



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 15-853, **Version:** 1

Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0041-ASPR, and Tentative Tract Map No. 74021, P2016-0041-TTM, for the Construction and Creation of a Five unit Condominium Subdivision at 3961 Tilden Avenue in the Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone.

Contact Person/Dept: Gabriela Silva, Associate Planner;
Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager

Phone Number: (310) 253-5736

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☒

Action Item: ☐

Attachments: ☐

Public Notification: A public notice was mailed a notice was mailed to all property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the site and extension area on May 18, 2016, emailed to the City's Master Notification List and posted on the City's website on May 20, 2016.

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (6/2/16)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt a Class 3 and Class 15 Categorical Exemption for this project pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act Section 15303 New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures and Section 15315 Minor Land Divisions.
2. Approve Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0041-ASPR, and recommend to the City Council Approval of Tentative Tract Map No. 74021, P2016-0041-TTM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2016-P005 (Attachment No. 1).

PROCEDURES

1. Chair calls on staff for a brief staff report and Planning Commission poses questions to staff as desired.
2. Chair opens the public hearing, providing the applicant the first opportunity to speak, followed by the general public.
3. Chair seeks a motion to close the public hearing after all testimony has been presented.
4. Commission discusses the matter and arrives at its decision.

BACKGROUND

Request

On March 16, 2016, an application was submitted for an Administrative Site Plan Review and Tentative Tract Map to allow the demolition of an existing triplex dwelling and detached accessory structure (garage), the subdivision of the subject site into a five (5) airspace condominium subdivision, and the construction of five (5) attached residential condominium dwelling units (i.e. one (1) dwelling unit on each of the proposed airspace lots) within the project site located at 3961 Tilden Avenue in the Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone.

Existing Conditions

The site is located on the west side of the Tilden Avenue, south of Matteson Avenue and north of Washington Place/Washington Boulevard, as outlined in the Vicinity Map (Attachment No. 2). The Land Use Element of the City's General Plan designates this site and surrounding areas as Medium Density Multiple Family Residential, which is consistent with the site's zoning designation of RMD. Properties to the north, south, east and west are also zoned RMD; the site is the fourth property north of Washington Place/Washington Boulevard, where the properties are zoned Commercial General (CG) and Tellefson Park, located nearby is zoned Open Space (OS). The parcel is rectangular in shape, generally flat in topography, and measures 7,795 square feet. The neighborhood surrounding the site to the north, east, and west consists of largely rectangular parcels, similar in size, with those to the east and west which are ten (10) to twenty (20) feet shorter in depth than the subject parcel, and developed with a mix of multiple family and single-family housing, in both single story and multi-story designs. To the west, a portion of the site abuts an existing public alley and the remaining portion abuts the existing public park property, beyond the alley are residential properties fronting Bentley Avenue.

The subject site is currently developed with a single-story, triplex and a detached garage. A significant portion of the lot is paved for on-site vehicle circulation; there is a landscaped front yard area, and a tree along the north property line. The site is currently occupied and all existing structures and site improvements are proposed to be demolished.

Project Description

The project applicant proposes to demolish all existing structures and site improvements to construct five (5) condominium dwelling units. The proposed condominium dwelling units have been designed as attached two-story structures, located above a subterranean parking garage. The proposed project has a maximum overall building height of (twenty-six) 26 feet to the top of the building roof and glass trim at the proposed parapet. The proposed stairwell projection extends above the roof to a maximum height of 31 feet - 6 inches. Each unit will have its own 2-car tandem parking area within the proposed subterranean garage. In addition, two (2) guest parking spaces are proposed, one (1) of which will be accessible, thus, a total of twelve (12) off-street parking spaces will be provided. The dwellings are arranged in a linear pattern from the front of the parcel to the rear. The building layout is such, that the four (4) rear dwelling units will be accessed from side facing entries located parallel to the southerly property line and which are designed to be recessed further from the main building wall, while the front unit is oriented towards the street and will have its entry facing Tilden Avenue. Secondary egress is provided for the four (4) rear units and will be located along the northerly side of the building/property, connecting to a small outdoor patio area. The front unit will measure approximately 1,732 square feet, the second will be 1,715 square feet, the third and fourth will be 1,851 square feet, and the

rear unit will be 1,614 square feet. Units 2 through 4 will contain three (3) bedrooms and two and one half (2 ½) bathrooms, while Unit 1 and 5 will be two (2) bedrooms and two and one half (2 ½) bathrooms. All improvements are consistent with the provisions of the Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC).

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:

The RMD Zone allows one (1) unit per 1,500 square feet of net lot area, up to a maximum of nine (9) dwelling units; therefore, based on the lot area of 7,795 square feet, a maximum of five (5) units may be allowed on the site. The RMD Zone requires minimum setbacks of ten (10) feet or half the building height, five (5) feet, and ten (10) feet or five (5) feet when adjacent to an alley, for the front, sides, and rear respectively. There is a minimum dwelling size based on the number of bedrooms that must be met, and the maximum allowable height is two (2) stories and thirty (30) feet. As shown in the Project Summary (Attachment No. 3), the proposed development conforms to all regulations of the RMD Zone.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE SITE PLAN REVIEW

Architectural Design

The structures are designed in a modern architectural style, characterized by straight lines, and angled features. The building incorporates flat roofs with parapets, as well as sloped/shed style roofs constructed with standing seam metal. The two-story structure is dressed with a smooth stucco finish on the exterior walls on all elevations, with certain wall segments and features clad in wood shiplap siding, and metal flashing/trim throughout the façade. Glass is also prominently utilized in the design, by incorporating numerous large windows on each unit, and in particular the application of floor to ceiling windows at the unit entry areas, allowing natural light into the dwelling units. In addition, a portion of the guard railings at the roof decks and balconies will be made of glass. Rooftop decks will incorporate perimeter landscaping to preserve privacy and enhance the appearance of the building.

The overall design and street view is further enhanced by the provision of a decorative fin at the entry for the front unit. The building mass is articulated and broken up by the use of variation in the building height, with the front unit being lower in height than the rear units, and also designed with a step back so as to reduce the massing as the street frontage. The building also utilizes varying building widths, widening on the second floor and as it extends further to the rear of the site. In addition, the integration of asymmetrical window shapes and wall lines, with varying materials and changes in the roof lines also helps to reduce the visual scale of the proposed building. The color palette consists of light, natural tones with dark accents, including light grey (stucco), tan (wood siding), black (metal flashing/trim), and dark grey (metal roof), providing depth and contrast throughout the building. The proposed subterranean garage is designed to be accessed from Tilden Avenue from a proposed ten (10) foot wide driveway located at the northerly edge of the property, and the entry is set back approximately forty (40) feet from the front property line, thereby minimizing the visual impact of the off-street parking facilities. Overall, the design of the proposed project is compatible with residential structures in the neighborhood and the building height and massing is consistent with the zoning standards of the RMD Zone, and intent of the ASPR required findings. Materials samples for the project will be available at the meeting.

Landscaping

As required by the CCMC, the applicant must landscape all front, side and rear yards not devoted to paved driveways, walkways or patios. The front yard, exclusive of the area necessary for vehicular access, will have approximately 75 percent landscape coverage, and will include a variation in plant materials, including trees,

and colors to soften the building façade and enhance the street view aesthetics of the site. Due to the need for walkways to access the various unit entries and secondary egress from the subterranean garage, the proposed driveway, and the provision of the required parking in a subterranean garage, there are limited opportunities for landscaping beyond the front yard. Nevertheless, site landscaping will be maximized by providing plantings at all remaining areas, including along the northwest setback area of the site, which will have landscape similar to the front yard. The southerly setback area will be used for a walkway, but will have a planting strip with screening plants (e.g. bamboo) to provide a visual buffer and increase privacy between the site and the southerly property. In addition, planters with small shrubs will be provided along the southerly façade of the building. The rooftop decks will also have planters along the northerly edges with plantings that will provide visual screening to preserve privacy on both properties. Proposed landscaping will be required to complement the building and enhance the aesthetic appearance of the development. New landscaping will also include the provision of at least one (1) street tree on Tilden Avenue, the species of which shall be in accordance with the City's Street Tree Master Plan; permanent irrigation will be required to be provided as part of the on-site irrigation. Preliminary landscape information is included in the preliminary development plans made part of this report (Attachment No. 4). Complete landscape and irrigation plans shall be submitted for review and approval by all applicable divisions/departments prior to installation and final inspection.

Open Space

The proposed development provides the required open space for each unit by means of private rooftop decks located along the northerly side of the building, and accessed from the second floor hallway area of each of the proposed units. Each rooftop deck measures approximately 300 to 500 square feet, with the front unit having the smallest area, thereby meeting the minimum requirement of one hundred (100) square feet. The rooftop open space areas are bounded by the building parapet walls and glass railings, measuring 3 feet - 6 inches to 4 feet - 6 inches in height, and are provided with landscape planters along the northerly edge, which serve to provide privacy between the open areas and surrounding properties. In addition, each unit has an additional ancillary outdoor area; for Units 2 through 4 it is located at the secondary egress point along the northerly side of the building, for Unit 1 is the front yard, and for Unit 5 it is at the rear yard area.

Neighborhood Compatibility

The proposed development is located along the 3900 block of Tilden Avenue which is a local residential street developed with single and multiple family residences. The block and surrounding streets (Matteson Avenue, Bentley Avenue, and Huron Avenue) contain one-story and two-story developments. The nearby major cross-streets of Washington Place/Washington Boulevard and Venice Boulevard, help define the neighborhood which has been transitioning to multiple-family development consistent with the higher density (Medium Density Multiple Family Residential) designation envisioned for the neighborhood in the City's General Plan Land Use Element.

Consistent with the average density for the block (4.2 dwelling units) and the RMD Zone and corresponding General Plan designation, the site permits the five (5) proposed units. The units are proposed in one (1) building, which is adequately set back to conform to zoning requirements. The building also incorporates architectural features and materials that break-up the massing and bulk of the development so as to be compatible with development in the neighborhood, and in particular with those multiple-family developments that have been constructed in the past several years. The average front setback for the block is thirteen (13) feet, while the minimum Code required setback, based on the RMD zone requirement of ten (10) feet or half the building height, is also thirteen (13) feet. Therefore, the proposed front setback of fifteen (15) feet is sensitive to the average setback condition on the block and exceeds the minimum code requirements. In addition, the fifteen (15) foot setback only applies to the single story portion of the building, which is approximately 11'-6" in height, while the two-story portion is setback 19'-2" with an additional step-back for the

taller units behind. Further, while the maximum allowed building height is thirty (30) feet, the proposed project maximum height is twenty-six (26) feet and stepping down to 24'-6" and finally to 11'-6" at the street front, to be compatible with the average block height of seventeen (17) feet. Lastly, the Zoning Code does not restrict lot coverage; however, the project proposes 58% lot coverage at the ground level and approximately 66% overall for the site, inclusive of second story cantilever and roof overhangs. The average lot coverage range for the block is 51 to 61%, with approximately 26% of the lots in the block having lot coverage between 66 and 78 percent. Thus, the proposed development aims to be consistent with the average range for the block with regard to ground floor coverage and the provision of ground level open space, while maximizing the unit floor areas consistent with the higher lot coverage of other multi-family developments in the block.

The project is sensitive to the neighborhood character, and also to the goal of preserving privacy for adjacent properties. Therefore, roof decks are required to have rooftop planters with landscape screening. Privacy is also considered in the project relative to window locations in order to minimize views into the abutting properties. Where windows/doors do overlap, the opening on the subject site is recessed from 7'-6" to 10'-0" feet from the property line and/or the adjacent opening is screened by the proposed site wall or perimeter landscaping.

Traffic, Parking, and Circulation

The existing sixty (60) foot wide public right-of-way, Tilden Avenue, has been deemed by the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department to be of adequate width to serve the site and the proposed development. The gutter, curb, sidewalk, and driveway approach along the project's frontage are required to be removed and replaced and will include the installation of a street tree and tree well as more specifically outlined in the recommended conditions of approval. In addition, repaving of the abutting segment of Tilden Avenue is required per the Engineering Division's requirements. The density of the overall development will not create any significant traffic impacts and is below the threshold requiring a traffic study or off-site improvements related to traffic.

In accordance with the Zoning Code requirements, each of the proposed units is provided with the minimum required two (2) parking spaces, for a total of ten (10) parking stalls, which will be provided in a tandem layout. In addition, the CCMC requires on-site guest parking for every four (4) the proposed development; therefore, one (1) guest parking stall is required, but two (2) are provided, for a total of twelve (12) off-street parking stalls within a proposed subterranean garage to be shared by all five (5) units. The existing driveway located along the southerly property line will be removed and a new ten (10) foot wide common driveway will be provided along the northerly edge of the site, providing vehicular access to the required off-street parking for the project. The garage is designed to provide a height clearance of 8'-6", allowing for additional space beyond the required minimum of seven (7) feet of overhead clearance. A back-up clearance of 27'-0" is provided, exceeding the minimum Code requirement of twenty-four (24) feet and allowing a sufficient turning radius and circulation area to maneuver in and out of each parking stall, and exit back onto Tilden Avenue in a forward direction. Pedestrian access from the subterranean garage to the unit entry level is provided by a stairway between Unit 1 and 2 and a secondary stairway at the rear of the building, while disabled access is provided by a lift also located between Unit 1 and 2.

Primary pedestrian access from the public street to the front unit is provided by a walkway at the center of the site, while access to the rear units is proposed via an at-grade walkway along the southerly end of the site. The unit entries are recessed beyond the main building wall and setback, providing a 10'-10" setback, which provides an additional buffer from the abutting property and also allows a person to stand at the entry without obstructing the common walkway. This walkway continues to the rear of the site, where it connects to the secondary stairs leading to the parking garage below, and is proposed to be screened from the neighboring property by a 6'-0" high masonry wall and bamboo plantings.

The proposed means of vehicle and pedestrian ingress/egress to and from the site and units provides adequate access for emergency vehicles and services. The configuration of the proposed onsite driveway and vehicle maneuvering area are designed in accordance with all applicable CCMC standards. Based on the above, the proposed project is in conformance with all applicable CCMC requirements relating to parking, circulation, and traffic.

2. TENTATIVE TRACT MAP

The State Subdivision Map Act and CCMC Chapter 15.10 regulate the subdivision of land, and require the submittal of a tentative tract map for subdivisions meeting certain criteria, including specific airspace subdivisions for condominium purposes. In addition, CCMC Section 17.210.020 - Table 2-4, Residential District Development Standards (RLD, RMD, RHD), requires a minimum lot area of 5,000 square feet or the average area of residential lots within a 500-foot radius of proposed subdivision, whichever is greater. This Zoning Code section further notes condominium, townhome, or planned development projects may be subdivided with smaller parcel sizes for ownership purposes, with the minimum lot area determined through the subdivision review process, provided that the overall development site complies with the minimum lot size requirements of the Zoning Code. A majority of the lots in the area measure approximately 6,600 to 7,800 square feet, with some outlier parcels measuring as little as 3,300 square feet and as much as 10,380 square feet. The subject site measures 7,795 square feet; therefore, the overall site complies with this requirement and there will not be changes to the current overall lot area. One of the various objectives of the tentative parcel map process is to allow the City to review the proposed condominium subdivision to ensure all necessary improvements and requirements are provided. The Public Works Department has reviewed the tentative tract map (Attachment No. 5) for proposed the condominium subdivision and found it to be in compliance with all applicable State and local regulations as more specifically outlined in the recommended conditions of approval.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

As part of the project review process, a community meeting was held on Tuesday, February 2, 2016, 7:00 pm at 11042 Washington Boulevard, Suite 217 (Tilden Terrace Community Room), during the Preliminary Project Review (PPR) phase. The applicant sent invitations on January 19, 2016 to property owners and occupants within a 500 foot radius (and extended to Matteson Avenue), inviting interested persons to learn about the development project, provide comments and feedback, as well as to share any concerns regarding the proposed project. Approximately eight (8) to ten (10) people attended, in addition to the project team and City staff. The project team presented an overview of the project and allowed for questions from attendees.

The primary topics of discussion were regarding parking, site conditions during construction and length of construction, and building design. In terms of parking, attendees wanted to be assured that the project would be fully parked and provide sufficient parking for the number of bedrooms provided per unit, as well as guest parking. In addition, attendees inquired about how the driveway ramp would be designed, as they've experienced conditions where the ramp provides a steeper slope and diminished visibility at the intersection with the walkway on the public right-of-way. The applicant summarized the proposed parking information and Code requirements, and also clarified that the slope of the proposed driveway ramp has been designed to have lesser slope at this area, in particular to allow for adequate visibility and pedestrian safety. Attendees shared their experience with existing street parking conditions and possible overflow from surrounding commercial uses, and also inquired about permit parking; City staff referred them to the City's Engineering Division for more detailed information on permit/preferential parking, and the applicant expressed willingness

to assist the community with that process if possible.

Similarly, attendees inquired about the construction timeline and site conditions during construction, including parking for construction staff. The applicant shared the projected construction timeline and indicated they would abide by all applicable City requirements and Conditions of Approval with regard to allowed construction hours, construction vehicle queuing, on-site and off-site staging, etc. In addition, the applicant stated they will work with City staff on solutions for parking prior to completion of the subterranean garage, which is where construction staff will park. One attendee expressed disapproval of the building design and questioned its compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood and intent of the General Plan. The project architect expressed they felt the neighborhood has a diverse mix of architectural styles and the proposed building design would complement and improve upon the existing character. City staff explained the building design would need to meet Zoning Code standards, as well as the required findings for the ASPR application. At the conclusion of the meeting, several attendees expressed their general support for the project.

Comments Received During Public Comment Period

As of the writing of this report, staff has received one (1) written public comment on the proposed project. The comment was submitted via email and expressed concern regarding site demolition impacts, and requests for the site to be shielded in order to prevent dust and similar debris from reaching abutting properties (Attachment 7).

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY:

The applicant has worked with Staff to design a project that is compatible with the neighborhood and the immediately surrounding properties. Specifically, the applicant followed staff direction with regard to lowering the parking further below grade to avoid a podium condition, reducing building height, and providing additional step backs. Care has been taken in the design to break up the bulk and mass of the building with varying building heights and widths and the inclusion of architectural projections and material variation to create visual relief. In addition the locations of windows and doors have been placed to ensure privacy with abutting properties. Based on the proposed preliminary development plans and recommended conditions of approval, staff considers the project to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, providing a layout, architectural design, and landscape consistent with applicable development standards and guidelines, with adequate public facilities, and consistent with the Culver City General Plan and the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Additionally, the Tentative Tract Map meets all requirements of the CCMC and the State Subdivision Map Act. Staff believes the findings for Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0041-ASPR, and Tentative Tract Map No. 74021, P2016-0041-TTM, can be made as outlined in Resolution No. 2016-P005 (Attachment No. 1).

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, initial review of the project by staff established that there are no potentially significant adverse impacts on the environment and the proposed project has been determined to be a Class 3 and Class 15 Categorical Exemption as “Construction or Conversion of Small Structures” (Section 15303) and “Minor Land Division” (Section 15315) project. Specifically, as outlined herein, the project consists of the construction of one multi-story structure containing five (5) attached residential dwelling units and the subdivision of the site into five (5) airspace condominiums, thereby establishing one (1) condominium residential unit on each airspace lot. The proposed project involves

the construction of a limited number of small structures, such as a duplex or similar residential structure, totaling no more than six (6) dwelling units within an urbanized area. The project is deemed to be consistent with the applicable General Plan and RMD zoning designation and regulations without any variances or exceptions, does not involve a parcel from a larger subdivision within the previous two (2) years, and will not result in a parcel with an average slope greater than 20 percent. In addition, the project will be adequately served by all required utilities and public services; and will have all services and access to local standards. Therefore, the project is categorically exempt pursuant to the above noted CEQA sections.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

The following alternative actions may be considered by the Planning Commission:

1. Approve the proposed project with the recommended conditions of approval if the applications are deemed to meet the required findings.
2. Approve the proposed project with additional and/or different conditions of approval if deemed necessary to meet the required findings and mitigate any new project impacts identified at the meeting.
3. Disapprove the proposed project if the applications do not meet the required findings.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution No. 2016-P005 and Exhibit A: Conditions of Approval
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Preliminary Development Plans dated May 18, 2016
5. Tentative Tract Map No. 74021
6. Community Meeting Summary
7. Comments Received