



## DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECORD OF DECISION

**Meeting Date**      May 11, 2023                      **DRB Case No.** PDR000105-2022

**Address**                      400-408 N. Maryland Ave.

**Applicant**                      Hamlet Zohrabians

**Project Summary:**

The project involves the demolition of four existing residential units and two existing garages currently on the site: two single-family homes, two garages and a duplex (built in 1919/1920). The 21,450 square-foot site is located on the east side of Lexington Drive, including the northeast corner of Maryland Avenue and Lexington Drive. The proposed residential development consists of a new four-story, 28-unit multi-family residential project totaling 34,932 square feet over a one-level, semi-subterranean parking structure containing 56 residential parking spaces. The project will provide four (4) affordable units reserved for very-low income households. The project site is located in the R-1250 (High Density Residential) zone

**Design Review:**

Board Member	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Absent	Abstain
Lockareff					X	
Kaskanian					X	
Simonian	X		X			
Tchaghayan			X			
Welch		X	X			
<b>Totals</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>		
<b>DRB Decision</b>		Approved with conditions				

**Conditions:**

1. Articulate the above ground planter walls facing the street by varying their height.
2. Identify utility connections such as backflow preventers on the site plan. If located in the front setback area, fire department connections and standpipes, not to exceed a height of twenty-four (24) inches, and to the greatest extent possible, such fire equipment shall be incorporated into landscaped areas

and located adjacent to walls, landings, stairways, driveways or other locations to minimize the visual impact.

3. That the colors and materials used for the building adhere to the color/material board palette, not the colored elevations/rendering.
4. Show the location of all proposed site lighting and light fixtures on the building, limiting their location to the main entry and patio doors.
5. Submit a window schedule consistent with the City's window handout.
6. To mitigate potential privacy issues associated with adjacent properties, address the following:
  - a. Relocate the east-facing balconies of all southeast corner units (all levels) to the south (front) side, facing Lexington Drive.
  - b. Use solid, translucent, or other appropriate railing material, not clear glass, for all balcony/patio railings proposed on the north and east sides of the building.

### **Determination of Compatibility: 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 is consistent with the rectangular shape of the lot. It is designed as one building with a somewhat "U" shape and a central courtyard.
- The proposed development strengthens and enhances the street edge and the site's prominent corner location by providing landscaped planters facing the street especially along the south and west sides.
- The proposed central courtyard is centrally located for easy access to all residents, providing a variety of seating areas complemented by landscaped planters, while maintaining appropriate privacy levels for adjacent residential units.
- Raised planters over the subterranean parking structure are distributed throughout the ground level. The planters are sized to allow for planting to grow to maturity. In-ground planting and trees are provided where possible including the common areas, and hardscape materials including concrete, and integrated seating are also design features. As conditioned by the Board to articulate the proposed planter walls facing the street by varying their heights appropriately complements the site and the building.
- The design and materials of the proposed site gates and fences/walls are compatible with the building design. An approximately six-foot high concrete block wall clad with smooth-finished stucco to match the building is featured on the property, setback five feet along the west and 20 feet along the south property line. Additionally, the wall features a metal railing on top, and entry gate are proposed immediately adjacent to the front of the building on its south side. The design and materials of the fence/wall are compatible with the building design.
- Vehicular access to the residential parking garage is via a gated two-way driveway on the southeast side along Lexington Drive, and provides access to one-level of subterranean parking containing 56 parking spaces. The driveway is designed with permeable interlocking pavers, complementing the site and the neighborhood.
- Trash room and transformer are located below grade in the parking level, effectively screened from public view.
- The proposed lighting design is appropriate, however, as conditioned by the Board, site lighting and lighting on the building should be depicted on the drawings, limiting light fixtures on the building to the main entry and patio doors, and show utility connections such as backflow preventer on the site.

### **Determination of Compatibility: Mass and Scale**

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

- The new four-story (52-foot high) structure will provide appropriate setbacks given the site's prominent corner location and its relationship to surrounding buildings. The ground floors are appropriately setback from the street front and side property lines. And the front main building is designed in a "U"-shape form with two buildings flanking a wide central courtyard, providing appropriate massing relief for the site, adjacent buildings and the neighborhood.
- The massing is broken up by recessed building forms, breaks in roof and wall planes, window patterning, and cladding material. This helps avoid long horizontal facades and minimizes a boxy outline. Through the use of different cladding materials and colors including stucco, stone, composite horizontal siding, fenestration, as well as private roof decks and balconies, holistically it gives the project additional texture and relief to the overall mass.
- As conditioned by the Board, using the colors and materials board shown on the material and color palette (e.g., siding, stone, stucco, siding, and glass treatment), will help reinforce the reading of different volumes, and articulates the building. The building's massing and articulation reflects the development pattern of the neighborhood and provides appropriate massing relief especially facing the street.
- The flat roof design, building mass and proportions are consistent with the contemporary style of the building and the neighborhood context.

### **Determination of Compatibility: 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 contemporary design of the building is compatible with the neighborhood context. The colors and materials featured on the color/materials board includes shades of dark bronze for the windows and doors, and white plaster combined with black smooth stone and brown siding for the building walls, which is appropriate to the building and complementary to the neighborhood. For this reason, the Board conditioned the project to use the colors and materials as shown on the color/materials board palette on the building.
- The building's main front entrance is well integrated into the design, featuring an appropriate focal point gated entry accessible from Lexington Drive, complementary to the site and the neighborhood. Additionally, access to the individual units on the upper levels are provided by exterior open corridors/walkways overlooking the landscape center courtyard area.
- The proposed contemporary architectural style of the project is appropriate to the site and the neighborhood. The design of the building includes an emphasis on rectangular shapes and voids, rooflines, appropriate materials and finishes, and transparent elements, which are consistently applied and complementary to the style of the building. To mitigate potential privacy concerns associated with adjacent properties, the Board conditioned the project to 1) relocate the east-facing balconies of all southeast corner units (all levels) to the front (south side) facing Lexington Drive; and 2) use solid, translucent, or other appropriate railing material (not clear glass) for all balcony/patio railings proposed on the north and east sides of the building.
- The proposed windows are appropriate to the design of the building and the neighborhood in terms of their material, operation and overall appearance. The project features recessed fiberglass windows with a brown finish and variety of operation types (casement, fixed, and sliding), appropriately complementary to the building's contemporary style. A condition is included to submit a window schedule consistent with the City's window handout.

DRB Staff Member     Milca Toledo, Senior Planner    

Notes:

Contact the case planner for an appointment for a DRB stamp prior to submittal for plan check.

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 approved for Building Division plan check. Prior to Building Division plan check submittal, Design Review Board approved plans must be stamped approved by the Design Review staff.

Any changes to the approved plans may constitute returning to the Design Review Board for approval. Prior to Building 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.