



# City of Culver City

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## Staff Report

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**File #:** 21-13, **Version:** 1

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**PC - Consideration of an Administrative Site Plan Review (P2020-0077-ASPR) and Tentative Tract Map No. 83093 (P2020-0077-TTM) for the Construction of a Six (6) Unit Condominium Subdivision located at 3808 College Avenue.**

**Meeting Date:** July 22, 2020

**Contact Person/Dept:** Michael Allen, Current Planning Manager;  
Gabriela Silva, Associate Planner

**Phone Number:** (310) 253-5736 / (310) 253-5727

**Fiscal Impact:** Yes ☐ No ☒

**General Fund:** Yes ☐ No ☒

**Public Hearing:** ☒

**Action Item:** ☐

**Attachments:** ☒

**City Council Action Required:** Yes ☒ No ☐

**Date:** N/A

**Public Notification:** (Mailed) Property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius and extended (07/01/2020); (Email) Master Notification List (07/02/2020), Meetings and Agendas - Planning Commission (07/16/2020); (Posted) City website (07/02/2020), Onsite Sign (06/29/2020).

**Department Approval:** Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (07/16/2020)

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### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission 1) Adopt a Class 32 Categorical Exemption, pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act Section 15332 In-Fill Development Projects, and 2) Approve Administrative Site Plan Review, P2020-0077-ASPR, and recommendation to the City Council for approval of a Tentative Tract Map No. 83093, P2020-0077-TTM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2020-P012 (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. Planning Commission discusses the matter and arrives at its decision.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Request**

On April 6, 2020, an application was submitted by 3808 College Avenue LLC (the Applicant/the Property Owner) for an Administrative Site Plan Review (ASPR) and Tentative Tract Map (TTM). The application request is to allow the following:

- Demolition of an existing triplex and detached accessory structure (garage);
- Subdivision of the existing parcel into six (6) airspace condominiums; and
- Construction of six (6) attached residential condominium dwelling units (i.e. one (1) dwelling unit on each of the proposed airspace lots).

Zoning Code Section 17.540.015.C.3, requires the referral of a Site Plan Review application to the Planning Commission, that otherwise could be approved administratively, if another action requires Planning Commission review and approval. As a Tentative Tract Map is submitted as part of the overall project application, both are being considered by the Planning Commission.

### **Project Site/Existing Conditions**

The Project Site is located at 3808 College Avenue, on the east side of College Avenue, south of Venice Boulevard and north of Matteson Avenue (see Vicinity Map, Attachment No. 2). The parcel is flat in topography and rectangular in shape, measuring ±9,830 square feet. Currently, the site is improved with one (1) single-story triplex, pool, detached 3-car garage at the rear, and site improvements including landscape, hardscape, and fences. Vehicular access to the existing parcel is provided by an existing public alleyway at the rear of the site which connects with Girard Avenue. The existing streetscape along the subject frontage consists of a five (5) foot wide sidewalk, and five (5) foot wide parkway including one (1) mature street tree and one (1) smaller street tree.

The Land Use Element of the City's General Plan designates this site and surrounding properties along College Avenue as Medium Density Multiple Family Residential, which is consistent with the site's zoning designation of Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD).

The Project Site is representative of the prevailing conditions in the surrounding neighborhood. Properties to the north, south, east, and west are also flat, rectangular in shape, and similar in size, with an average lot size of 7,325 square feet for the neighborhood block.

The surrounding zoning and land uses are as listed below.

- North: Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone (two-story multi-family dwellings)
- South: Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone (one- and two-story single- and multi-family residential dwellings)
- East: Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone and Commercial Neighborhood (CN) Zone (one- and two-story single- and multi-family residential dwellings)
- West: Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone (one- and two-story single- and multi-family residential dwellings, across College Ave)

### **Project Description**

As illustrated in the project plans (Attachment No. 4), the applicant proposes to demolish all existing on-site improvements and construct six (6) condominium dwelling units with associated site improvements. The proposed condominium dwelling units have been designed as attached two-story structures, located above a subterranean parking garage. The proposed project conforms to the maximum allowable height limit with a maximum overall building height of 25-feet, 4-inches, to the top of the second-floor building roof. Additional height projections for parapets/guardrails reach up to an additional forty-two (42) inches; the project has been designed so that roof access does not include any additional rooftop projections. Each unit will have two (2) parking spaces within the proposed subterranean garage, and one (1) guest parking space is proposed, for a total of thirteen (13) off-street parking spaces. The dwellings are arranged in a linear pattern oriented from the front of the parcel to the rear. The front dwelling unit will have a street-facing entry, while the remaining five (5) rear units will be accessed from side facing entries located parallel to the southerly property line. The side entries are inset, designed to be recessed further from the main building wall. The three (3) rearmost units will have a secondary egress that connects to a small outdoor patio area. All units will be three-bedroom, with 3 to 3.5 baths, ranging from approximately 1,600 to 2,100 square feet. 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. Based on the net lot area of ±9,695 square feet, a maximum of six (6) units may be allowed on the site. The RMD Zone requires a minimum front yard setback of ten (10) feet or half the building height, side yard setbacks of five (5) feet, and a rear yard setback of ten (10) feet, or five (5) feet when adjacent to an alley. The maximum allowable height is two (2) stories, not to exceed 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 structure is a two-story building over a subterranean parking garage in a linear layout, with a side loaded street facing driveway. The structure is characterized by a modern architectural style, incorporating straight lines and right angles, with a flat roof with flat parapets and guardrail walls. The building incorporates minimal articulation at the front façade. The two-story structure will have a smooth stucco finish at various segments, including a majority of the side elevations, the entire rear, and a portion of the front façade. Vertical timber siding is proposed at select areas on all elevations, except the rear, with the siding prominently featured at the second floor of the front façade, which serves to break up the building plane between the first and second floor. Additional materials include black aluminum trim at windows, which vary in size. Decorative lighting fixtures are proposed throughout the elevations, adding to the building's ornamentation. Rooftop decks will incorporate perimeter landscaping to further preserve privacy and enhance the appearance of the building.

The overall design and street view are maintained in a simplistic style and massing from the roof deck guardrail walls is minimized by the use of additional step backs. The entry to the front unit is oriented to the street and, along with the proposed front yard landscape elements, aids in maintaining communication with the street and contributes to the pedestrian-oriented quality of the streetscape. Building mass along the side elevations is articulated and broken up by the use of changes in the plane and material, adding to the multi-dimensional appearance of the building. The color palette consists primarily of white and two (2) grey tones. The color palette serves to provide a subdued and simplified appearance throughout the building. Overall, the appearance of building massing from the street is minimized for the six units by the liner arrangement of duplex buildings behind one another.

The subterranean garage is accessed from College Avenue through a proposed ten (10) foot wide driveway located at the northerly edge of the property. The entry is set back approximately eighty (80) feet from the front property line, minimizing the visual impact of the off-street parking facilities.

The project design strives to be compatible with the residential structures in the neighborhood. The building height and massing is consistent with the zoning standards of the RMD Zone, and intent of the ASPR required findings. Nevertheless, staff recommends that the applicant work to modify the front and rear elevations to provide more variation in the building planes and materials.

### Landscaping

Landscaping will include a variety of plant materials to soften the building façade and enhance the street view of the project. Proposed landscaping will be required to complement the building and enhance the appearance of the development. However, there are limited opportunities for landscaping beyond the front yard, due to the need for walkways to access the various unit entries and the subterranean garage, the proposed driveway, and the provision of the required parking in a subterranean garage that prevents effective on grade planting and presents challenges to providing significant planting beyond the front yard. Landscaping is provided where feasible along the side property lines, where the setbacks will be used primarily for walkway, and screen planting along portions of the southerly (side) setback area of the site. The planters along the northerly edge of the buildings will also serve stormwater infiltration purposes. The majority of the landscaping will be provided at the front yard and will include shrubs and two (2) trees and three (3) additional accent trees will be provided at the rear setback area.

The rooftop decks will have minimal planters with shrub planting at select areas along the roof perimeter. Landscaping will also include replanting the existing parkway, in accordance with the City's Parkway Planting Guidelines; permanent irrigation will be required to be provided to the parkway 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).

### Open Space

The proposed development provides the required open space for each unit by means of private rooftop decks, which are accessed from the second-floor hallway areas. Each rooftop deck measures approximately 275 to 580 square feet, thereby meeting the minimum requirement of one hundred (100) square feet. The rooftop open space areas are bounded by guardrails required for safety, measuring forty-two (42) inches in height. The rooftop open space areas are stepped back four (4) to nine (9) feet from the edges of the building, which aids in minimizing visibility onto abutting properties to preserve privacy. Additionally, the front unit and the three (3) rear units have a supplementary outdoor open space area at the ground floor, measuring approximately 100 to 200 square feet.

### Neighborhood Compatibility

The proposed development is located along the 3800 block of College Avenue, which is a local street developed with a variety of one-story and two-story single- and multiple-family residences. The block is zoned RMD, similar to the surrounding streets (Girard Ave, Prospect Ave, Huron Ave, etc.), with a mix of housing types, including multiple-family development consistent with the higher density designation (Medium Density Multiple Family Residential) envisioned for the block by the City's General Plan Land Use Element.

### *Density*

The project exceeds the average density of 3.7 units per lot for the block, as there is a mix of densities, ranging from one (1) to twelve (12) dwelling units per lot, within the subject block area. However, the proposed six-unit development, which comprises a parcel with a lot area on the high end of the range for the

block, is consistent with the median for the density range and is within the allowable density formula, in compliance with the RMD Zone and corresponding General Plan designation.

#### *Front Setback and Street Massing*

The building is adequately set back to conform to, and exceed, zoning requirements. The second floor of the building cantilevers beyond the first floor and uses a different material, to diminish the appearance of one continuous vertical plane and break-up the massing and bulk of the development to be more compatible with the mix of development in the neighborhood. The average front setback for the sample block is 15.9 feet, while the required setback is 12'-8", based on the RMD zone requirement of ten (10) feet or half the building height. Therefore, the proposed front setback of fifteen (15) feet, is sensitive to the average condition on the block, considering the abutting buildings have a front setback of approximately thirteen (13) and twenty (20) feet. In addition, the roof deck guardrail walls are stepped back six (6) feet from the front building edge, which minimizes their visibility from the street and surrounding properties. The project is also designed to omit the typical rooftop stairwell towers, which also eliminates some of the building mass.

#### *Height*

While the maximum allowed building height is thirty (30) feet, the proposed maximum roof height is 25'-4" with additional allowable height for parapets and guardrails. The parapets/guardrails extend forty-two (42) inches to a maximum of twenty-nine (29) feet, with no stairwell projections. The roof deck guardrail walls are set back six (6) feet from the front and four (4) to nine (9) feet from all other building edges, to help minimize their appearance from the street and help address neighborhood compatible with the average block height of 20.2 feet. The building's height will be a contrast from the existing 16'-0"-high development on the subject site, as well as from the 21'-0"-high structure on the south-abutting property, but more consistent with the 25'-0"-high building to the north. Overall, the building height fits within the neighborhood range of thirteen (13) to twenty-eight (28) feet. However, there are also lower density buildings in the twenty (20) to twenty-nine (29) foot-high range, which give the neighborhood a more diverse development character.

#### *Lot Coverage*

The project includes lot coverage of approximately 64% of the site. The lot coverage range for the block is 20 to 76 percent, with a block average of 48 percent. The proposed development is an increase from the subject site's current coverage of 35 percent, but is generally consistent with the range of the existing development on the sample block area and the allowances of the Zone and General Plan Land Use designations.

Although the overall project departs from some of the prevailing conditions in the neighborhood, the project design attempts to be sensitive to the existing neighborhood development, and the goal of preserving privacy for abutting properties, particularly with the roof deck setbacks from the building's side edges. The preservation of privacy is also considered by the project relative to window locations in order to minimize direct views into the abutting properties. Where windows/doors do align, the opening on the subject site is set back further than the minimum setback from the dividing property line.

#### Traffic, Parking, and Circulation

The existing sixty (60) foot wide public right-of-way, College 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. Any sidewalk along the project's frontage which is not in compliance with the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) will be removed and replaced, as will the existing driveway aprons. Off-site work will also include the replanting of the existing parkway with drought tolerant planting, as more specifically required by the City's Parkway Planting Guidelines, as indicated in the recommended conditions of approval. 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 will be provided with the

minimum required two (2) parking spaces, for a total of twelve (12) parking stalls, which will be provided in a standard configuration in an open shared garage. In addition, the CCMC requires one (1) on-site guest parking space for every four (4) dwellings; therefore, one (1) guest parking stall is required and provided, for a total of thirteen (13) off-street parking stalls within the proposed subterranean garage. Since current vehicular access is from the rear alley, a new driveway apron will be cut at the sidewalk on College Avenue to provide access to the proposed ten (10) foot wide driveway along the southerly property line. The proposed location of the driveway is the result of significant consultation with the neighboring property owner. The proposed driveway slopes down into the property at 3% for the first twenty (20) feet, as required by the Zoning Code, then 10% for eight (8) feet, 20% for 45.33', transitions back to 10% for eight (8) feet, and then level with the parking area. Although the ramp meets the Zoning Code requirement, supplemental diagrams are provided with the preliminary development plans demonstrating the necessary safety sightlines and undercarriage clearances are provided, consistent with methodology used in the Federal Highway Design Manual.

The garage is designed to provide a minimum height clearance of ten (10) feet at areas necessary for refuse access and service, per the requirements of the Environmental Programs and Operations (EPO) Division; and no less than seven (7) feet of overhead clearance at any other vehicular access area in conformance with the minimum Zoning Code required overhead height clearance. A back-up clearance of twenty-four (24) feet is provided, in compliance with the minimum Code requirement and allowing a sufficient turning radius and circulation area to maneuver in and out of each parking stall and exit back onto College Avenue in a forward direction. Pedestrian access from the subterranean garage to the unit entry level is provided by two (2) stairways, including one (1) at the front of the building and a second at the rear of the site. In addition, each dwelling unit has individual stair access to the shared parking area. Disabled access is provided by a wheelchair lift located at the easterly end of the site accessible parking space.

Primary pedestrian and disabled access from the public street to the unit entries is proposed via an at-grade walkway along the northerly edge of the site, which will meet the minimum four (4) foot wide access path required by the Zoning Code. The four middle unit entries are recessed beyond the main building wall and setback, providing a 10'-0" setback, which provides an additional buffer from the abutting property and 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 stairs and lift that provides access to the parking garage below and will be screened from the neighboring property by a six-foot high masonry wall.

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.

The project incorporates seven (7) electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, including one (1) for the guest parking within subterranean parking garage. This exceeds the current Zoning Code requirements, which requires 10% charging stations, 10% EV ready, and 20% EV capable, plus one (1) guest charging station. In addition, sixteen (16) long-term bicycle parking spaces will be provided in a designated room within the subterranean parking garage, and four (4) short-term spaces at the ground level, in conformance with the conditions of approval for the project.

### Construction Management

In order to minimize the potential for disruptions resulting from the construction related activities for the project, the applicant will be required to submit a final Construction Management Plan, Pedestrian Protection Plan, and Construction Traffic Management Plan. Per the Conditions of Approval, said plans will incorporate measures for noise reduction and dust control, and will specify detailed construction phases and timelines, construction and crew vehicle parking, on-site staging areas, pedestrian path of travel and coordination of construction

deliveries.

A preliminary construction management plan has been prepared by the applicant, which indicates no lane closures will be necessary for the project construction. In addition, the preliminary pedestrian protection and construction traffic management plan anticipates use of the sidewalk and parking lane directly in front of the project during the construction of the driveway and any repair and/or reconstruction to the sidewalk. During this time, the contractor will provide a diversion plan and/or a protected path of travel as required by the Public Works Engineering Division. The contractor will assess the site conditions to determine the best method for pedestrian diversion and protection during any necessary sidewalk construction and repair. At all times of construction, a temporary fencing system will be installed at the perimeter of the site to ensure construction activities and materials do not encroach into the public right-of-way or abutting properties. In addition, the developer will ensure all construction and crew vehicles are parked within the project site or at designated off-site locations with applicable City approvals as a Condition of Approval.

## 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 map for subdivisions meeting certain criteria, including specific airspace subdivisions for condominium purposes. In addition, CCMC Section 17.210.020 (Table 2-4) requires a minimum lot area of 5,000 square feet or the average of residential lots within a 500-foot radius (whichever is greater) and allows condominium projects to be subdivided with smaller parcel sizes for ownership purposes, provided the overall development site complies with the minimum lot size requirements of the Zoning Code. Most of the lots in the area measure approximately 6,000 to 9,840 square feet. Parcels on this block are quite uniform due to the configuration of the street. The subject site measures  $\pm 9,830$  square feet, which is on the high end of the parcel sizes on College Avenue; therefore, the overall site complies with this requirement and there will be no changes to the current overall lot area. One of the objectives of the tentative 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 Engineering Division has reviewed the tentative tract map (Attachment No. 5) for proposed the condominium subdivision and determined it to be compliant with all applicable State and local regulations as more specifically outlined in the recommended conditions of approval.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

As part of the review process, two community meetings were held for the project. The first meeting was held on Thursday, September 26, 2020, 7:00 pm during the Preliminary Project Review (PPR) phase, and the second on Thursday, May 14, 2020, 6:30 pm, during the application review phase. The applicant sent invitations two weeks before the meeting to property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius and extended area from the site, inviting interested persons to learn about the development project, provide comments and feedback, as well as to share any concerns regarding the proposed Project.

Community Meeting 1 - September 26, 2019, 7:00 pm (Veterans Memorial Building, 4 attendees)

Topics of discussion

- Overview of project by architect
- Number of units and bedrooms
- Price point for units
- Project parking and vehicular access
- Parking access from alley to southerly abutting property
- Written comment received expressing the project mass, scale, and design was inconsistent with the existing neighborhood character

Community Meeting 2 - May 14, 2020, 6:30 pm (Virtual Meeting (Go-To Meeting), 9 attendees)

Topics of discussion

- Overview of project and its evolution, including changes made since first community meeting
- Parking access from alley to southerly abutting property; request to provide project access from College Avenue
- Written comment received expressing the project mass, scale, and design was inconsistent with the existing neighborhood character

During both community meetings, questions were minimal, with the most discussion focused on vehicular access to the project and the preservation of the vehicular access from the alley to the southerly abutting property. This led to switching the driveway from College Avenue to the alley, which would require a reciprocal access easement. Upon further consideration by the southerly property owner, the access was moved back to College Avenue and a formal access easement is proposed to allow the continuation of vehicle access to the garage at the rear of the southerly abutting property, as this property does not have a driveway from College Avenue. Community reception of the project was mixed, as some attendees complimented the project, while written comments submitted expressed opposition to the density and scale.

Comments Received During Public Comment Period

As of the writing of this report, staff has not received any public comments in response to the public notification of the public hearing for this item.

**CONCLUSION/SUMMARY**

The proposed development will result in a project that provides additional housing near the City's largest concentration of RMD zoned properties, at a density consistent with the Zoning and General Plan Land Use designations. The building is designed with a minimalist material and color pattern and minimal changes in the building plane at the front and rear elevations; therefore, staff recommends additional articulation to the front and rear façades as was communicated during the project review process. Roof top guardrails are set back from the building edge to minimize the mass, maximize adjacent property privacy and be compatible with the mix of housing and building types in the neighborhood. Front yard landscape will enhance the street view. The side elevations incorporate supplemental setbacks and material variation at key locations to break up the building bulk and mass, create visual relief, and to be sensitive to side abutting properties. In addition, the locations of windows and doors have been considered in order to ensure privacy with abutting properties. Based on the proposed preliminary development plans and recommended conditions of approval, staff considers the project to provide 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, P2020-0077-ASPR, and Tentative Tract Map No. 83093, P2020-0077-TTM, can be made as outlined in Resolution No. 2020-P012 (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 32 Categorical Exemption as an "In-Fill Development Project" (Section 15332). As outlined herein, the project involves the construction of one (1) two-story structure containing six (6) attached residential dwelling units and the subdivision of the site into six (6)



airspace condominiums, thereby establishing one (1) condominium residential unit on each airspace lot. Further, the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan Land Use Designation of Medium Density Multiple Family Residential and with the RMD Zone; located within Culver City surrounded by urban uses, and has no value as a habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species as currently developed with a triplex, accessory structure, paved vehicle circulation and walkways, and vegetation consistent with residential yards in urban areas. Based on the density, the project will not have significant traffic impacts or peak hour vehicle trips exceeding fifty (50); as a multi-family use surrounded by a mix of multi- single- and two-family housing, noise and air quality impacts generated by the project will be within established thresholds for existing multi-family neighborhoods; implementation of public works storm water run-off standards will result in less than significant impacts to water quality; and the project can be adequately served by utilities and public services.

### **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 Planning Commission Resolution No. 2020-P012 with Exhibit A: Conditions of Approval
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Preliminary Development Plans dated July 22, 2020
5. Tentative Tract Map No. 83093
6. Community Meeting Summaries

### **MOTION**

That the Planning Commission:

Adopt a Class 32 CEQA Categorical Exemption and Approve an Administrative Site Plan Review and Recommend to the City Council Approval of Tentative Tract Map No. 83093, for a 6-Unit Condominium Complex, subject to the Conditions of Approval per the proposed Resolution.