



## DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECORD OF DECISION

Meeting Date August 9, 2018 DRB Case No. PDR1809409  
 Address 1838 South Brand Blvd.  
 Applicant Missak (Mike) Balian

**PROPOSAL:** To demolish the existing industrial buildings (1838 S. Brand) and one single family residence (1845 Topock), and to construct a new five-story, 80-unit multi-family residential (rental housing) project, featuring a total of 10 affordable housing units (12.5 percent of total number of base units) and a total of 139 parking spaces (127 parking spaces for the residents and 12 parking spaces for guests), on a 27,603 SF lot, zoned SFMU (Commercial/Residential Mixed Use). The project will utilize the California affordable housing density bonus law (SB 1818).

### DESIGN REVIEW

Board Member	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Absent	Abstain
Arzoumanian		X	X			
Benlian	X		X			
Charchian			X			
Malekian					X	
Simonian					X	
<b>Totals</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>		
<b>DRB Decision</b>		Approved with Conditions				

### Conditions

1. Install additional landscape planters along the base of the building fronting Vassar Avenue.
2. Provide plans showing all ventilation ductwork and venting on the elevations for staff review and approval prior to plan check submittal. The ventilation ductwork shall terminate at the roof unless related vent hoods and/or louvers can be effectively incorporated into the design of the facades.
3. Provide drawing details of all junctions where different materials intersect, including corner details where materials turn the corners.
4. Ensure that any proposed building identification signage must be complementary to the contemporary, rectilinear style of the project (unlike the signage depicted in the perspective drawing on Sheet A-8.1).
5. Fully enclose the areas below all first-floor balconies with a material compatible with the proposed design.
6. Redesign the center portions of the Topock (east) and Vassar (north) facades to provide additional areas of curtainwall cladding similar to the treatment at the building corners along the Brand Boulevard (west) façade.

## Consideration

1. Consider introducing step backs and greater setbacks on the upper floors of the south-easterly elevation to better relate the building to the lower scale of the adjacent neighborhood across Topock Street.

## Analysis

**Site Planning:** The proposed site planning is appropriate to the site and its surroundings, as modified by any conditions, for the following reasons:

- The project site has three street frontages: Brand Boulevard to the north-west, Vassar Avenue to the north-east, and Topock Street to the south-east. The U-shaped residential building essentially spans the length and width of the 27,603 SF lot, with a central courtyard oriented towards Brand Boulevard. There are no street front setbacks or interior setbacks required in the SFMU zone.
- The driveway is appropriately located on Topock Street. A new traffic signal will be installed at the Brand and Vassar intersection by the applicant as part of the project scope.
- The garage features 139 parking spaces, in compliance with the allowable parking concession for affordable housing projects per GMC 30.36.090.
- The project substantially exceeds the 11,200 SF minimum common and private open space required by Code (140 SF per unit). The project includes a significant landscaped courtyard on the ground floor that opens to Brand Boulevard, a roof deck, indoor gym, community room, and private balconies (5,793 SF of private area and 9,167 SF of common area).
- The project exceeds the 10% minimum landscaping requirement of 2,760 SF (3,757 SF provided, not including the landscaped easement along Brand Boulevard). All landscaping is drought tolerant and complementary to the contemporary design.
- All equipment and trash areas are appropriately screened from view.
- The project features integrated downspouts, so no roof drains/gutters will be visible on the elevations.

**Mass and Scale:** The proposed mass and scale are appropriate to the site and its surroundings, as modified by any conditions, for the following reasons:

- The five-story, 66'-6" height building complies with the maximum height standard in the SFMU zone. The project fits along Brand Boulevard, where all properties have the same zoning and building envelope potential. Meanwhile, the primarily one-story neighborhood to the south-east across Topock Street is zoned R-3050 and allows a maximum height of two or three stories, depending on lot width.
- Though the new residential development is slightly larger in height and number of stories than the surrounding 4- and 5-story affordable housing projects, a variety of architectural strategies is used to express and break up the massing of the building. A U-shaped configuration with the central courtyard that faces west and opens towards Brand Boulevard helps break up the mass, while the interior elevation steps down for the roof-top patio deck. The massing of this Brand Boulevard elevation is the most successful of the four facades, while the other three elevations rely on balcony projections and recesses, as well as material changes, to help create variety across otherwise solid five-story building planes.
- A landscape setback is proposed on the ground floor fronting Topock Street to provide a bit of relief from the five-foot public right-of-way (rather narrow sidewalk from curb-face to property line); however, the building cantilevers above the first floor and extends up to the parapet. This tall building wall, the longest of the elevations and the closest to the street,

results in an imposing form on the otherwise low-scale residential neighborhood to the south-east. The Board has recommended that the applicant consider introducing step-backs or niches to the vertical massing on the south-easterly façade to better relate the project to low-scale neighborhood across Topock Street.

**Building Design and Detailing:** The proposed building design and detailing are appropriate to the site, as modified by any conditions, and its surroundings for the following reasons:

- The proposed architectural style is modern and compatible with many of the newer multi-family residential buildings located on Brand Boulevard and to the north between San Fernando Road and Vassar Avenue.
- The contemporary project consists of flat plaster planes organized into a grid system of inset and projecting balconies, windows and colored siding arranged in a geometric pattern. The ground floor or building “base” is finished in a cast stone brick veneer below the white banding that wraps around the building between the first and second floors. White banding is also used to wrap certain balconies and windows in order to add interest and variation to the pattern at the corners of the project. The building is somewhat stylistically consistent on all four elevations, recognizing that all elevations will be visible from Brand Boulevard, Vassar Avenue, Topock Street and even the interior property line. The Board has conditioned that the center portions of the Topock (east) and Vassar (north) facades be redesigned to provide additional areas of curtainwall cladding similar to the treatment at the building corners along the Brand Boulevard (west) façade.
- Materials uses on the exterior facades consist of high quality curtain wall system with dual glazed vision glass, dual glazed clear vision glass storefronts, cast stone veneer cladding, composite metal accent fascia, composite wood panels and smooth finish plaster.
- The project’s color palette focuses on beiges and tans, offset by the black anodized window and door frames, the white banding, and the dark brown composite wood panels. The muted colors are compatible with the surrounding residential projects and commercial buildings.

**The Design Review Board approves the design of projects only. Approval of a project by the Design Review Board does not constitute an approval of compliance with the Zoning Code and/or Building Code requirements.**

If an appeal is not filed within the 15-day appeal period of the Design Review Board decision, plans may be submitted for Building and Safety Division plan check. Prior to Building and Safety Division plan check submittal, Design Review Board approved plans must be stamped approved by Design Review Board staff. Any changes to the approved plans may constitute returning to the Design Review Board for approval. Prior to Building and Safety Division plan check submittal, all changes in substantial conformance with approved plans by the Design Review Board must be on file with the Planning Division.

Please make an appointment with the case planner for DRB stamp/sign-off prior to submitting for Building plan check.

DRB Staff Member Vilia Zemaitaitis, Principal Planner