



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Preliminary Review and Comments

Meeting Date July 13, 2023

DRB Case No. PDR 2209209

Address 1303 – 1315 N. Central Ave.

Applicant Gregory Brody

Project Summary:

Preliminary design review application to demolish a 37-unit apartment complex (built in 1957) and construct a 131-unit apartment building (density bonus affordable housing project), three to six stories in height, with two parking levels (237 parking spaces) and 14 very low-income units, on an approximately 86,025 SF lot in the R-1250 (High Density Residential) Zone.

This is a PRELIMINARY review, and no decision will be made at this meeting. The Design Review Board is being asked to provide direction related to site planning, mass and scale, and design and detailing to enable further project refinement prior to submittal of the Density Bonus and Design Review applications. No environmental determination or review is required for preliminary design review. Environmental review will be completed prior to any future discretionary decision.

The project site is an approximately 86,025 SF, irregularly shaped, double-fronting lot that fronts North Central Avenue for a length of 286 feet, and Viola Avenue for 75 feet at the end of the cul-de-sac. The site gradually slopes a few feet down from north to south and east to west, with the highest point being at the northeast corner and the lowest point at the southwest corner. The site is developed with an apartment complex consisting of three two-story apartment buildings and associated parking garages, constructed in 1957.

The proposed multi-family project includes two apartment buildings ranging in height from three to six stories with two parking levels below, and a smaller two-story leasing office. Primary access is from North Central Avenue, which includes pedestrian access to the building lobby and driveway access to the two lower parking levels. The two buildings are located at the north and south sides of the property, with a large open space courtyard in the center, and a smaller open space pool area at the west side of the property. The leasing office faces North Central Avenue adjacent to the central courtyard.

The project consists of 18 one-bedroom units, 74 two-bedroom units, 38 three-bedroom units and one four-bedroom unit. Of those units, 14 are proposed as very low-income units: two one-bedroom units, eight two-bedroom units, and four three-bedroom units. Review of the

affordable units will be conducted when the Density Bonus Application is submitted. The project also includes a two-story recreation room, a gym, and a two-story leasing office. Required parking for the affordable housing project is 187 stalls, including 131 non-tandem, accessible spaces, and the project proposes 237 stalls with 160 accessible spaces and 77 tandem parking spaces, in accordance with State Density Bonus Law.

The project will be developed as one podium structure across the site with two primary building forms above, connected by a four-story pedestrian bridge. The northern-most building ranges from three to five stories with two underground parking levels. The southern-most building ranges from three to five stories with one underground parking level and another parking level that also contains dwelling units. The building forms along Central Avenue are three-stories, stepping in and up toward the west to five stories. At the southwestern area of the site (facing Viola Avenue), the building is considered to be six stories, per the Zoning Code.

Design Review:

Board Member	Present	Absent
Kaskanian	X	
Lockareff	X	
Simonian	X	
Tchaghayan	X	
Welch	X	

DRB Comments:

- As proposed, the building volume and massing are too tall and overbearing for the neighborhood context. Explore methods of reducing mass and scale in relation to surrounding properties, including the following:
 - Lower the units and utilize more of the courtyard common open space area on the ground floor for building area and provide open space within rooftop decks in order to reduce the overall height and mass of the building.
 - Increase setbacks along the the sides / northerly and southerly interior property lines and push massing toward the center of the project. Within the increased interior setbacks, add more large trees for a better buffer.
 - Maintain three-story massing around the perimeter of the building that is better scaled with the surrounding buildings.
 - Provide more variation in design detailing and materials to reduce apparent building massing and scale. Ensure design detailing and materials are carried across all project facades.

- The existing property features lush landscaping and mature trees. Provide more larger shade trees (not palm trees) and greenery to help replace existing canopy trees and add hanging plants to the sides of the building.
- The single driveway entry point on Central is a concern both in terms of traffic and accessibility during an emergency. Provide more entry points to lower parking or provide more than one driveway, such as possibly an exit-only driveway on Viola.
- The location of the proposed pool should be reconsidered and integrated elsewhere on the property. Relocate pool away from single-family homes and closer to interior of site.
- The central elevator tower, as viewed on the east, street-facing elevation, appears too tall and massive. Relocate and consider ways to soften height.
- Provide site sections/elevations showing how massing relates to surrounding properties both north to south, and east to west (and across Central Avenue).

DRB Staff Member Cassandra Pruett, Senior Planner