
5. Consider passenger drop-off and/or valet spaces at grade level parking area at the east side of the project.
6. Provide decorative paving at all entries and at the driveway on Dryden Street in compliance with Code. The material and finish should be complementary to the contemporary style of the building.
7. Submit details for staff review of cladding at junctions where materials intersect.
8. Submit a lighting plan and cutsheets/details for staff review prior to plan check submittal. The lighting scheme shall be in keeping with the night rendering presented to the Board. Any façade uplighting will only be incorporated at the west and south facades, and prohibited along the easterly rear elevation facing the residential neighborhood. All lighting at the roof deck and rear parking lot shall be shielded to direct light downward.
9. Provide subtle lighting at the vertical architectural feature at the west side of the south façade to enhance its nighttime appearance, as depicted in the rendering presented to the Board.

ANALYSIS:

Site Planning: The proposed site planning is appropriate, as modified by any proposed conditions, to the site and its surroundings for the following reasons:

- The project's site plan features the hotel building located primarily on the westerly half of the corner lot adjacent to the street front property line along North Brand Boulevard, in compliance with the Commercial Design Guidelines. The building essentially spans across the width of the site, north-to-south, and is setback 44'-11" from the interior rear property line and the three-story residential apartment building to the east. A three-foot setback with fixed planter boxes buffer the building from the pedestrian sidewalk and street edge, while the at-grade parking lot at the rear is buffered from the street and interior property line by landscaping and a screening wall.
- The project provides the required number of on-site parking spaces (85 spaces; one space per hotel room). A single two-way driveway on the far east side of the project site along Dryden Street provides access to the drop-off area and surface parking at the rear, and the two levels of subterranean parking below the building. The at-grade parking behind the building features a total of 11 spaces (two of which are handicap accessible) and a loading space that complies with GMC 30.32.150. The driveway location complies with the Commercial Design Guidelines that state "on corner lots where alley access is not available, vehicular access should be from the street that is less pedestrian-oriented", and that "service and loading should be from the alley or side street during business hours". The Traffic & Transportation staff has reviewed and approved the proposed location of the driveway on Dryden Street as far from the signalized intersection as possible. No driveway is to be located on Brand Boulevard, per the Traffic Engineers.
- The main hotel entry is located facing Dryden Street and adjacent to the project's driveway. The entrance is marked by an architectural element and a Loft signage.
- Landscaping is provided within fixed planter boxes along the Brand Blvd and Dryden Street property lines, and along the perimeter around the roof deck, within the garden terrace on the 2nd floor, as well as within the easterly landscape planter that spans across the rear of the site. All landscaping is to be drought-tolerant and in compliance with the new State-mandated model water efficient landscape ordinance program.

- The Code-required 5½-foot high decorative masonry wall and landscape planter with trees at least 20 feet on center are provided along the northerly interior property line to buffer the project from the residents to the east.

Mass and Scale: The proposed mass and scale are appropriate, as modified by any proposed conditions, to the site and its surroundings for the following reasons:

- The building mass has been pulled towards the front of the site and away from the residential neighborhood to the east; an approximate 45-foot setback at the rear provides substantial separation between the proposed hotel building and the lower-scaled residential structures at the rear.
- The primary “box” rests atop the glass-enclosed ground floor that is slightly recessed from the building edge along Brand and Doran, enhancing the pedestrian experience.
- The building is approximately 77 feet to the flat parapet and 82'-5" to the top of the architectural aLoft element. The building height is below the maximum 90-foot height allowed by Code for the C3 (Height District III) zone; all neighboring properties along Brand Boulevard are permitted the same height. While this structure will be one of the taller buildings along this stretch of Brand Boulevard north of Glenoaks, the height is not inappropriate considering its corner location on one of the City’s major north-south thoroughfares; Brand Boulevard features an extremely wide right of way (130') which can visually and practically accommodate the permitted building height envelope.
- Based on additional options presented during the DRB meeting, the Board has conditioned that overall project be revised to match Option B to improve the mass and scale of the project. The revised building volume will better comply with the Commercial Design Guidelines by removing the frame element on the south and east facades, reducing the perceived mass of these locations.
- A signature architectural element for the aLoft Hotel projects at the west side of the south elevation and rises above the parapet to an overall height of 82'-5", providing a focal point to the corner of the building at the intersection. This feature increases the building’s sense of mass and actual height, though its location at the Brand corner mitigates its impact on the adjacent residential area.
- The building volume is broken up on the north elevation by a substantial light well/courtyard (21'-11" wide by 18'-8" deep). The remainder of this façade, visible from the north, is largely blank. As conditioned, this north façade will be redesigned to create greater visual interest at the areas of plain stucco to be better integrated with the design of the other facades.
- The contemporary architectural style of the project lends itself to clean, rectilinear lines. As noted above, some architectural details such as the stucco frame, the metal panel cladding, and the vertical fenestration pattern emphasizes the height and mass of the building volume. These details are conditioned to be reconsidered and redesigned to minimize the scale and expression of the elevations to be more appropriate to its neighborhood context.

Building Design and Detailing: The proposed design and detailing are appropriate, as modified by any proposed conditions, to the site and its surroundings for the following reasons:

- The hotel project is designed in a contemporary, rectilinear style that focuses on clean lines, geometric elements, and modern finishes. The main design expression on the Brand Boulevard street-facing elevations focuses on a projecting building frame element outlining the 2nd through 6th floors above, a metal mesh screen system across the 2nd through 5th floors with punched vertical bands for the windows, and a composite wood paneled 6th floor. The ground floor is a recessed, transparent glass band. The southerly, street-facing and easterly rear elevations include many of the same design elements as on the street-facing facades, while the interior, north elevation, set against the adjacent three-story commercial building, is stripped down but with a recessed lightwell well at the center; this north elevation is conditioned to have greater visual interest at the areas of plain stucco. Overall, the contemporary design and proposed materials reinforce the overall project design and are consistent throughout the project, as recommended by the Design Guidelines.

- The layering effect and a variety of materials on the elevations are encouraged by the Design Guidelines and effectively create visual interest across the facades. The changes incorporated in Option B will result in a lighter, less heavily framed composition that improves the appearance, as well as the massing, of the south and east façades.
- The proposed high quality materials and finishes reinforce the overall contemporary building design, per the intent of the Design Guidelines. Per the material/color board and notations on the plans, the proposed materials and colors include smooth finish cement plaster, composite aluminum cladding (Alucobond or equivalent), anodized aluminum frame, dual glazed vision glass doors and windows, composite aluminum coping and reveals, metal mesh screens, composite metal panels, and composite wood panels. These materials and colors are appropriate for the contemporary architectural style of the project. Conditions have been added to require decorative paving at the driveway and entryways, to have the applicant provide details for staff review of cladding at junctions where materials intersect, and to submit a lighting plan and cutsheets/details.

The Design Review Board approves the design of projects only. Approval of a project by the Design Review Board does not constitute an approval of compliance with the Zoning Code and/or Building Code requirements.

If an appeal is not filed within the 15-day appeal period of the Design Review Board decision, plans may be submitted for Building and Safety Division plan check. **Prior** to Building and Safety Division plan check submittal, Design Review Board approved plans must be stamped approved by Design Review Board staff. **Any** changes to the approved plans may constitute returning to the Design Review Board for approval. **Prior** to Building and Safety Division plan check submittal, **all** changes in substantial conformance with approved plans by the Design Review Board must be on file with the Planning Division.

Please make an appointment with the case planner for DRB stamp/sign-off prior to submitting for Building plan check.

DRB Staff Member

Vilia Zemaitaitis, AICP

