



# STAFF REPORT

Date: November 24, 2014

To: Chairman Cheng and Design Review Commissioners

From: Fang-zhou Zhou, Assistant Planner

Subject: **402 E. Las Tunas Dr.**  
**Planning Case PL-14-039 (Precise Plan of Design and Master Sign Program)**  
**Applicant: Kenneth Pang (Architect) on behalf of Las Tunas Medical Plaza LLC (Property Owner)**

## SUMMARY

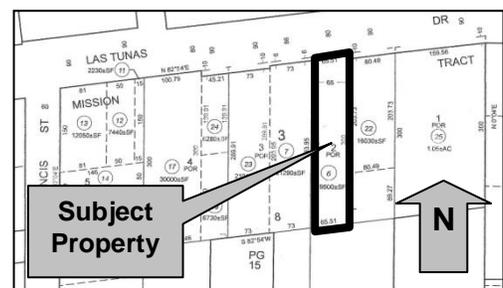
This application is for the approval of a Precise Plan of Design and Master Sign Program for a proposed two-story medical office building in the C-1 (Retail Commercial) Zone. The project will include 9,420 square feet of medical office space that will be subdivided into seven commercial condominium units.

Based on the facts and findings of the project, staff recommends that the Design Review Commission APPROVE Planning Case No. PL-14-039, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. BACKGROUND

The property at 402 E. Las Tunas Dr. is located on the south side of Las Tunas Dr. between St. Francis St. and S. California St. The property is currently vacant. The developer is proposing a new two-story, 9,420 square medical office building that will contain seven commercial condominium units and 38 parking spaces.



Vicinity Map

On November 10, 2014, the Planning Commission approved a Tentative Tract Map for the creation of the new condominium units, a Conditional Use Permit for a 20 percent reduction in the amount

of required parking, Variance for a 5' reduction in the landscape buffer width along the southeast portion of the property, and a Variance to increase the amount of compact parking spaces from 35 percent to 71.7 percent. The project also received a Minor Modification to allow for a standard parking stall length of 19' in lieu of the 20' required by the zoning code. As proposed, the project conforms to all other zoning code regulations.

**B. GENERAL INFORMATION**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>APN</b>	5367-014-006
<b>LOCATION</b>	402 E. Las Tunas Dr. is located on the south side of Las Tunas Dr. between S. California St. to the east and St. Francis St. to the west.
<b>ZONING AND LAND USE</b>	The property is located in the C-1 (Retail Commercial) zone and has a General Plan land use designation of General Commercial.
<b>SURROUNDING LAND USE</b>	The property is bordered by an office building to the east, an office building to the west, apartments to the southwest, south and southeast, and the San Gabriel Country Club to the north across Las Tunas Dr.
<b>CURRENT DEVELOPMENT</b>	The property is currently vacant.
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW</b>	An environmental analysis was conducted and found that the project is categorically exempt under Guidelines Sections 15303(c) (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures).

**II. ANALYSIS**

**A. CONTEXT AND COMPATIBILITY**

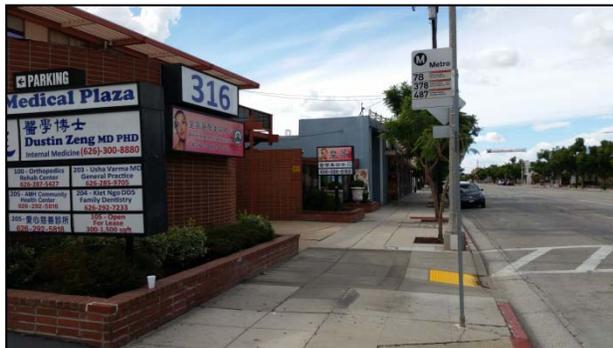
The site is currently entirely vacant and is surrounded by two-story commercial office buildings to the east and west, a multi-family residential building to the southwest, and large apartment complex to the south and southeast. The property is directly across the street from the San Gabriel Country Club to the north, which is completely walled off from the street.

The proposed two-story medical office building is consistent with the character of other existing developments along the south side of Las Tunas Dr. The proposed building will directly front the sidewalk along the south side of Las Tunas Dr., which will enhance the pedestrian experience. This is similar to the mixed-use development that was recently approved at 416 E. Las Tunas Dr. and the existing medical office building at 316 E. Las Tunas Dr., and is consistent with the City's current policies for commercial and mixed-use developments in the C-1 zone.

The southern edge of the property that adjoins the apartment building at 401 E. Live Oak St. will have a landscape buffer that ranges from 10' to 20' wide. The rear parking lot will have 5' wide landscape buffers along its east and west edges in addition to a 6' high block wall surrounding the entire parking lot. These, in addition to new trees in the landscape buffers, will provide screening from adjacent multi-

family residential structures. As noted above, these structures will eventually be replaced with commercial development as these parcels redevelop over time.

The project has been reviewed by the City Architect and City Landscape Architect, and will bring a high-quality, well-designed building that will help revitalize this stretch of Las Tunas Dr.



*Existing development in the vicinity, clockwise from top left: 404 E. Las Tunas Dr.; 330 E. Las Tunas Dr.; 316 E. Las Tunas Dr. (bus stop shown); San Gabriel Country Club*

## **B. PRECISE PLAN OF DESIGN AND MASTER SIGN PROGRAM**

This project requires the approval of a Precise Plan of Design and Master Sign Program for the overall design of the project. The City Architect also worked with the applicant and provided feedback on how to achieve a high level of design and how to comply with the City's Commercial Design Guidelines.

## **C. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STANDARDS: COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The proposed development will be an important addition to this stretch of Las Tunas Dr., and will help spur future development along this corridor. The contemporary design approach is fitting for the proposed use, and responds well to the site's context and constraints. The following design comments are based on relevant characteristics described in the City's Commercial Design Guidelines:

**Balance:** The proposed design for the medical building exhibits well proportioned and balanced building mass through individually defined but well integrated masses to complete a harmonious whole. Two ground floor masses support an elevated mass all uniquely detailed with similar motifs, materials, and other significant design features.

**Rhythm:** The rhythmic quality of the proposed design is represented by horizontal lines consistent across multiple details including the exterior plaster or stucco control joints, window mullions, and wood detailing at the ground level.

**Integrity:** Similarly articulated masses, detail components and material palette help support the integrity of the design intent.

**Detail:** Because the proposed design is a contemporary architectural style with minimal intricate details, the final execution of the project as a whole and the precision of how materials are applied and installed will support a strong character for the project.

**Substance:** Substance is achieved throughout the design by the well proportioned relationships between whole masses and voids. This is also reinforced through similar relationships between solid planes and transparent planes.

**Transition:** The transitional experience for the project is one of the most compelling design elements of the project. Because the programmatic elements of the building wrap a parking area, and each part of the building serves a different function, this allows for multiple unique and surprising transitional experiences as pedestrians move through the intersecting spaces both horizontally and vertically.

**Character:** Character is ultimately defined by a strong design intent that is consistent throughout an entire project, which this project in particular exemplifies.

**Sustainability:** The contemporary style will lend the project to more refined constructability cutting down on material waste, and will also feature state of the art materials and other design elements, such as lighting and landscaping, to meet current green building standards.

Overall, this project is promising and a good example of a contemporary architectural style. The applicant has shown a willingness to make proposed considerations to help further strengthen the design intent which will ultimately make for an exceptional addition to the urban fabric of the neighborhood.

#### **D. MASTER SIGN PROGRAM**

The proposed master sign program meets the requirements of the San Gabriel Municipal Code and the City's Commercial Design Guidelines for signage. The master sign program will allow for a building identification sign at the upper right corner of the façade, and a ground-floor tenant wall sign and directory sign on the ground level on opposite sides of the central driveway. The signage materials, fonts and design are fitting for the contemporary style of the building.

## **E. LANDSCAPING**

The project will incorporate all applicable landscaping requirements and principles adopted through Ordinance 601-C.S. (Greening the Code, pt.1), which became effective on April 4, 2014. This includes the use of permeable paving in all non-accessible parking stalls, drainage toward landscaped areas where feasible, as well as the use of drought-tolerant and native vegetation and grouping of plants into hydrozones. Landscaping-related sustainability requirements are listed in the City Landscape Architect conditions of approval.

The developer is proposing landscaping above what is required by the Municipal Code, which requires that a minimum of 6 percent of the gross lot area be landscaped (1,170 square feet). The developer is proposing 1,695 square feet of landscaping, well in excess of what is required. The Municipal Code also requires that a minimum of 8 percent of any parking lot area be landscaped. Only the portions of the surface parking that are open to the sky would count towards this requirement. The project will include landscaping on 23 percent of this parking lot area. These landscaped areas will consist of 19 new trees in addition to a combination of shrubs and ground covers.

There are two existing street trees in the public right of way directly in front of the project site. One of these trees will be removed to make way for the new driveway. The Public Works Department will require the applicant to plant replacement tree(s) in an amount, location, species and size consistent with the City's Street Tree Master Plan.

The City Landscape Architect reviewed the project and expressed the following comments:

1. Provide drip irrigation in planter areas within the parking lot areas, if not for all of the planter areas. Overspray and/or runoff onto hardscape surfaces is not permissible per AB 1881.
2. Plants that have similar water uses shall be grouped together per Section 153.536 of the San Gabriel Municipal Code.
3. Select plant materials that are compatible with potential SUSMP/bioswale/vegetated treatment for the parking lot area. Plant materials in the perimeter planters shall be conducive to the capture and treatment of storm water, and shall also be drought tolerant.

The project is also conditioned to install street trees in coordination with the Public Works Department, City Landscape Architect and the City's Street Tree Master Plan. Staff will work closely with the applicant during the construction plan check stage of the project to ensure that these items are adequately addressed. Additionally, landscape conditions are included to assure that landscaping on-site is installed as shown on the approved landscape plan and is continuously maintained throughout the life of the project.

## **F. IMPROVEMENTS FROM THIS PROJECT**

The project will provide a quality commercial development that will fill an empty gap along Las Tunas Dr. The following is a brief summary of the improvements from this project:

1. Provide pedestrian-friendly commercial frontage along Las Tunas Dr.

2. Provide streetscape improvements including pedestrian and street lighting, landscaping along the project frontage, and additional street trees.
3. Provide a building with well-executed modern design befitting its medical use.
4. Provide a unique master sign program that incorporates an artistic presentation of the building address on the façade.
5. Provide sustainable features such as permeable pavers in parking areas, drainage toward landscape buffers, and 19 new trees which will eventually provide shading for the parking lot and increase the City's tree canopy.

## **G. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The project was reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is categorically exempt under Guidelines Sections 15303(c) (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures).

## **III. FINDINGS**

**Precise Plan of Design Findings:** Section 153.355 of the San Gabriel Municipal Code requires the City of San Gabriel to find that a project's site plan, architecture and landscape design comply with the following findings in order to approve a Precise Plan of Design application:

- a) That the proposed Precise Plan of Design is consistent with the policies of the general plan, zoning ordinance, design guidelines, and other city ordinances and policies governing the quality and character of development:

*The project has been reviewed by staff for code compliance, and has been determined to be consistent with the requirements of the General Plan, Zoning Code, and Commercial Design Guidelines, resulting in a project of a quality and character befitting its location.*

- b) That the proposed Precise Plan of Design is architecturally harmonious, consistent with the scale and impact of similarly sited properties in the same neighborhood and zoning classification, and carry out the intent of the city's design guidelines. Each building shall include full architectural character on all building elevations demonstrating a quality of craftsmanship and design quality consistent with the city's guidelines:

*The project will fill a gap along Las Tunas Dr. by developing a vacant site. The proposed two-story commercial building is in keeping with the scale and of other commercial buildings in the vicinity, as well as a recently-approved mixed-use project along the same block. The project has been reviewed by the City Architect, who has determined that the architectural character of the building elevations demonstrate a quality of craftsmanship and design quality consistent with the city's guidelines.*

- c) That the proposed Precise Plan of Design provide a degree of amenity characterized by generous landscaping of the open spaces and parking lots consistent with city design guidelines; provision of pedestrian connections; provision of landscape transition zones between parcels; and preservation of native, historic, and specimen trees and vegetation on the site:

*The proposed project will provide landscaping in an amount exceeding the requirements of the zoning code and in a manner that is consistent with the City's design guidelines. The majority of landscaping will be located along the perimeter of the rear surface parking lot and will result in the planting of 19 new trees. Landscaping will also be provided along the building's sidewalk frontage to soften the building façade. Pedestrians will have direct access from the sidewalk to the ground-floor unit, with elevator and stairwell access to upper floor units via an easily accessible walkway along the proposed driveway. There are no existing native, historic or specimen trees on the site.*

That the proposed Precise Plan of Design provide proper transition between the subject parcels and adjoining properties, including proper streetscape, architectural scale, massing, proportion and harmony; landscape palette, sound and vibration control, buffering, privacy protections; public improvements, and sign controls necessary to improve the quality of the streetscape:

*The proposed project meets all applicable setback requirements and will include landscape buffers along the perimeter of the rear surface parking lot. The project will also result in the installation of new pedestrian lights, street lights and street trees in the public right of way fronting the project. The architectural scale, massing, proportion and harmony of the project have been determined to be appropriate by the City Architect, and is consistent with the City's Commercial Design Guidelines. The landscape palette will be finalized during building plan check and must be approved by the City Landscape Architect.*

- d) That the proposed Precise Plan of Design includes, to the extent possible, passive solar design opportunities, new and sustainable technologies, water-efficient landscape techniques, elimination of nonconforming signs, and other building practices consistent with the provisions of state law and city design guidelines:

*As conditioned, the project will incorporate the use of drought-tolerant, water-efficient landscaping. The project will include permeable paving for all non-ADA parking stalls that are open to the sky, and will allow surface runoff to flow into the perimeter landscape buffers. New trees along the edges of the parking lot will also provide shading. All proposed improvements will meet applicable state laws and the City's design guidelines.*

- e) That the proposed Precise Plan of Design protects the character-defining features of historic streetscapes, building exteriors, and cultural landscapes consistent with Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties:

*The project site is not located along a historic streetscape and does not include any historic buildings or cultural landscapes.*

## **V. RECOMMENDATION**

The Community Development Department recommends that the Planning Commission:

- A. Approve Planning Case No. PL-14-039, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.**

- Attachments:
1. Recommended Conditions of Approval
  2. Master Sign Program
  3. Architectural and Landscape Plans

Attachment 1

**RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

PROJECT ADDRESS: 402 E. LAS TUNAS DR.  
 PROJECT NO.: PLANNING CASE NO. PL-14-039  
 PROJECT DESCRIPTION: PRECISE PLAN OF DESIGN AND MASTER SIGN PROGRAM FOR A NEW TWO-STORY MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING

*The following conditions shall be made a part of the approval of the project, and shall be complied with in their entirety and copied on the revised sets of plans for construction plan check:*

No.	CONDITION	VERIFIED BY
<b>General Notices Required by Law</b>		
1.	<b>Right to Appeal:</b> You have the right to appeal this decision within ten (10) business days by filing a letter of appeal with the City Clerk's Office and paying the appeal fee of \$790. This appeal period expires on December 9, 2014, after which an appeal may not be filed.	
2.	<b>Conditions are Binding:</b> Once the appeal period has expired, all conditions of approval are final. No approval shall be valid until the applicant has signed the affidavit at the bottom of this document stating that (he/she) has received, read, understands and accepts the conditions of approval. All conditions are binding, and the City retains continuing jurisdiction to ensure that all requirements of an approved permit are met.	
3.	<b>You Must Use Your Permit Within 1 Year:</b> Approval of a precise plan shall be used within one year from the effective date of approval. (The effective date of the approval occurs 10 days after your application has been acted on, assuming no appeals are filed).	
4.	<b>Follow the Law:</b> The City's approval of your application does not relieve you from compliance with other Federal, State or City requirements.	
5.	<b>All Improvements Must Be Finished to Occupy:</b> No occupancy permit can be granted, nor any building permit "finaled," until all improvements required by this approval have been properly constructed, inspected, and approved.	

6.	<b>Changes Must Be Approved:</b> Any revisions to an approved application shall be resubmitted to the Community Development Department for review and approval. It is important for the property owner to understand that once a project is approved by the Design Review Commission, the drawings and Conditions of Approval become legal documents. If any changes are made to the project subsequent to the design review approval without obtaining proper approval of these changes, then the property owner is in fact violating the rules and they will be held responsible for the implementation as presented without coming back to the Design Review Commission for a request of relief or change.	
7.	<b>Construction Must Follow the Plans:</b> All construction and development shall conform to the approved plans on file in the Community Development Department.	
<b>Planning Division Conditions cont'd (please call 626-308-2806)</b>		
8.	<b>Conditions of Approval:</b> All conditions of approval for the precise plan of design shall be included on the construction plans.	
9.	<b>Check Transformer Locations:</b> Prior to the issuance of building permits, the Community Development Department shall review and approve all Southern California Edison underground utility transformer locations for compatibility with the site design. All portions of the transformers that are above ground shall be adequately screened with landscaping and/or screen walls to the satisfaction of the Community Development Department.	
10.	<b>Screen Mechanical Equipment:</b> All ground level utility/mechanical equipment shall be screened by screen walls and/or landscaping to the satisfaction of the Community Development Department.	
11.	<b>Conceal Rooftop Equipment:</b> All roof top appurtenances shall be fully screened from view to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director or designee.	
12.	<b>Obtain a Permit for Walls, Fences:</b> A fence/wall plan indicating placement, height, and materials for proposed fencing and walls shall be subject to the approval of the Community Development Department. Design and placement of the block walls shall be reviewed and approved by the Design Review Commission during the Precise Plan of Design review. No fences or walls may be built without first securing a permit from the Community Development Department.	
13.	<b>Obtain Permit for Group Mailboxes:</b> When grouped mailboxes are approved in conjunction with an apartment building, condominium, planned unit development or subdivision, the mailboxes shall be fully treated with architecture and landscape screening to the satisfaction of the Community Development Department. The U.S. Postal Service shall also approve the placement and structure of the mailboxes themselves.	
14.	<b>Supply Trash Enclosure Plan:</b> Prior to issuance of permits, applicant shall submit a design for trash enclosures approved by the City waste hauler and the Community Development Department. For information concerning minimum standards, call Athens Disposal at (626) 336-6100.	
15.	<b>Light Fixtures:</b> Design and placement of exterior light fixtures shall be reviewed and approved by the Design Review Commission.	

16.	<b>Architectural Details:</b> Architectural details of doors and garage doors, and window muntins and mullions shall be approved by the Design Review Commission.	
17.	<b>Finishes &amp; Roofing:</b> Exterior architectural finishes, colors, and roofing materials shall be approved by the Community Development Department.	
<b>Landscape Conditions (Please call, 626-308-2806)</b>		
18.	<b>Plan approval required:</b> Final landscape and irrigation plans shall be reviewed by the City's contract landscape architect prior to issuance of grading permits.	
19.	<b>Install erosion control:</b> Applicant shall install all erosion control and slope stabilization measures as necessary to prevent silt and other debris from being carried offsite and entering the storm drain system prior to grading.	
20.	<b>Newly planted trees:</b> Newly planted trees shall be supported with stakes or guy wires.	
21.	<b>Installation and completion:</b> Installation and completion shall occur in compliance with Section 153.538 of the San Gabriel Municipal Code.	
22.	<b>Maintenance:</b> A permanent maintenance program shall be implemented ensuring regular irrigation, fertilization, and weed removal. All landscaping shall be maintained in a healthy, neat and orderly condition, free of weeds and debris and with operating irrigation at all times. Landscaping and planting shall be maintained in accordance with 153.539.	
23.	<b>Inspection:</b> The City Landscape Architect, prior to final release of utilities, shall inspect landscape materials and irrigation systems. The applicant shall install the landscape as indicated on the approved landscape plans. The applicant may not receive permission to occupy the facility until the landscape and irrigation have been installed per the approved plans.	
24.	<b>Pruning:</b> The applicant shall prune all trees, including street trees with proper thinning; the City prohibits topping of street trees. Trees shall be pruned under the direct supervision of a Certified Arborist.	
25.	<b>Automatic irrigation system:</b> The applicant shall install automatic irrigation system with irrigation spray nozzle per the approved landscape plans. Irrigation specifications shall comply with Section 153.537 of the San Gabriel Municipal Code.	
26.	<b>Maintenance guarantee:</b> Prior to permit issuance, the applicant shall provide a 5-year maintenance guarantee in the amount of \$750 cash deposit per street tree. If any amount of the maintenance guarantee has not been utilized after five (5) years from the date the project is approved for occupancy, any remaining fund shall be returned to the applicant.	
27.	<b>Street trees:</b> The applicant shall provide street trees on the public right-of-way as required by the Public Works Department. The applicant shall plant all street trees in a minimum twenty-four inch (24") box size. The street trees shall be supported by two-inch (2") lodge poles on sides of the tree trunk, secured by wire ties with green rubber collars, with stakes and green color rubber ties. All street trees shall be planted in tree wells twice the diameter and as deep as the rootball.	

28.	<b>Drip irrigation:</b> At a minimum, provide drip irrigation in planter areas within the parking lot areas, if not for all the planter areas. Overspray and/or runoff onto hardscape surfaces is not permissible per AB 1881.	
29.	<b>Grouping by Water Use:</b> Plants that have similar water uses shall be grouped together per Section 153.536 of the San Gabriel Municipal Code.	
30.	<b>Plant Materials:</b> Select plant materials that are compatible with the potential SUSMP/bioswale/vegetated treatment for the parking lot area. Plant materials in the perimeter planters shall be conducive to the capture and treatment of storm water, and shall also be drought tolerant.	

## *Applicant Affidavit*

I have received, read, accept and understand the conditions of approval contained on the Standard List of Conditions for Planning Case No. PL-14-039 (Precise Plan of Design and Master Sign Program).

PROPERTY OWNER NAME (PLEASE PRINT) \_\_\_\_\_

PROPERTY OWNER SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

APPLICANT NAME (PLEASE PRINT) \_\_\_\_\_

APPLICANT SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_