



Architectural Review Board Report

Architectural Review Board Meeting: April 6, 2015

Agenda Item: 7.3

To: Architectural Review Board
From: Steve Traeger, Principal Urban Designer
Grace Page, ARB Liaison
Subject: Bifurcated approval of the design, materials, and colors of new accessory structures pursuant to Condition No. 3 of 14ARB-358 and modifications to previously approved landscape plans and sign program for an existing office complex, The Water Garden.

Addresses: 1620 26th Street
2425 Olympic Boulevard
2450 Colorado Avenue
1601 Cloverfield Boulevard

Applicant: Renee Watkinson, CBRE

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board approve ARB application 14-358 based upon the findings and subject to the conditions contained within this report.

Executive Summary

The applicant proposes to update and modernize the property grounds and sign program for the existing office building complex, The Water Garden. As a proactive measure to decrease on-site water usage, the proposal involves reducing the large man-made lake feature. Along with the infilling of the lake, the applicant is redesigning the exterior space to improve the property's park-like setting and strengthening the connectivity to the adjacent Bergamot Expo Station. On November 17, 2014, the landscape plans and request to modify the existing sign program was approved with the condition that bifurcated, and required further Board review and action on the design, colors, and materials of the accessory pavilion and trellis structures (Condition No. 3 of 14ARB-358). The Board's November 17, 2014, decision became effective ten days after that ruling was made and is not subject to further review pursuant to SMMC §9.32.140. The applicant presented additional information and exhibits on January 5, 2015 and March 2, 2015 but the Board continued to express issues with the accessory structures' design and appearance of the Gateway Plaza. Staff feels that the applicant's revised accessory structure designs for the pavilion and trellis elements have a corresponding architectural language that appropriate and functional for the office setting. The applicant is also requesting a modification to the landscape plan and signs as a result of removing the pavilions and concentric walls that were previously proposed in the Gateway Plaza. Staff feels that the revisions have addressed the Board's comments and recommends approval of the applicant's requests.

Background

The Water Garden office complex is governed by a Development Agreement that allowed the construction of four, six-story buildings, totaling approximately 1,239,577 SF. The Development Agreement was approved by City Council on March 23, 1988 and allowed the project to be constructed in two phases. The project contains commercial office, medical office, retail space, restaurants, health club, child care facility and subterranean parking for 4,035 vehicles. The following provide a summary of the ARB actions for the project site:

ARB 14-325: The ARB granted a bifurcated approval the landscape and a modification to the sign program for the Water Garden on November 3, 2014. On January 5 and March 2, 2015, the ARB continued the bifurcated review of the accessory structures.

ARB 00-044: The ARB approved landscape and irrigation plans on March 6, 2000

ARB 89-086: The ARB approved a Sign Program modification for the Water Garden

Project / Site Information

The following table provides a brief summary of project data:

Zoning District / Design Guidelines:	C5, Special Office Commercial District
Parcel Area (SF):	Office complex comprised of 4 contiguous parcels
Parcel Dimensions:	Irregular shaped parcels
Existing On-Site Improvements (Year Built):	Four, six-story buildings Project was built in two phases between 1991-2001.
Mature Vegetation	Existing landscape plan with approximately 378 existing trees.
Historic Resource	Existing buildings are not listed.
CEQA	Exempt pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3) and 15304, Class 4 (c)
Adjacent Zoning & Use:	<p style="text-align: center;">North</p> <p>C5 – Colorado Center Offices</p> <p style="text-align: center;">South</p> <p>LMSD- Expo right-of-way and public storage facility</p> <p style="text-align: center;">East</p> <p>LMSD – Papermate and NME/Viacom offices</p> <p style="text-align: center;">West</p> <p>C5 – Ralph’s Grocery Store and The Arboretum</p>

The Water Garden office complex is surrounded by four major streets (Olympic, Colorado, Cloverfield and 26th Street). Adjacent uses include creative office complex developments, such as the Colorado Center and NME/Viacom, Ralph’s grocery store and The Arboretum development. The former Papermate factory site and the Expo light rail are located towards the south east. Pedestrian and vehicular access is provided on all street frontages.

Analysis

On November 17, 2014, the landscape plans and request to modify the existing sign program was approved with the condition that bifurcated and required further Board review and action on the design, colors and materials of the accessory pavilion and trellis structures. The Board encouraged the applicant to reconsider the scale of the structures, elaborate on the architectural relationship between the proposed accessory structures and existing office development, and provide a detailed submittal of the proposed trellis and pavilion elements. The applicant returned to the Board on January 5, 2015, and March 2, 2015 but was granted continuances to allow the applicant to explore alternate accessory structure design approaches and to provide additional information about the Gateway Plaza. Subsequent to the Board's review the applicant's design team responded by submitting the following revisions:

Pavilion Design

During the ARB's most recent review of the pavilion, board members further encouraged the applicant to re-examine the design approach and elaborate on the architectural relationship between the trellis and pavilion elements. In response, the applicant revised the pavilions to be more in character with the trellis elements on Colorado

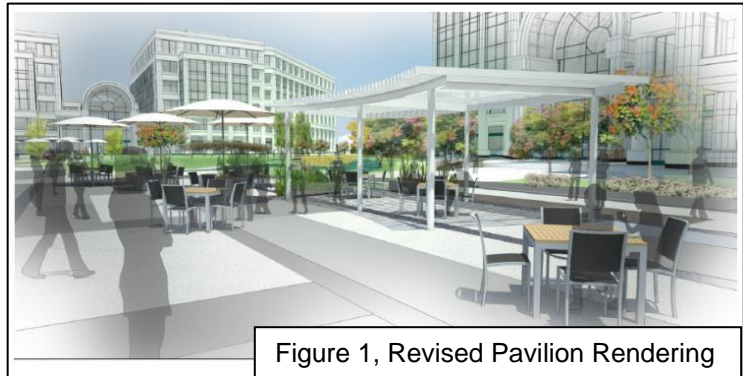


Figure 1, Revised Pavilion Rendering

Avenue by simplifying the material selection and creating an arrangement that echoes the geometry of the Central Plaza. The two pavilions are composed of architecturally exposed structural steel with a warm white finish (See Figure 1) and aesthetically correlated to the trellis structures in the motor court area of the office park.

Trellis Design

In response to the ARB's comments, the applicant revised the trellis elements to incorporate additional shading and planting opportunities to the design. The density of the overhead trellis members increased from 1 member at 4 degrees to 1 member at 1.5 degrees. The profile of the trellis members are changed from 3"x 3" to 2"x 6" for a more pronounced curve and dimension that is consistent with the with the member sizes from the pavilion structures. Two planter benches and two additional planters are added at each trellis (See Figure 2) for an enhanced automobile pick-up and drop-off experience.

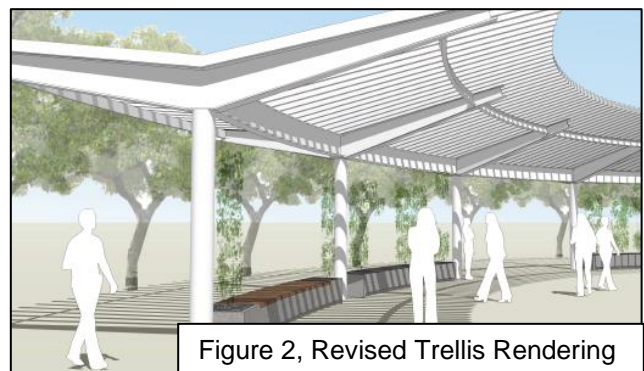


Figure 2, Revised Trellis Rendering

Gateway Plaza

The applicant has revised the plaza to create an enhanced welcoming gesture at the corner of 26th & Olympic Boulevard by eliminating the concentric walls around the water feature and softening the hardscape with additional planting area. Specifically, the trees are aligned in a gentle arc around the fountain with walkways that have a minimum of



Figure 3, Revised Gateway Plaza Rendering

14-feet of unobstructed pedestrian access around the fountain and 12-feet of clearance on the primary walking path leading to the interior of the office park. Included in the applicant's submittal is a diagram depicting the dimension of pedestrian paths into the site at the Gateway Plaza (Sheet 4) and general path of circulation throughout the site (Sheet 2).

Signage at Gateway Plaza:

The revised design eliminates the concentric walls and associated wall sign identifying the Water Garden at a major entry point. Alternatively, the applicant is requesting to modify the approved sign program and allow for two monument signs in lieu of the wall signs that were incorporated in the previous design scheme. The proposed monument signs reflect the Water Garden name and logo (font and logo TBD, work in progress) that are placed at the opening of the fountain/Gateway Plaza entry. As illustrated on Sheet 4, the monument signs are single-faced, comprised of metal cabinets with internally illuminated letters and are approximately 39 SF in sign area. Staff supports the requested revision and believes that the size and placement of the monument signs is proportional and unobtrusive to the openness of the Gateway Plaza.

Conclusion

Staff believes that the applicant's refinements result in a welcoming, open entry plaza supported by its wide walkway, planting arrangement and concentric geometry.

Additionally, the trellis and pavilion structures are much improved with a compatible aesthetic that allows for shade and seating opportunities for office employees and visitors. Staff supports the applicant's revisions and recommends approval of the application as conditioned.

Impact on Historic Resources

The subject property is not listed on the City's Historic Resources Inventory.

The project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3) in that it can be seen with certainty that the proposed project does not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment in that the project involves the review of design-related issues associated with the proposed structure(s) in terms of general architectural design, proposed materials, colors, mechanical screening and/or landscape plans. Further, the project is exempt pursuant to Section 15304, Class 4 (c) in that the project consists of filling of earth into previously excavated land with material compatible with the natural features of the site.

Code Compliance

This application has been preliminarily reviewed for compliance with the base district's development standards and governing Development Agreement which address aspects of the plan that could result in significant changes to the project's design. A complete code-compliance review will not occur until the application is submitted for plan check. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the plans comply fully with all applicable provisions of the Municipal Code. The applicant has been notified of any significant non-compliant aspects of their plans, and a condition has been added requiring full compliance with all applicable regulations prior to the issuance of a building permit. Any significant changes to the design subsequent to any ARB approval will require Board approval.

FINDINGS:

- A. The plan for the proposed accessory structures are expressive of good taste, good design, and in general contributes to the image of Santa Monica as a place of beauty, creativity and individuality in that the proposed accessory pavilions, canopies, seating areas and fire pits enhance the pedestrian environment and introduce an activated space by offering a place for gathering, shade and recreation in a large open space between the existing six-story office buildings.
- B. The proposed accessory structures are not of inferior quality such as to cause the nature of the local neighborhood or environment to materially depreciate in appearance and value in that high quality material as detailed in the application submittal and as presented to the Architectural Review Board will be used.
- C. The proposed design of the accessory structures are compatible with developments on land in the general area in that design elements of the canopy

and pavilion structures relate to the architectural language and geometry of existing office building design.

- D. The proposed development conforms to the effective guidelines and standards adopted pursuant to Chapter 9.32 – *Architectural Review Board*, and all other applicable ordinances insofar as the location and appearance of the buildings and structures are involved. Specifically, the location and appearance of the buildings and structures comply with required findings set forth in Chapter 9.32, as documented by the Architectural Review Board, and as conditioned, the plans will fully comply with all applicable regulations prior to the issuance of a building permit.

CONDITIONS:

1. This approval shall expire when the administrative or discretionary entitlements, not including any Subdivision Map approvals, previously granted for the project have lapsed. If no such entitlements have been granted, this approval shall expire eighteen (18) months from its effective date, unless appealed.
2. This sign program modification includes the plans for two monument signs in the Gateway Plaza as modified by these conditions, a copy of which shall be maintained in the files of the City Planning Division.
3. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall demonstrate that the plans comply with all applicable provisions of the Development Agreement and Zoning Ordinance. Significant changes to a project’s design shall require review and approval of the Architectural Review Board. Minor changes may be approved administratively pursuant to all applicable guidelines.

The Architectural Review Board’s approval, conditions of approval, or denial of this application may be appealed to the Planning Commission if the appeal is filed with the Zoning Administrator within ten consecutive days following the date of the Architectural Review Board’s determination in the manner provided in Chapter 9.32, Section 9.32.160.

Prepared by: Grace Page, ARB Liaison
Steve Traeger, Principal Urban Designer

Attachments

- A. Applicant’s Submittal Material
- B. Staff Reports (11/17/14, 1/5/15, 3/2/15) and Statement of Official Action (11/17/14)

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