

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MEETING SUMMARY 4234 SAWTELLE BOULEVARD

When: Monday, May 23, 2016 at 7:00PM

Where: Tilden Terrace Community Room
11042 Washington Boulevard
Culver City, CA 90232

Attendees:

Phyllis Batzer	4240 Sawtelle Boulevard
Vick Batzer	11625 Montana Avenue #220
Marino Solano	4230 Sawtelle Boulevard
Abraham Solano	4230 Sawtelle Boulevard
Noe Solano	4230 Sawtelle Boulevard
Donna Paul	4135 Huntley Avenue
Nik Jackson	4201 Huntley Avenue
Kam Yick	4254 Sawtelle Boulevard

City Staff:

Peter Sun	Culver City Planning Division
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Applicant Team:

Aaron Brumer	Architect
Gene Chen	Applicant/Owner Representative

INTRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION

The Applicant representative, Gene Chen, introduced himself and thanked everyone for attending. He informed the attendees that the applicant, Chen & Company, LLC, is a small, family-owned business that will take the time to work with the community and values their inputs, which will take priority over the bottom line. Applicant invited the attendees to contact him if any of their questions or comments were not addressed during the meeting.

The Architect, Aaron Brumer, introduced the proposed project by providing a PowerPoint presentation projected onto the meeting room wall and 11x17 printed handouts (which some of the attendees took with them). He walked through the floor plans beginning with the semi-subterranean garage, then the two-story living space, then the rooftop deck. He then presented the elevations and renderings, explaining that the setback area along the North wall will be left open down to the garage, there will be a walkway along the South wall that is up to 4' above grade, and the rear setback of 10' will be at grade. All three sides will be landscaped with planters and trees that provide additional privacy beyond the CMU walls that will be erected. Aaron also touched on the existing sidewalk, adjacent landscaping, and curb cut, which will all remain, but may be improved based on guidance from the City.

The neighbors from abutting properties expressed concerns over the project's density, the semi-subterranean garage, the two-story height, and the rooftop deck. Questions from the attendees were fielded leading up to, during, and following the Architect's presentation. Below is a summary of the concerns/questions raised by the attendees and the responses that were provided.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

DEVELOPMENT AND OVERALL DESIGN

Q: Why is the Applicant building 3 units and not a single family house?

A: The area is zoned for medium density residential development due to its location on a main thoroughfare and proximity to shops, offices, and transit. The proposed project will provide the opportunity for two additional families to become members of the community, contribute towards the City's economy, and benefit from the great public school system.

Q: Why is the Applicant building two stories when the abutting properties are only one story? It will obstruct some of the neighbors' sunlight and privacy.

A: All residential zones in Culver City allow residential structures to be up to two stories. The Applicant is taking measures to minimize encroachment on neighbors' privacy. This includes limiting windows directly facing neighbors' buildings, new planters and trees along the three property lines, keeping the area along the North wall open, and guardrails set 2' back from the edge of the roof. The Applicant offered to take into consideration inputs from the attendees to further improve the project's sensitivity to neighbors' privacy.

Q: Why will there be a rooftop deck? The attendees are concerned there will be rooftop parties. The current residents at the property tend to throw parties and create excessive outdoor noise.

A: It is important for residents to have outdoor living space, and the rooftop deck provides that, particularly for the front two units that will not have a backyard. Previous versions of the design included balconies as outdoor living space, but the decision was made to remove all balconies due to privacy concerns. With respect to parties, the Applicant mentioned that the design of the townhomes is intended to attract buyers that are families. Families tend to throw fewer parties and property owners (vs renters) tend to be more respectful of their property and neighbors. The excessive noise created by current residents is a separate issue, which the Applicant will work to mitigate immediately.

Q: Why will there be a semi-subterranean garage?

A: The Code requires two parking spaces per unit, which could only be provided for in a partially underground space. The proposed garage parking would be an improvement to the current parking situation, which allows cars to be parked at grade along the entire driveway (up to 5 cars) leading to the detached parking garage in the rear of the property.

Q: There is concern that the subject property has had numerous different residents over the past. Also, a condominium will diminish the value of neighboring properties.

A: The proposed project should address this issue as it is intended to attract long-term future residents that will be invested in the value of their property and the community. Based on the Applicant's research of the market and similar developments, the proposed project's design as a townhouse with an attached garage and three bedrooms, as well as the contemplated level of finish, attracts families as the prime buyer group. Additionally, such developments typically enhance the value of the community by creating demand for the neighborhood and incremental commercial activity to serve the neighborhood growth.

CONSTRUCTION

Q: How long will construction take?

A: Generally 10-14 months

Q: When will construction take place?

A: The City has specific allowable times for construction. Generally, they are during business hours and slightly shorter on Saturdays. Construction is not allowed on Sunday.

Q: Will the construction damage neighbors' property? Attendees have particular concern around the excavation for the semi-subterranean garage. Rear abutting neighbor has a pond in her backyard with fish and turtles.

A: The construction should not affect the neighbors' property. The Applicant will take care in hiring a general contractor that has strong safety procedures and a good track record. With respect to the excavation, a soil study was performed to ensure that the geology of the land is suitable for the proposed project and that the development would not compromise the integrity of surrounding soil. Following excavation/grading, a retaining wall will be put in place along the three sides to reinforce the integrity of soil in abutting properties. The excavation process will be done following all building safety codes and the utmost care will be taken to not disturb abutting neighbors' land and property.

Q: What if the construction does damage neighbors' property? Who will pay for it?

A: The general contractor will have general liability insurance that will cover incidental damage it causes to anyone or anything related to work on the proposed project. Practically, if the damage is minimal, the Applicant and/or the contractor will fix the issue directly.

Q: Can the neighbors be directly added as an insured party under the contractor's policy? There is concern over the length of the insurance claim process.

A: The Applicant is not aware of such an arrangement, but will look into it.

Q: During construction, will the abutting neighbors' utilities be affected (e.g., interruptions, water quality)?

A: There should be no disruption to neighbors' utilities. The subject property will be essentially taken off the grid and temporary power will be set up during construction. Proper disconnecting and reconnecting of utilities to the subject property will be the responsibility of the utility companies.

Q: What will happen with the Shell gas line that runs along the rear property line?

A: The Applicant is not aware of the gas line, and there is no easement granted for such in the subject property's title report. The rear 10' of the property will be left at grade. Nonetheless, the Applicant will investigate the concern raised.

PROCEDURAL AND MISCELLANEOUS

Q: What is the approval process with the City?

A: Peter Sun explained that the community meeting is an integral part of the process that provides a forum for community input. Based on comments from the community during the meeting, the Applicant will work with the City to make changes to the proposed plans in order to address the community's concerns. Subsequently, the Applicant will make a formal submittal of the revised plans and a public hearing will be scheduled for the community to provide additional comments and for the Planning Commission to determine if the project can proceed. The public will be given notice of the hearing at least two weeks in advance and the City's staff report, latest plans, and any supporting materials will be made available distributed online prior to the hearing.

Q: How long does the approval process take?

A: Peter Sun informed the attendees that he has seen it take anywhere from 6-18 months. The entitlement timing is dependent upon the complexity of the project and the concerns raised by the community.

Q: Who are the principles of the Applicant?

A: Gene Chen and his father, who resides overseas

Q: Does the Applicant have other projects that the community can review?

A: Currently, the proposed project is the only one that is far enough along for public review. The Applicant has been developing overseas (Taiwan) for the past 30+ years and offered to present those projects for community review.

Q: When does the Applicant anticipate start of construction?

A: The timing is largely dependent upon the process with the City and ability to address community concerns raised during the meeting. As a ballpark, Applicant is targeting the end of 2016.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The attendees were provided with the contact information for the Applicant, Architect, and City Planner. The meeting concluded at approximately 8PM. Following the end of the meeting, the Applicant spoke to several of the abutting neighbors who voiced concerns and mentioned he will set up follow-up meetings to address their issues.

COMMUNITY MEETING #2 SUMMARY

4234 SAWTELLE BOULEVARD

Date/Time: Thursday, November 17, 2016 at 7:00PM

Location: Tilden Terrace Community Room
11042 Washington Boulevard
Culver City, CA 90232

Attendees:

Marino Solano	4230 Sawtelle Boulevard
Lucila Solano	4230 Sawtelle Boulevard
Abraham Solano	4230 Sawtelle Boulevard
Noe Solano	4230 Sawtelle Boulevard
Julissa Chavez	4230 Sawtelle Boulevard
Donna Paul	4135 Huntley Avenue
Vicki Batzer	11625 Montana Avenue #220

City Staff:

Peter Sun Culver City Planning Division

Applicant Team:

Aaron Brumer	Architect
Gene Chen	Applicant/Owner Representative

MEETING SUMMARY

The meeting commenced at approximately 7:05PM. Peter Sun kicked off by welcoming everyone and providing context for the meeting. He explained where things stand for the project and the next steps in the planning process. A number of questions/comments were addressed (details below in Q&A section) prior to turning over to the applicant team.

The Architect, Aaron Brumer, presented the updated proposed plans through a PowerPoint presentation projected onto the meeting room wall and 11x17 printed handouts, which the attendees took with them. He focused on the improvements made since the prior community meeting (May 23, 2016), having taken into account the attendees' comments as well as input from Culver City Planning Division. He mentioned that there were two key elements to the revisions:

- 1) Removal of the rooftop deck given concerns over privacy
- 2) Revision of overall design to enhance neighborhood compatibility
 - Reoriented front unit so that its entrance faces the street
 - Softened design with roof lines, muted colors (mostly white) and enhanced landscaping
 - Increased front and side setbacks

Aaron discussed the window adjacency analysis and how it was utilized to determine the placement of proposed windows to avoid direct line-of-sight with that of adjacent neighbors. He then talked through the updated floor plans, elevations, new balconies (in lieu of rooftop deck) and updated landscaping.

Following the presentation, Peter and the applicant team opened the floor to additional questions and comments (details below). The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:50PM. Below are details of the questions and comments raised by the attendees and the responses that were provided.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Planning Commission hearing – when and where will it be? What is the format? Will the community be able to provide input?

A: The hearing date has not been set and will depend on several factors, including feedback at the community meeting. The soonest it will occur is in January 2017, and the community will be notified of it in advance. The hearing will take place in Culver City City Hall Council Chambers. The Planning Commission consists of 5 members. During the hearing, the Commission will hear brief presentations by the Planning Staff and applicant team, followed by comments from the community (in person following submittal of comment card or in writing). They will then deliberate and render a decision on whether or not to approve the project. An approval may be contingent upon certain conditions the Applicant must abide by.

Q: Will there still be underground parking? Has Culver City approved the underground parking?

A: Yes, there will be a semi-subterranean parking garage. Underground parking is permitted in Culver City given proper site/soil investigation and adherence to applicable Building Safety and other regulations.

Q: How many parking spaces will the project have? Will there be guest parking? There are not enough parking spaces on the street. Can the City make the west-most lane on Sawtelle Blvd permanent street parking (currently, street parking allowed only during certain hours of the day)?

A: The project will have 6 parking spaces, 2 per unit. There will be no guest parking spaces. Street parking rules are managed by the Department of Public Works. The Applicant will make an inquiry with Public Works regarding potentially changing the rules on the 4200 block of Sawtelle Blvd and follow up with the attendees.

Q: Is there one driveway going in and out of the garage?

A: Yes, one driveway. Having one driveway avoids additional curb cuts that will take away from street parking.

Q: Are there entrances on the side of the project? Are there stairs in the rear? Are there stairs coming up from garage?

A: There will be 2 entrances along the south side of the project, reduced from 3 in the previous plans. No stairs in the rear. To reach their units from the parking level, residents will primarily use the stairs located within the garages of each unit. The Applicant intentionally designed the entries in this manner to enhance privacy for future residents and minimize foot traffic around the property (privacy for neighboring residents).

Q: Why were balconies added to the project? Why are they where they are? The balconies in the rear unit will look into adjacent neighbors' backyard and encroach on their privacy. Can they be on the 1st floor?

A: The City's zoning code requires a certain amount of private outdoor space for each residential unit. With the removal of the rooftop deck, the Applicant needed to incorporate outdoor living space for each unit. The balcony layout and location were chosen with the adjacent neighbors' well-being in mind. The front unit's balcony faces the street. For the back units, the required outdoor space was divided into 2 smaller balconies that extend from bedrooms (rather than 1 large balcony that extend from the living room/kitchen, which tend to create more noise), and placed towards the rear to minimize overlooking into adjacent houses/windows. Based on the feedback, backyard privacy appeared to be of greater concern to the attendees. Therefore, the Applicant agreed to revise the balconies and follow up with updated plans via email.

Q: The project is not suitable for Sawtelle Blvd. There has not been any new development on the street for over 30 years. There is already too much traffic.

A: The City's zoning code permits multifamily residences on the street, and nearly half of the properties on the street have multiple units. The Applicant is appreciative of the street's character and has made multiple design iterations to enhance compatibility with surrounding properties. The project meets all requirements per the zoning code, and in various areas, exceeds what's required for the sake of compatibility and design quality.

Q: Does the input from the community get taken into consideration?

A: Yes, and as an example, the updated plans being presented reflect some of the community's comments from the prior meeting. The community meeting is one of the forums for the neighbors to provide input, and everything discussed is being written down and submitted to the City. Another forum will be at the Planning Commission hearing. Community members may also provide input to the Planning Division at any time in person or in writing.

Q: How long will construction take? Can it be shorter than 12 months?

A: Approximately 1 year. The Applicant will push to complete construction as quickly as possible, as it would be in the best interest of all parties.

Q: Will construction exacerbate the traffic congestion on Sawtelle? Where will the construction crew park?

A: Construction will likely not impact traffic on the street. During the initial phases, street parking in front of the project may be temporarily blocked off for construction vehicles/equipment. Once the semi-subterranean garage is finished, all construction vehicles will park on the project site to the extent feasible.

Q: What if construction damages neighbors' property? Will the neighbors then have to sue?

A: The Applicant will hire a reputable general contractor with a strong track record to reduce, and hopefully avoid, any accidents. In the event there is damage to adjacent properties, a claim can be filed with the contractor's general liability insurance. The Applicant will also maintain an insurance policy.

Q: The attendees have received letters from Shell regarding an underground pipeline in the area. There are signs placed by Shell along the street – were they in response to the project?

A: After this issue was raised at the previous community meeting, the Applicant contacted a representative with Shell Pipeline Company, Brent, who is in charge of maintaining the company's oil pipelines in the area. The Applicant was informed that the pipeline is located ~15 feet from the sidewalk, towards the middle of the street and that there should be no issues posed by the excavation related to the project. The project's contractor will reconfirm with all underground utilities and pipelines prior to digging. The signs were posted to provide markers for Shell's pipeline location and not related to the project.

Q: What will separate the project with adjacent properties after it's built? How tall will the wall be?

A: There will be a block wall erected along the 3 contiguous sides that will be 6 feet tall from grade.

Q: Where will the A/C units be placed? Can they be placed in the garage? The current A/C unit is extremely noisy.

A: The A/C units will be placed on the roof towards the center of each unit. As such, the A/C will be as far as possible from the adjacent properties, as compared to placing them on the ground. They cannot be installed in the garage due to lack of ventilation. The A/C units will be new and quieter than the current system, which is ~50 years old. They will sit on top of a dampening pad to further reduce noise.

Q: Will the construction affect sewage line of adjacent properties?

A: No, each property has its own sewage line that will flow out to the street/main sewage line.