



**CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA  
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2023 AT 6:30 P.M.**

**CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
1424 MISSION STREET, SOUTH PASADENA, CA 91030**

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**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Brian Nichols called the Regular Design Review Board meeting to order on Thursday, November 2, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was conducted as an in-person meeting from the Council Chambers located at 1424 Mission Street, South Pasadena, California.

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:**

Brian Nichols, Chair  
Melissa Hon Tsai, Vice-Chair  
Joe Carlson, Board Member  
Samantha Hill, Board Member  
Kay Younger, Board Member

**STAFF**

**PRESENT:**

Matt Chang, Planning Manager  
Sandra Robles, Associate Planner  
Mackenzie Goldberg, Assistant Planner  
Lillian Estrada, Administrative Secretary

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Majority vote of the Board to proceed with Board business.

There were no changes requested and the Agenda was approved as submitted.

**DISCLOSURE OF SITE VISITS AND EX-PARTE CONTACTS**

Disclosure by Board of site visits and ex-parte contact for items on the agenda.

Chair Nichols, Vice-Chair Tsai, Board Member Carlson, Board Member Hill and Board Member Younger all stated that they drive by the Vons parking lot regularly but no one had spoken to anyone about the project.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**1. Public Comment – General (Non-Agenda Items)**

None.

**CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS**

- 2. Minutes from the Regular Meeting of 5/6/21**
- 3. Minutes from the Regular Meeting of 2/2/23**
- 4. Minutes from the Regular Meeting of 4/6/23**
- 5. Minutes from the Regular Meeting of 5/4/23**

The Consent Calendar items were approved as submitted.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**6. Project No. 2452-DRX:**

A request for a Design Review Permit (2452-DRX) to add a 240-square-foot, first floor addition; enclose an existing 174 square-foot, second floor balcony; and legalize three (3) retaining walls in the rear yard at 4968 Harriman Avenue (APN: 5308-029-014). In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this project qualifies for Categorical Exemption under Section 15301, Class 1 (Existing Facilities).

**Recommendation:**

Finding the project exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301 Class 1 (Existing Facilities). Approve the project, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

**Presentation:**

Vice-Chair Tsai recused herself since she owns property within 1,000 feet of the subject property.

Assistant Planner Goldberg presented the Staff Report.

There were no questions for staff.

Assistant Planner Goldberg stated that the applicant did not have a presentation but was available to answer questions.

With no questions for the applicant, Chair Nichols opened the public comment portion of the meeting.

**Public Comments:**

The neighbor on the south side of the property stated that she had concerns about the size of the windows on the balcony enclosure. She stated her concerns were privacy, noise and the character of the neighborhood.

Stephen Novotny, also a neighbor on the south side of the property, stated he echoed the previous comments about concern for privacy, noise and the character of the neighborhood.

Jake Weber, the designer of the project, stated he understood the concerns and felt the homeowners would be willing to consider that side of the facade.

With no further requests to speak, Chair Nichols closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

**Board Member Discussion:**

Chair Nichols asked if the windows on the south elevation were operable.

Assistant Planner Goldberg stated that the largest window in the middle was a fixed window but the other two were single hung.

Board Member Hill asked if the program of the enclosed space would be a patio or a prayer room.

Mr. Weber stated it was a prayer room.

Board Member Carlson stated that noise should be reduced that since the open patio and would now be enclosed.

Board Member Hill said she agreed this enclosure could reduce noise. She added that it was well-designed project and since the applicant was willing to consider the windows in the enclosure, it could be a Chair Review.

Board Member Carlson stated that from the aerial view, it looked like there were many trees between the two properties.

Board Member Hill asked if it was possible for the applicant to provide a relationship study to show the relationship between the neighboring house and the views.

Board Member Carlson added that perhaps the applicant could take photos to share with the Board of the view from the balcony.

Board Member Hill stated that there should be glazing on the front façade of the house.

**Action and Motion:**

MOTIONED BY BOARD MEMBER HILL AND SECONDED BY BOARD MEMBER CARLSON, CARRIED 4-0, to approve the project with conditions that a view study is done for the impact of the glazing views on the south neighbor's property and windows are redesigned if proven necessary, subject to the Design Review Board Chair Review process.

Vice-Chair Tsai re-joined the meeting.

- 7. PROJECT NO. 2507-DRX** – A request for a Design Review Permit (2507-DRX) to add a 416 square-foot first floor addition, a 528 square-foot attached garage and a 1,036 square-foot, second story addition to an existing 2,332 square-foot, one-story single-family dwelling at 1824 Hanscom Drive (APN: 5308-029-0014). In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this project qualifies for Categorical Exemption under Section 15301, Class 1 (Existing Facilities).

**Recommendation:**

Finding the project exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301, Class 1 (Existing Facilities). Approve the project, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

**Presentation:**

Assistant Planner Goldberg presented the staff report.

Chair Nichols asked staff if the brown material on rendering was brick and if it was the same as what is on the house currently.

Assistant Planner Goldberg stated it is brick and is same as is currently on home.

Vice-Chair Tsai asked to confirm that applicant had not maximized the front setback allowed.

Assistant Planner Goldberg confirmed that the applicant had not maximized the front setback and could push out further.

**Applicant Presentation:**

Applicant/Architect Ester Noegroho shared her presentation.

**Board Member Discussion:**

Board Member Hill stated the front façade needs additional work including the roofline, the massing, the windows, and the materials.

Vice-Chair Tsai added that the articulation of the setback needed work so it was not so flat.

Board Member Carlson added that the right side of the building was a big box.

Chair Nichols stated that the brick at the front door seemed like too small of a gesture. He added that the roof element should highlight the kitchen.

Vice-Chair Tsai suggested that the applicant balance the front windows and materials like they had done in the back of the house.

Board Member Hill stated the windows in the front needed rethinking and that she appreciated the brick detail but the execution needed work.

Vice-Chair Tsai stated the front entrance needed to be a larger gesture and suggested making the kitchen larger as well.

Board Member Hill stated that the options suggested a continuance of the project or the forming of a subcommittee to work with the applicant.

Board Member Carlson stated the applicant should rework the design and resubmit it.

**Action and Motion:**

MOTIONED BY VICE-CHAIR TSAI AND SECONDED BY BOARD MEMBER HILL, CARRIED 5-0, to continue the project to the next Design Review Board meeting with recommendations to rework the west elevation to have more balance between the materials, articulation, windows and roofline.

8. **PROJECT NO. 2584-DRX & 2585-DRX/SGN** – A request for a Design Review Permit (2584-DRX) for a façade remodel of an existing 61,086-square-foot shopping center located at 1101-1153 Fair Oaks (Assessor Parcel Numbers: 5315-004-066; 083; 084; 085). The proposed façade remodel will not include an increase of building square footage. The applicant is also requesting a Design Review Permit (2585-DRX/SGN) for a Master Sign Program at the renovated shopping center. In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this project qualifies for Categorical Exemption under Section 15301, Class 1 (Existing Facilities) and Section 15311, Class 11 (Accessory Structures).

**Recommendation:**

Finding the project exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301, Class 1 (Existing Facilities) and Section 15311, Class 11 (Accessory Structures). Approve the project, subject to the recommended

conditions of approval.

**Presentation:**

Associate Planner Robles presented the staff report.

Board Member Hill asked staff if the applicant had originally requested a larger monument sign.

Associate Planner Robles stated that the applicant originally asked for a larger sign but staff let them know it would not be in compliance.

Board Member Hill stated she worried about reducing the sign size and not being able to read it from the street. She asked if the applicant had asked for a variance or if that was not an option.

Associate Planner Robles stated the only sign that needed to be reduced per the code was the monument sign and it was only reduced by four inches. She added that the applicant was comfortable with the size.

**Applicant Presentation:**

Applicant Dr. Richard Wagner made a presentation.

Designer Greg James made a presentation.

Board Member Carlson asked if tenants in the shopping center would have the same size signs for consistency. He added that the monument sign has inconsistent sizes currently and asked if those would also be the same size.

Sign Designer Ryan Ybarra stated that tenant signs would be a similar size since they would maximize their signs to the code. He added that the individual signs making up the monument sign would all be the same size.

Chair Nichols asked the applicant why the anchor tenant's store was white but all other tenant stores were warmer colors.

Mr. James stated that they did that so that the anchor tenant's sign would pop.

Chair Nichols asked if they were doing anything with the rundown chain-link trash enclosure on Mound Avenue.

Mr. James stated they were not doing anything with the trash enclosure.

Dr. Wagner added that people from the community were dumping their trash in the trash enclosure on Mound Avenue. He stated they planned to clean up the area and then lock it. He added that Athens Services had been leaving the bins on street.

Board Member Hill stated that the sign at the US Bank was in the center of the roof but that all of the other tenants had signage below the roof. She stated this was a missed opportunity to utilize the roof area for signage.

Mr. James stated there were cost implications with moving signs and the placement was intended to break up the front façade.

Board Member Carlson stated he preferred to see the grey steel element rather than have signs cover it.

Mr. James stated that the signs were limited to a certain size.

Vice-Chair Tsai asked for clarification regarding placement of columns and stucco on the anchor tenant building.

Mr. James stated the new tenant is turning the anchor space into two unequal size spaces which explained why the columns would be shifting.

**Public Comment:**

None.

**Board Member Discussion:**

Board Member Carlson stated he believed the project was a huge improvement.

Board Member Hill stated she agreed it was a huge improvement. She added there were small items to reconsider including the metal standing seam that appeared very prominent.

Chair Nichols noted that there were many seams in the rendering and perhaps they could get seams that are spaced further apart.

Vice-Chair Tsai stated she loves standing seam and thinks because the roof slopes away, this will not stand out as much.

Chair Nichols stated the white on the anchor tenant was too stark.

Board Member Younger stated she thought the design was a big improvement but agreed with Chair Nichols that the white on the anchor tenant looked stark.

Vice-Chair Tsai stated this might not be as stark as it appears per the color material palate. The real color would be light grey.

Mr. James stated that the proposed color was warm white, which was different from what was shown in the rendering. He added that the tenant had specific requests.

Dr. Wagner stated the anchor tenant had a specific logo and signage requests.

Board Member Hill stated she would not want to deter a large tenant coming into town and could respect their brand needs.

Chair Nichols stated that the project was a great improvement and he just had two notes. He noted that the wood at the US Bank corner stops abruptly on the Fair Oaks side and the trash enclosure on Mound Avenue was an eyesore.

Vice-Chair Tsai stated she felt the wood framed the US Bank sign very well and it was part of the sign, not the building.

Chair Nichols stated he would prefer the wood extend at both ends of the shopping center by US Bank and the UPS Store.

Mr. James stated that this design request had a cost impact. He added that the signs were framed and centered over the two columns at the ends of the shopping center.

Board Member Hill stated the US Bank sign was moving to the corner. She added that moving the sign between the columns would be a more balanced move since in the drawings, the signs on the east and south elevations are almost touching.

Dr. Wagner stated that the signs on the US Bank currently were the old signs and the new sign were not as long. He added that if they extend the wood façade all the way to the window on east elevation, would make it a lot of exposed wood.

**Action and Motion:**

MOTIONED BY VICE-CHAIR TSAI AND SECONDED BY BOARD MEMBER HILL, CARRIED 5-0, to approve the façade remodel with a Chair Review with conditions to redesign the east elevation of the US Bank tenant and address the Mound Avenue trash enclosure.

MOTIONED BY BOARD MEMBER HILL AND SECONDED BY BOARD MEMBER YOUNGER, CARRIED 5-0, to approve the master sign program as submitted per the conditions of approval that were provided by staff.

<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>
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**9. Comments from City Council Liaison**

None.

**10. Comments from Board Members**

None.



**11. Comments from Subcommittees**

Board Member Hill stated that she was a member of an ad-hoc subcommittee that provided comments to a draft of the Objective Development Standards (ODS) for consultant AECOM. She added that the next step would be for AECOM would review the comments and respond.

**12. Comments from Staff**

Planning Manager Chang reiterated that staff forwarded the comments from the Ad Hoc Committee to the City consultant, AECOM, who will review the comments and provide feedback. He added that the City was waiting for the Planning Commission's comments. He thanked the Board for reviewing so many projects and specifically Chair Nichols for all the Chair Reviews he had completed.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**11. Adjourn to the regular Design Review Board meeting scheduled for December 7, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.**

There being no further matters, Chair Nichols adjourned the Design Review Board meeting at 9:04 p.m.

APPROVED,

  
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Brian Nichols, Chair – Design Review Board

3/7/24  
Date