



Meeting Notes

COMMUNITY OUTREACH FOR PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT 4241 DUQUESNE AVENUE

When: Thursday, October 29, 2015

Time: 7:30 pm

Where: Veterans Memorial Complex

Room B

4117 Overland Avenue

Culver City, CA 90230

(310) 253-6650

Attendees:

Mary Fernandez	4243 Lafayette Place
Wendy Hogan	4244 Lincoln Avenue
Jinny Parkwaller	4240 Lincoln Avenue
Mr. Parkwaller	4240 Lincoln Avenue
Richard David	4161 Duquesne Avenue
Karim Sahli	4201 Lafayette Place
Nori Yukawa	4245 Duquesne Avenue
James Yukawa	4245 Duquesne Avenue
Daisy Claro	4125 Duquesne Avenue #1

City Staff:

Jose Mendivil Culver City Planning Dept.

Applicant Team:

Ric. Abramson AIA	Architect
Simon James	Applicant/Owners Rep

Presentation:

Ric. Abramson AIA introduced the proposed three (3) unit townhome development project to the attendees with printed rendered panels and a powerpoint presentation. The discussion included zoning requirements for the project, design concepts, parking, material selections, landscaping concepts, sustainability goals and specific responses to the local neighborhood context.

Attendees provided general comments related to the following:

DENSITY:

While several expressed concern about the way Culver City is changing, the consensus was that a three unit townhome project is much preferred over a code compliant four unit apartment or condominium building (or a six unit housing project requesting density bonuses and additional height for providing on site affordable housing).

MASSING OF PROJECT:

Attendees expressed appreciation that the developer was tuned into the scale of the neighborhood and also commented on the wisdom of providing separations between the individual dwelling units.

LANDSCAPING:

The Architect reviewed several of the landscaping ideas for the Project and the attendees appreciated the project team's approach to incorporating landscaping buffers at the adjacent properties and designing a landscaped garden space at the rear of the property to screen at the back for privacy.

Specific questions from community attendees included:

Q: – Are the trees along the craftsman property to the south going to remain? What will be the division between the two properties?

A: - The developer will be preserving some trees in the rear and then adding new trees to create a nice division between the two properties and ensure the craftsman does not lose too much privacy. Existing trees on the property to the south will remain as well.

Question- Will you be planting bamboo or eucalyptus? They are very harmful to the concrete paths and potentially to foundations and retaining walls. "Please do not plant either of these species?"

A:– The project team is very open to working with its immediate neighbors to find a sensible solution that species acceptable species to both parties. The developer is willing to set up a time with the project's landscape architect and the neighbors to discuss options.

Question – What is the plan with the trees and the fence at the back of the property behind the rear unit? Will you keep the existing fence? Will the existing trees remain? "We want to make sure we have privacy and something nice to look at as our back yard is very important to us."

A: – The project team does include a landscape architect (Aron Nussbaum Studio) and he has been tasked to determine what trees can remain at the rear property line. The developers are very much in favor of keeping as many trees as possible and adding replacement trees wherever one is removed. We can set up a meeting with the landscape designer to discuss specific options at the rear property line. We want to work with adjacent property owners closely to ensure the outcome is positive for them and for future residents of 4241 Duquesne as well.

SETBACKS AND OVERALL DESIGN

Question – What is the setback in the rear of the property?

A: – The project design complies with the rear setback minimum of 10 ft

Question – What is the setback on the side of the property between the Craftsman and you?

A: – The minimum required side yard setback is 5 feet but the developers and architect felt it was more important to have a sense of space between the two properties so the side yard setback was enlarged significantly and now varies between 12 to 16 feet along the driveway. At the rear unit, the side setback is 5 feet along the carport.

Question – is there any way to make it less boxy? And keep with the aesthetic of the rest of the buildings on the street?

A: – As the architect, we have actually spent a lot of time researching the neighborhood. The western side of Duquesne in particular includes an eclectic mix of styles, the majority of which happen to be modern and rectangular or what people refer to as ‘boxy’. However, instead of proposing a larger housing massing solution with underground parking, we opted for a smaller development concept, consisting of three detached town home dwellings, that would result in fewer impacts and less intensity and incorporate more sustainable design features. The craftsman bungalow next door has been designated as a cultural resource and the proposed design not only respects its heritage but reinterprets the craftsman spirit in a 21st century context. The proposed design blends old and new while also being mindful of today’s new code requirements for energy efficiency and sustainable design principles. The proposed design establishes more of a bungalow feel by introducing individual town homes separated by a 10 ft. interior setback. This development pattern actually reflects historical housing developments very familiar for decades in Culver City.

Question – What are the basis for the neighborhood design guidelines that were adopted? Are they aesthetic or more functional?

A: – The design guidelines are not aesthetic in that they prescribe specific style requirements. Rather they are more physical in that they look at quantitative factors such as buildable square footage, setbacks and height averages in order to help mitigate potential measurable qualitative impacts to adjacent properties or the neighborhood. Design guidelines are more akin to recommendations for best practices and specifically are not to be treated as additional development standards or code requirements. Guidelines acknowledge site specificity and therefore do not always apply in the same way in every case and should be looked at in specific situations where compliance with the zoning code could still result in unreasonable visual or physical impacts to adjacent properties.

Question – Are you not able to build an old bungalow on the property like some of the historic homes?

A: – Many issues factor in. First, the City's General Plan envisions Duquesne as a medium-density housing district with larger housing projects. RMD districts are very different from the city's single-family zones where single-family craftsman solutions could be considered. Second, the 20th century craftsman bungalows do not reflect today's 21st c. codes that now consider and/or require day lighting, insulation, seismic elements, increased fire ratings, energy efficiency, storm water treatment etc. that craftsman bungalows do not take into account. (It is not unlike comparing a early 20th c. Model T with a 21st c. Toyota Prius) This project is very advanced in how it takes into account and incorporates many of the most advanced ways of designing for new energy efficiencies, green building standards and sustainable design strategies.

PRIVACY & NOISE

Question – Will people be able to look into my back yard from the roof deck in the rear unit?

A: – The design includes planters along the perimeters edges of the roof deck space to setback occupants away from the perimeter and prevent people from hanging over the edge and looking into adjacent yards.

Question – will you be able to do anything to keep the noise down from the future owners in the rear unit? Can we build a wall or something?

A: – The project includes both a fence as well as dense landscaping to help with the noise. However, this is no different a situation than any one neighbor to the next. People mow lawns, listen to music, do weekend projects and play games when there is outdoor space so it is not a developers place nothing to limit any resident on any property from enjoying the outdoors.

Question – Where are the air conditioning units be? Will they be visible and an eye sore?

A: – The primary units will be inside the homes but the condensing units will be located on the north side of the roof decks. There are surrounded by an enclosure that visually hides them and buffers their sound.

CONSTRUCTION

Question – When will construction start and how long will it take?

A: – The overall construction phase will likely be around 11 to 14 months. The owners are hoping to begin construction in March or April depending on permits and city approvals.

Question – is there any way to keep the noise down? Will it be really loud for the entire construction phase?

A: – No question construction is noisy during certain portions. The demolition and excavation will be fairly quick. After the foundations have been poured and the concrete garages cast there will be a protected place where construction vehicles will park during the rest of construction. The framing is the noisiest portion of the work 4 to 6 weeks. The remaining time will be mostly interior work and should be much quieter. However, the gyp board portion does get dusty.

A: From Jose Mendivil, City Planner- “The City does restrict the hours of the day and days of the week. But with respect to noise, the more the allowable building times are restricted the longer the overall construction phase will take.”)

Question – What are the hours of construction?

A:– The site will be posted and the Contractor will have to work within the city guidelines for construction hours. Longer hours during the week and shorter on Saturday. If there is ever work happening outside of the regulated hours, there is a phone number to contact the city to complain.

Question – What about dust and dirt? Will that be an issue?

A: – The City does have erosion control measures and construction procedures to control dust and dirt. The Owner will ask the Contractor to be as respectful as possible.

GENERAL CONCLUDING REMARKS BY ATTENDEES

- Neighbors in the meeting expressed opposition to a larger four-unit condominium solution in favor of this proposed design.
- Attendees said they were very pleased that the proposal voluntarily limited itself to three dwellings and that the design was “sensitive” and “tasteful” and it would be an improvement to the neighborhood.
- They appreciated the owner’s willingness to have their design team meet with adjacent neighbors about landscaping and screening.
- Attendees said they recognized the quality of the design and liked the increased setbacks and spacing between units.
- They appreciated the project design’s thoughtfulness with respect to the environment and thanked the developer for wanting to make the neighborhood better.