To: Downtown Design Advisory Board (DDAB)
From: Fran Penafiel, Associate City Planner- Urban Design
Meeting: June 9, 2020
RE: Staff Report for Design Review
2175 California Street
2019PM0000616

I. Board Authority and Role of Design Review

This project is located within the D-AS-12+ Zone District and is therefore subject to Design Review for Arapahoe Square and the Denver Zoning Code in addition to the requirements of other agencies. Projects submitted shall conform to all the requirements of the Arapahoe Square Design Standards and Guidelines.

The Standards and Guidelines establishes a process for promoting the neighborhood vision by setting clear expectations for the level of design quality for improvements.

Through its’ provisions, the Design Advisory Board is directed to consider Design Review Submittals of the proposed project (per the Design Review Process chapter and checklists), to receive the staff findings, to receive the applicant presentations, to hear public comment, and to make a motion for recommendation for Approval, Approval with Conditions, or Denial to the Zoning Administrator of the project’s design review at each submittal to the Downtown Design Advisory Board.

II. Scope of the Project

The proposed project is a 9-story building (111’ 2” high) in the D-AS 12+ Zone District. It is being developed under the General Building Form. The ground floor of the project will accommodate offices, floor administration and parking. Floors 2 and 3 will accommodate a recuperative care and assisted living facility while the upper levels (4 through 9) will provide affordable housing apartments (98 units).

III. Previous Review: Site Design and Massing Review

Site Design and Massing review was completed. Design Review Submittal was required.

I move to recommend the 2175 California St, Application #2019-PM-0000616, proceed to Design Review to the Zoning Administrator and to study and address the following topics of concern:

1. Study the option of including additional pedestrian elements like canopies, awnings or plantings to enhance the pedestrian experience.
2. Study alternative fencing elements along streetscape to integrate with the architecture.
3. Streetscape to provide additional trees and/or planting areas to promote development of mature tree canopy.
IV. Design Review
Staff finds that the Design Review Submittal provided by the Applicant meets the requirements established in the Arapahoe Square Design Standards and Guidelines and addresses the areas of study noted at the Site Design and Massing Review.

V. Staff Findings

A. Staff finds that the proposed project adequately meets all required design standards that relate to Design Review (see Design Review Checklist for details). The following topics are recommended by staff for additional Board discussion with the Applicant:

- We understand the limitations that come with developing a project in a small lot while also providing such an important number of affordable housing units. The developer was able to design an interesting building through the combination of different materials and massing shifts that allow the project to differentiate and distance itself from the adjoining buildings. We believe this will be a positive contribution to the character of Arapahoe Square.

- The applicant included a new canopy at the entrance to enhance the pedestrian experience. Design review discussion at Site Design and Massing Review indicated additional features that could accentuate it as an architectural element (i.e. by making it larger, expanding its length, varying its material). Although the canopy submittal did not include some of these options, the review of the proposed design was found to be compliant. The canopy was reviewed in the context of the small building footprint (a fraction of a full block development), the affordable housing goals, and other massing setbacks that contribute to pedestrian experience already along the block.

- The applicant studied alternative fencing designs at the service access on California St to make sure it integrates with the architecture and doesn’t detract from the pedestrian access. The new gate proposed is an ornamental steel gate with some ornamental plants and paving that will make that pedestrian access more attractive.

- The applicant is now proposing additional trees and/or planters that will promote development of mature tree canopy.

VI. Submittal and Compliance Checklist
Refer to the attached checklist. Green-highlighted checked topics are areas that appear to comply or are not applicable to the project; Orange-highlighted checked topics are issues for further design discussion; Red-highlighted checked topics (if there are any) appear to not comply and require intensive board input.

VI. DDAB Project Commentary
Refer to the attached board review form for initial board comment.

VII. Staff Recommendation
For a board motion that includes:
• I move to recommend approval of 2175 California Street, Application #2019-PM-0000616, to the Zoning Administrator.