



CITY OF GLENDALE, CA

DESIGN REVIEW STAFF REPORT – DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN PROJECT ADVISORY REVIEW BY THE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

December 12, 2024

Hearing Date

601 North Brand Boulevard

Address

Design Review Board (DRB)

Review Type

5643-002-049

APN

PDR 000628-2022

Case Number

ONNI

Applicant

Roger Kiesel, AICP

Case Planner

ONNI

Owner

Project Summary

The project site is the eastern approximately three-quarters of the block created by Sanchez Drive to the north, North Brand Boulevard to the east, West Doran Street to the south and North Central Avenue to the west and is approximately 5.4 acres. The proposal consists of the demolition of an existing 144-space surface parking lot (approximately 78,000 sf) located in the northern portion of the site and the construction of a new 858-unit, 858,000 SF (total development 7.5 FAR) multi-family development. The multi-family dwelling units will be contained in two 380-ft. high towers over a podium level. The 936 (net spaces 783) parking spaces will be located at-grade as well as within four levels of below grade parking. Most of the proposed publicly accessible open space is located within a newly created plaza formed by the proposed project and an existing on-site office building (to be maintained), fronting Brand Boulevard. Additional publicly accessible open space is proposed adjacent to the Sanchez Drive right-of-way. The project site is in the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) Gateway District.

Aside from the surface parking lot where the project is proposed, existing development will be maintained on the project site. The project site features a 14-story office tower fronting Brand Boulevard, a one-story retail building located at the intersection of Brand Boulevard and Doran Street and a five-story parking garage located in the western portion of the site fronting Doran Street.

The applicant will be requesting the following incentives and waivers:

- DSP 4.2.C – Building footplates above 200 feet high shall be reduced in area by 15%.
- DSP 4.2.M – High rise facades above 60 feet must be stepped back a minimum of 20 feet.
- DSP 4.2.4.A – Building facades over 200 feet in length must include building

- separation at the street level or at 16 feet above street level.
- DSP 4.2.4.B – Building separation must be at least 40 feet wide.
- DSP 4.2.14 – No more than 40% of balconies shall extend beyond the building façade and project a maximum of 25% of balconies full depth.

Environmental Review

Environmental review is not required for Stage I Design Review or the Design Review Board's advisory review; environmental review will be prepared and presented to City Council at the Stage II Design Review.

Existing Property/Background

The Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) designates the project site as well as the block east and west of Brand Boulevard from Glenoaks Boulevard to the north and Lexington Boulevard to the south as the Gateway District. Located at the northern portion of the Downtown Specific Plan area, the Gateway district features the most visibly noted skyline of Downtown Glendale, characterized by high-rise development featuring numerous corporate headquarters. The focus of the Gateway District is the continued promotion and location of corporate headquarters, mixed-use and residential buildings, complementary/accessory services, and retail businesses at the street level, as well as the introduction of appropriate night-time entertainment uses.

	Zoning	Existing Uses
North	DSP – Gateway District	134 Freeway and 8-story office buildings.
South	DSP – Gateway and Orange Central Districts	High-rise, mixed-use building, parking structure, drive-thru ATM, and multi-family residential building (Altana).
East	DSP – Gateway District	High-rise office buildings.
West	DSP – Gateway District	6-story multi-family building (Modera).
Project Site	DSP – Gateway District	14-story office tower, a one-story retail building, a five-story parking garage and a surface parking lot (to be demolished for the currently proposed project).

Staff Recommendation

Provide comments and recommend City Council to approve the project.

DESIGN ANALYSIS

The Design Review Board performed an initial advisory review of the project on February 22, 2024. The applicant requested the Board to perform a second advisory review to evaluate proposed revisions to the project as a result of the Board's initial comments and suggestions. Below are the Board's comments and a brief staff overview regarding how the comments were addressed.

Site Planning

- **Better integrate traffic/service/ridesharing infrastructure into the site planning of the project. Widen Sanchez Drive so traffic pattern is less impeded.**

Changes to the porte cochere, ground level automobile circulation behind the building and pedestrian access to back-of-house uses have been made to improve traffic circulation and provide better efficiency with regard to service and ridesharing. Any street improvements to Sanchez Drive will be required by the Public Works Department.

- **Consider the long-term plan for public transportation in the area.**

A bus rapid transit (BRT) line will be implemented between Pasadena and North Hollywood. The BRT's closest stops to the project will be south of it on Brand Boulevard and on Central Avenue and northwest of it at the Pacific/Glenoaks intersection. No substantive changes to the site plan of the project have been proposed as a result.

- **Lobby entries need to be celebrated and not located off the porte cochere, as presently proposed.**

Entrances to the residential lobbies have been added directly off Sanchez Drive. The Board should discuss whether other refinements, such as lighting or landscaping are warranted to further highlight the pedestrian entries to the project.

- **Publicly accessible open space:**
 - **Consider the programming of this area when refining its design.**
 - **Consider interactive spaces and public concerts.**
 - **Better integrate and coordinate the proposed trellis element into the design with other components in this area, including planters and seating. Consider a ramp up to the top of the trellis. Curved forms of the trellis could emulate the facades of the project to soften the publicly accessible open space.**
 - **Restudy the landscape plans. Increase the number of trees within this area and reduce the amount of hardscape. Ensure that landscaping at the borders of this area provides transparency and does not unduly prohibit access.**

The publicly accessible open space along Brand Boulevard is roughly the same size as the first iteration of the plans. However, the "amphitheater" in the western portion of the site has been eliminated and incorporated into the common open space for the residents (at a level above). The trellis has been moved to a more southern location in the revised design. It appears less sculptural in form and more angular. No ramp to the top of the trellis is proposed. Interactive spaces could include the trellis, along with a public art installation in the open space near the intersection of Brand and Sanchez.

Overall, the amount of paving in the publicly accessible open space has been reduced by reducing the width of the path and the size of the paved plaza. Organized tables and chairs are provided on this path leading from the street intersection to the main body of the open space but have been eliminated from the remainder of the open space. It does not appear that the revised plans increase the number of trees in this area. Landscaping adjacent to the Brand Boulevard right-of-way does not inhibit or preclude access or vision into the open space area.

- **Gateway at Brand Boulevard and Sanchez Drive intersection:**
 - **The design of the project at this corner needs to be extremely special.**
 - **Design ideas are limited by the currently proposed second level podium seating.**
 - **The corner design should use shapes and forms to distinguish it from the remainder of the project.**
 - **Consider public art in this area.**

The proposed project at the street intersection has been refined to include most notably a sculptural “jewel” at the second level seating area to provide shade. A space for public art is designated near the street intersection within the open space. The applicant has reached out to the staff liaison of the Arts and Culture Commission, the Commission that reviews public art, for further input. This art could provide the opportunity for increased pedestrian interactivity within the publicly accessible open space.

Mass and Scale

- **Towers:**
 - **Massing of the towers does not address context.**
 - **Massing is flat, monolithic, sterile and plain vanilla (particularly compared with the previous design). The design of these features needs to contain more interest and be more playful and unique, particularly the north elevation.**
 - **The towers do not need to be identical.**

While identical, the revised design of the towers are more streamlined and elegant. The curved design of the balconies is playful and unique and suggests a streamlined modern style reminiscent of important buildings in Glendale, including the Alex Theater and City Hall.

Design and Detailing

- **The project is such a big example for the City. With the proposed concessions/waivers, the overall design of the project needs to excel in other areas, such as in the use of environmental materials and the design of the publicly accessible open space and corner “Gateway” feature. Consider a bridge connecting the two towers.**

The design of the publicly accessible open space and corner gateway is moving in a direction that will make the project unique and special to Glendale. The architectural element that serves as partial cover for the second floor outdoor area at the gateway was inspired by the “jewel” in “The Jewel City”. Revisions to the designs of the towers were inspired by the streamlined public and semi-public buildings in Glendale’s downtown. Aside from the second level of the towers, a bridge connecting the two towers is not proposed.

- **The overall design and detailing of the project should be influenced by its location in Glendale. The current project design could be located anywhere.**

Inspiration for the sculptural element that serves to shade the second floor seating area at the corner of the building comes from the City's nickname – "The Jewel City." The redesign of the facades of the towers to a more streamlined appearance is informed by important early mid-century buildings in the City. There is an opportunity in the design of the public art, currently designated for an area of the open space near the street intersection, to be influenced by Glendale.

- **Consider how the proposed project integrates with other on-site buildings and revised the design accordingly.**

The location of the base and towers of the proposed residential project have not changed significantly in the revised design. The shape of the publicly accessible open space has been amended and the "amphitheater" within it has been eliminated and the location of the trellis feature has moved to just north of the existing office building.

- **Consider including 3-bedroom units into the unit mix of the project.**

Floor plans were not included in the revised submittal but 3-bedroom plans do not appear to be in the unit mix.

Conditions

1. **The applicant shall refine the design of the project at the Brand/Sanchez intersection (commercial tenant area) to better differentiate it from the remainder of the proposed development and highlight it as a prominent downtown Glendale entrance and landmark architectural feature location. This could include unique, complementary facing materials, lighting, signage or architectural elements.**

The addition of the sculptural shade element, inspired by Glendale's nickname, successfully differentiates the building corner from the remainder of the project. Creative lighting in this area would add interest and differentiation from the remainder of the project. Material differences at the ground level and creativity in terms of shapes and forms will help signify this downtown Glendale entrance at street level and further distinguish this area from the remainder of the project, which is important from a pedestrian standpoint. The public art, currently targeted for a location near the street intersection is an opportunity to re-enforce the project's location in Glendale.

2. **The applicant shall refine the designs of the lobbies/entrances to the residential towers to incorporate the features specified in the DSP and better highlight these important areas of the project.**

Entrance doors for both the tower lobbies are located directly off Sanchez Drive. Further highlighting this area through the use of materials, lighting and/or landscaping is encouraged. Additionally, the paving pattern and materials should be differentiated in front of these entries.

3. **Provide landscaping and programming for the common open space proposed on the rooftop towers.**

The common open space at the rooftop of the towers has been altered but no landscaping or programming has been provided at this juncture.

Recommendation / Draft Record of Decision

Based on the above analysis, staff recommends that the Design Review Board provide comments and recommend City Council approve the project proposal.

Attachments

1. December 12 Design Review revised plans
2. February 22, 2024 Record of Decision
3. February 22, 2024 Design Review plans