



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Advisory Review and Comments

Meeting Date January 13, 2022 **DRB Case No.** PDR No. 2119308

Address 620 N. Brand Blvd. & 625 N. Maryland

Applicant Rodney Khan, Khan Consulting

Project Summary:

The proposal consists of maintaining the six-story commercial bank/office building at 620 N. Brand Boulevard, demolishing the two-level parking garage and adjacent commercial building to the rear along Maryland Avenue (625 N. Maryland Avenue), and constructing a new 294-unit, 24-story multi-family residential building on the easterly half of the 63,760 SF (1.48 acre) project site zoned DSP Gateway District.

The Project includes:

- 247 1-bedroom units and 47 2-bedroom units;
- 373 subterranean parking spaces for the residential uses and 129 above-ground, replacement parking spaces for existing commercial bank building;
- A sizeable, publicly accessible open space courtyard/plaza fronting Brand Boulevard; and
- Residential amenity spaces and decks throughout the project.

The proposed FAR is 7.25 and the building height is 266 feet (7.25 FAR and 275 feet maximum by right). The project complies with all of the development standards and no variances are proposed. The office building at 620 N. Brand was identified as a potential historic resource in the 2019 South Glendale Historic Resources Survey and is therefore considered a historic resource under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Design Review:

Board Member	Present	Absent
Minas	X	
Simonian	X	
Tchaghayan	X	
Welch	X	

Staff's Recommended Conditions – Upheld by DRB

1. Provide a unique or enhanced paving pattern on the driveways, equal to the width of the garage entry to create visual separation. Garage doors or gates shall be set back from the face of building.
2. Incorporate lighting to highlight and illuminate the project's significant loggia framework at the top of the building, not just the columns, as shown in the nighttime rendering.
3. Provide an appropriate metal mesh behind the louvers on the second and third levels so as to better screen the commercial parking.
4. Consider employing either a stacked bond pattern for the limestone cladding at the base of the east and west facades or an alternative material more in keeping with the material palette at the rest of the building.
5. Consider using gray spandrel glass in lieu of the proposed gray-colored metal panels at the curtain-wall portions of the upper floors to enhance the desired uniformity of these surfaces.

Additional Conditions Added by DRB

6. Enhance the programming and amenities of the publicly-accessible open spaces at the west side of the project, and provide more landscaped areas, to encourage use by occupants of the commercial bank building and the general public, as well as residents of the apartment building, and to soften the overall appearance of this area.
7. Revise the design of the vertical fins at the building podium to provide caps or other appropriate means of terminating these elements, with the goal of achieving a more consistent design language.

Additional Comments by the Board:

- The Board believes that City Council's three conditions from Stage I Design Review have been addressed: residential parking has been relocated below grade, detailed information has been provided for the high-quality, human-scale materials, and the design has modified to focus more on rectilinear forms and building lines as seen on the adjacent bank building.
- DRB supports the site planning, with its generous, useable, at-grade open space and substantial setback from Brand Boulevard, as well as setbacks from the two existing buildings (600 N. Brand and 620 N. Brand).
- Open Space:
 - The project has a good distribution of outdoor open space (ground level, podium deck levels, rooftop decks).
 - Because the publicly accessible open space is designed as a key entry point, consideration should be given to "soften" the plaza. However, the plaza includes a required fire lane for emergency access which can only have moveable furniture and planters.

- Comments made to reconsider to move pool from the north-east corner to the south-west corner.
- Circulation:
 - Several board members voiced concerns regarding possible impacts to traffic and questioned whether the Public Works Engineering Division required street widening (not required) and if the project has a drop-off/pick-up area for deliveries.
 - The Board suggest to explore ways to avoid potential traffic impacts on Maryland Avenue caused by delivery and rideshare services with Public Works and Planning. A recommendation was made to include a porte cochere along Maryland Avenue to address drop-offs and pick-ups while not impacting circulation, but at this time, the DSP does not permit porte cocheres along Maryland Avenue, designated a Mixed Use Residential Street.
- Pedestrian Circulation:
 - Consideration should be given to the access from the commercial parking garage levels to the existing building. Currently, commercial visitors and residents use the same bank of elevators. Explore separating the access points for users of the above-grade commercial parking levels from the residential lobby.
- Massing & Scale
 - Proposed massing and scale of the high-rise development work in this area.
 - The staggered building forms do a great job breaking up the mass, though suggestions were made to explore shifting the pool deck from the northeast to the southwest and adjust building masses accordingly.
- Design
 - Overall, the design detailing of the project is well thought-out, the modern design is fresh, and the renderings are well-done.
 - The current design appears more commercial, less residential, than the Stage I proposal, and more horizontally oriented then vertically. Board recommends to explore ways to provide upper levels of building with a more residential, rather than commercial, feel.
 - The Board relinquishes detailed historic comments to the Historic Preservation Commission, though recommended a condition to cap the fins for a more consistent design language.

Staff's Determination of Compatibility Findings from the DRB Staff Report:

Site Planning

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

- The site planning for the project is driven by the existing six-story bank building at the north-west corner of the site to be maintained and the proposed publicly accessible open space courtyard/plaza along Brand Boulevard that replaces the existing surface parking

lot; the new high-rise project is located on the easterly half of the dual-frontage, project site, adjacent to Maryland Avenue.

- The placement of the new building to the rear of the two nearby historic buildings and the wide setbacks between them allow each to be viewed in the round even though the new building will block some visual access to the older buildings from vantage points to the east.
- Pedestrian access to the building and its ground floor lobby is provided from both streets, while the vehicular access to the project's parking garage is only from Maryland Avenue; this creates a more pedestrian-oriented frontage along Brand, and relocates the project's vehicular access to the secondary frontage along Maryland that faces a three-level parking garage.
- The proposed project complies with the Brand Boulevard Streetscape Plan, as well as the mixed-use residential frontage street requirements of the DSP along Maryland Avenue by providing a 5-foot parkway, 8-foot sidewalk and 3-foot building adjacent zone.
- The project provides a 6,994 SF, landscaped, publicly accessible open space courtyard/plaza fronting Brand Boulevard, and a total of 15,844 SF of general open space at grade (exceeding the DSP requirements of 6,376 SF (10%) and 12,752 SF (20%), respectively).
- The project includes 41,625 SF of residential open space in the form of private balconies and common decks on various levels throughout the project, featuring a pool deck, dog park, outdoor seating decks of various sizes and a substantial rooftop deck to take in the view.
- Fully developed landscape plans show a variety of drought-tolerant landscaping (tree and shrub palette), decorative hardscape, a water feature and seating in the open space area fronting Brand Boulevard. A condition is recommended to incorporate decorative paving for the driveways along Maryland.

Massing and Scale:

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

- The mass of the proposed 24-story, 262.5-foot high project complies with the DSP's by-right height standard, and is consistent with the surrounding development in the Gateway District, which includes high-rises interspersed with lower scale development in three directions (north, west and south). The project, with its three-story podium base 16 feet from the curb and the additional, minimum 20-foot setback above, also helps provide an appropriate transition to the lower scale neighborhood to the west.
- The tower element is set back about 140 feet from Brand Boulevard, to the rear of the two adjacent historic buildings with the considerable setback of the new tower from their rear facades, and also more than 20 feet from the podium edge along Maryland Avenue, thereby centering the tall massing away from the street edge. This placement allows the new building to serve as a visual backdrop to the two buildings on Brand, while also

helping the older buildings retain their prominence as viewed from the street and allowing for the expression of their building volumes in relation to their new neighbor.

- The project effectively utilizes off-set building forms, step-backs, façade modulations and floorplate reductions to lessen the appearance of its mass. The end volumes also step down at their outside corners in order to break down their overall massing, similar to several taller commercial buildings just to the south on the same side of Brand Boulevard (400-550 N. Brand).
- The project has a strong sense of base, middle and top building components – podium base, repetitive residential floors, and dramatic roof trellises signaling the building’s termination, as required by the DSP, to further help reduce the scale of the tall building.

Design and Detailing

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

- The contemporary design of the 24-story, high-rise project fits within its urban context in the DSP’s Gateway District of taller, streamlined developments and is appropriately articulated for its highly visible location adjacent to the 134 Freeway.
- The ground floor is primarily clad in glass and limestone for a more transparent, pedestrian-oriented feel, as recommended by the DSP. The podium levels above features louvers screening the two levels of commercial parking; these louvers are intended to harken the fins of the existing bank building (while not mimicking them) and to screen the cars. This podium base is also punctuated by three architectural elements: a two-story high frame facing Maryland with deep blue louvers that screens the 4th floor community room and 3rd floor commercial parking; a one-story high element that wraps the pool with deep, angled metal louvers; and an unframed screen of vertically-oriented lights and wood toned louvers facing the publicly accessible courtyard/plaza on Brand. The elements and materials help to differentiate the base from the tower above and provide visual interest at a more pedestrian level.
- The pedestrian lobby entry facing Brand is highlighted by the architectural, unframed screen element of lights and wooden louvers, while the lobby entry on the opposite side fronting Maryland is identifiable by the expansive glass opening below the two-story, framed, louvered element, and Lucia Park signage.
- The middle section is divided into three defined sections – two end sections, clad by vision glass framed by blue and white metal panels, with a central volume clad entirely in vision glass and matching gray metal panels. For the two end sections, the two sizes of tripartite windows systems and varying widths of the vertical panels help provide greater articulation and a sense of movement for these larger, grid-patterned expanses that would otherwise be monolithic and rigid/fixed; a condition is recommended to ensure that the proposed design is not lost when value engineered for construction.
- The trellis/loggia architectural elements rising from the end volumes on the north and south are the signifying feature of the building’s top. The rectilinear forms play off the project’s rectilinear grid patterns below, while the openness adds a sense of lightness to the top of the high-rise building.