



City of Culver City

Staff Report

File #: 16-602, **Version:** 1

Item #: PH-1.

PC - Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0035-ASPR; Tentative Parcel Map, P2016-0035-TPM, for the construction of a two-story, three-unit condominium development at 3873 Bentley Avenue in the Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) zone.

Contact Person/Dept: Peter Sun, Assistant Planner
Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager

Phone Number: 310.253.5710

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☒

Action Item: ☐

Attachments: ☐

Public Notification:

(Mailed) Property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the site (01/26/17); (Email) Master Notification List (01/26/17); (Posted) City website (01/26/17); (Sign) Posted on the site (01/26/17).

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (2/16/17)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt Class 3 and Class 15 Categorical Exemptions for this project pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act Section 15303 New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures and Section 15315 Minor Land Divisions, respectively.
2. Approve Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0035-ASPR and Tentative Parcel Map, P2016-0035-TPM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2017-P003 (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 February 29, 2016, an application was submitted for an Administrative Site Plan Review and Tentative Parcel Map to allow the subdivision of the subject site into a three airspace condominium lots, and the construction of three attached residential condominium dwelling units (i.e. one dwelling unit on each of the proposed airspace lots) within the project site located at 3873 Bentley Avenue in the Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone. This item is coming before the Planning Commission as an Administrative Site Plan Review per Section 17.540.015.C.3, which requires referral of a Site Plan Review application to the Planning Commission, that otherwise could be approved administratively, if another action requiring Commission review and approval such as a subdivision application, is submitted as part of the overall project application. Therefore, both requests per the Zoning Code section are being considered in the Planning Commission hearing.

On June 22, 2016, the project plans and entitlements were presented before the Planning Commission. No cards were received and no speakers commented on the item. In discussion, the Planning Commission mentioned several shortcomings and weaknesses in the proposed project. The Commission cited lack of innovation and consistency in the architecture as the most important shortcoming in the design. The Commission also had concerns with overall quality of the project drawings, trash enclosure design and location, landscape plans not in color, and window alignment. Due to the aforementioned inadequacies, the Commission continued the item to a date uncertain.

The applicant met with staff over the past several months to get direction on how to improve their plans to the satisfaction of the Planning Commission, and has made revisions to correct mistakes on the plans and to improve the design of the building. The revisions were completed over several months and included:

- Correct spelling errors
- Remove landscape plan from tentative map
- Improve lines and colors in renderings
- Improved north elevation by adding additional materials
- Roof line projections
- Consistency in window placement and window sills
- Added additional colors
- Corrected errors in project data
- Required color landscape plan

On January 11, 2017, the applicant submitted revised plans based on direction from the Commission and staff.

Existing Conditions

The project site located at 3873 Bentley Avenue on the northwest corner of Bentley Avenue and Matteson Avenue. It is approximately 50 feet in width and 100 feet in depth, having a lot size of approximately 4,950

square feet. The property is zoned Residential Medium Density (RMD) and designated Residential Medium Density Multiple Family in the General Plan. The neighborhood surrounding the site is zoned RMD and currently developed with a mix of one-unit to four-unit properties. The site abuts a public alley in the rear. Bentley Avenue is an 80-foot public right-of-way inclusive of sidewalk; Matteson is 60-foot wide; and the alley is approximately 20 feet in width. The project site is currently developed with a one-story single-family home with attached one-car garage. All existing structures and site improvements are to be demolished.

Project Description

The proposed project is a three-unit, 24-foot tall, two-story condominium. The project provides parking at grade with each unit having a two car garage. Two of the units will have a tandem garage accessed off of the abutting alley and the third unit will have a side by side two car garage accessed off of Bentley Avenue. The proposed condominium dwelling units have been designed as attached two-story structures. The dwellings are arranged in a linear pattern from the front of the parcel to the rear. The two rear dwelling units will be accessed from side facing entries on the Matteson Avenue side, while the front unit is oriented towards the Bentley Avenue with its entry facing the street. Unit 1 is a two-bedroom unit in the rear of the building with a two-story living area of 1,371 square feet. Unit 2 is a two-bedroom unit on the second floor fronting Matteson Avenue, and has 1,358 square feet of living area. Unit 3 is a three-bedroom unit fronting Bentley Avenue, with a two-story living area of 1,830 square feet. All improvements are consistent with the provisions of the Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC).

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

1. ADMINISTRATIVE SITE PLAN REVIEW

Standards of Development

The RMD Zone allows one unit per 1,500 square feet of net lot area, up to a maximum of nine dwelling units; therefore, based on the lot area of 4,975 square feet, a maximum of three units may be developed on the site. The RMD Zone requires minimum setbacks of 10 feet or half the building height in the front, five feet on the side, and 10 feet in the rear or five feet when adjacent to an alley in rear. There is a minimum dwelling size based on the number of bedrooms that must be met, and the maximum allowable height is two stories and 30 feet. No maximum livable area or lot coverage is required to be met provided that the project meets all required setbacks and other applicable zoning requirements.

As shown in the Project Summary (Attachment No. 3), the proposed development conforms to all regulations of the RMD Zone. The project complies with all setback requirements, providing 13-foot 3-inch setback in the front yard on the first story and 12-foot setback on the second story, 5-foot setback in the side yard, and 5-foot setback in the rear abutting an alley. The project is 24 feet high and complies with the maximum height of 30 feet in the RMD zone and meets the minimum required livable area of 900 square feet for a two-bedroom unit, and 1,100 square feet for a three-bedroom unit. The project incorporates one private balcony for each of the units to meet the private open space requirement, and an additional balcony for Unit 3. Each of the balconies facing Matteson Avenue is 100 square feet. A smaller balcony of 32 feet is provided at the northeast corner of the building. The balconies facing Matteson Avenue project the maximum 1-foot 6-inch into the required setbacks.

Architectural Design

The project is a contemporary building that contains three attached units. The design provides articulation and second story balcony projections on Bentley Avenue and Matteson Avenue. The building is finished in a

smooth stucco in a palette of grey, light grey, and white. Aside from the use of stucco and color on the building, the project utilizes wood-like ceramic tiles to accent the building on Bentley Avenue, Matteson Avenue, and the interior side. Units 1 and 2 have main entrances in a recessed corridor facing Matteson Avenue; Unit 3 has a main door facing Bentley Avenue. Each of the units incorporate a small private balcony on the second floor facing the street so that they pose minimal impact to abutting neighbors. No roof decks are proposed on the structure. (Please see Attachment No. 4)

Parking

The project meets the parking requirement for a multi-family project by providing two enclosed parking spaces per unit, for a total of 6 spaces. Units 1 and 2 have individually accessed parking garages accessed off the alley with tandem parking. Unit 3 has a double wide parking garage accessed off the Bentley Avenue. No guest parking spaces are required for a multi-family project less than four units.

Landscape

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 be landscaped, and will include one 24-inch box multi-trunk olive tree and marathon grass. The side yards facing Matteson Avenue will include hedge material and marathon grass. The interior side yard will contain shrub planting along the walkway and property line wall. New landscaping will also include the provision of at least five street trees; four on Matteson and one on Bentley, planted in accordance with the City's Street Tree Master Plan; permanent irrigation will be provided consistent with State mandates for water conservation. 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.

Neighborhood Compatibility

The proposed development is located in a multi-family zoned neighborhood along the 3800 block of Bentley Avenue which is a local residential street developed with a mix of single and multiple family residences. The block and surrounding streets (Matteson Avenue and Tilden Avenue) contains a mix of one-story and two-story developments.

The project plans included a vicinity map of the project in the neighborhood context to illustrate prevailing and existing conditions of properties on Bentley Avenue from Matteson Avenue to Tilden Avenue. The following data is calculated from the average of three houses to the north of the project site on the west side of Bentley Avenue, and three houses to the south of the project site on the west side of Bentley Avenue.

Address	Units	Bldg. Ht.	Lot Coverage.	Setback
3867 Bentley Ave	1	15'	50%	17'
3863 Bentley Ave	3	26'	71%	8'
3857 Bentley Ave	1	21'	31%	13'
3901 Bentley Ave	1	18'	42%	16'
3913 Bentley Ave	4	29'	85%	9'
3919 Bentley Ave	1	21'	37%	17'
Average	1.8	21.6	52.5%	13.3
Project	3	24'	68%	12'

As is evident in the above comparison of six properties to the north and south closest to the project site, the area consists of one-unit to four-unit developments. Given the range in development, building height, lot coverage, and front setback vary considerably. The proposed multi-family project is consistent with two multi-family developments on the block. Specifically, 3863 and 3913 are three-unit and 4-unit developments respectively. The proposed project has a lower height, less lot coverage and a greater setback than these existing multi-family developments. The proposed development meets the Zoning Code development standards and has been designed to be compatible with the existing dwellings on the block as noted herein.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)

This project will address a portion of Culver City's share of the RHNA by constructing a net new 2 market rate dwelling units. This will further the intent of the 5th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), 2014 to 2021, as prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and the State of California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD), which call for an addition of 185 housing units in Culver City in the RHNA planning period ending in 2021. By addressing Culver City's share of new housing units as stipulated in the RHNA and the Housing Element, the new dwelling units are considered to be within the expected development threshold for the City during the current Housing Element cycle (2014 to 2021).

Sustainability and Mobility

The project location near transit stops, and bicycle friendly streets will provide mobility options for the residents. The Project is situated near a bicycle lane on Venice Boulevard and is near Culver City Bus Line No. 1 along Washington Boulevard and numerous bus lines on Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard.

In order to address project sustainability goals and accommodate alternative transportation, the project is proposed to incorporate electric vehicle (EV) charging at all parking stalls within each garage, as well as one (1) bicycle parking space per unit, and will be a condition of the project if approved. Due to the scale of the project solar photovoltaic improvements may not be required, but the project will implement measures consistent with the Culver City Green Building Program as set forth in CCMC Section 15.02.1100, et. seq., as well as with CalGreen mandatory residential measures.

CHANGES TO PLANS

In the currently submitted plans, the applicant has made changes to the elevation facing the north side.

Specifically, the applicant has added projections at the roofline and above first floor windows. The applicant also implemented some of the same design elements on the south facing side to the north facing side by incorporating wood siding to connect windows on the first and second floor, and utilizing an offset in the exterior that will be painted a darker grey. The building design is now more consistent on all four sides and uses a combination of color, materials, and changes in roofline and articulation to give the building visual interest.

The applicant also corrected all spelling and numerical mistakes on the plans, reorganized the pages, and improved the color renderings. The color renderings now give clearer illustrations of the color and depth of the building. The landscape plan is now also in color.

In response to concerns about trash bin locations that were brought up by the Planning Commission during the June 22, 2016 meeting, staff has confirmed with Environmental Operations and Programs Division that a 3-unit condominium does not require trash enclosures. Trash bins issued by the Environmental Operations and Programs Division may be stored anywhere on the lot, typically in the side yard or in the garage. Window alignments with the abutting neighboring single-family dwelling to the north had also been analyzed. No window from a living space aligns perfectly with the abutting neighbor's windows. Furthermore, the proposed building is on a slab-on-grade foundation, and not any higher than the single-family house next door. The 6-foot high wall in the side yard will also help to protect privacy of the neighbors.

2. TENTATIVE PARCEL 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. The project lot area is 4,950 square feet. The lot is slightly smaller than adjacent lots because it is chamfered on a corner. Through the subdivision review and site plan review process, the lot is determined to be adequate to support the development of three condominium airspace units and meet the requirements of the Zoning Code.

Tentative Parcel Map No. 73923 has been reviewed and deemed complete by the City's Engineering Division. It includes the proper legal map descriptions, preliminary site drainage and grading, notations of new sidewalk and ADA ramp improvements, and alley to be reconstructed.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

As part of public outreach for discretionary projects the City requires up to three community meetings prior to the formal Public Hearing. A community meeting was held Thursday, December 3, 2015 at 11042 Washington Boulevard. Invitations were sent by the applicant on November 17, 2015 to all property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the project site. Two community members participated. The applicant invited interested persons to review the proposed project, provide comments and feedback, as well as to share any concerns regarding the proposed project. The meeting attendees inquired about the project design, parking, parking access, and building height. The overall comments about the project were positive. No objections were raised. Only one community meeting was held due to the low community participation in the meeting and

no outright statements of opposition from those who did attend the meeting. Further, there were no significant project changes that would necessitate another community meeting.

Comments Received During Public Comment Period

No comments were received during public comment period.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

The applicant has worked with Staff to design a project that is compatible with the neighborhood and the immediately surrounding properties. The applicant also made adjustments to the project to address the comments from the Planning Commission during the first public hearing. Through the use of building projections, material changes, and a more cohesive design, the project is now well articulated and architecturally consistent and interesting from all sides. The project conforms to adjacent multi-family developments and is consistent with the scale of single-family homes on the block. Care has been taken to articulate the building, respect privacy with balconies only on the street side and keep the height of the building relatively low by using at grade parking in garages as opposed to a semi-subterranean podium type design.

Based on the preliminary development plans and recommended conditions of approval, staff finds 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 Parcel Map meets all requirements of the CCMC and the State Subdivision Map Act. Staff believes the findings for Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0035-ASPR, and Tentative Tract Map No. 73923, P2016-0035-TPM, can be made as outlined in Resolution No. 2017-P003 (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 fall within the Class 3 and Class 15 Categorical Exemptions as the "Construction or Conversion of Small Structures" (Section 15303) and a "Minor Land Division" (Section 15315), respectively. Specifically, as outlined herein, the project consists of the construction of one multi-story structure containing three attached residential dwelling units and the subdivision of the site into three airspace condominiums, thereby establishing one 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 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 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 required findings for approval cannot be made.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Resolution No. 2017-P003 and Exhibit A: Conditions of Approval
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Preliminary Development Plans dated January 11, 2017
5. Tentative Tract Map No. 73923
6. Community Meeting Summary