



# City of Culver City

Mike Balkman  
Council Chambers  
9770 Culver Blvd.  
Culver City, CA 90232  
(310) 253-5851

## Staff Report

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**File #:** 16-663, **Version:** 1

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**PC - Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0200-ASPR and Tentative Parcel Map, P2016-0200-TPM, for the construction of a two-story, three-unit condominium subdivision at 4234 Sawtelle Boulevard in the Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (RMD) zone.**

**Meeting Date:** March 8, 2017

**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 (02/15/17); (Email) Master Notification list (02/15/17); (Posted) City website (02/15/17); (Sign) Posted on site (02/20/17)

**Department Approval:** Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (03/02/17)

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends 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.
2. Approve Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0200-ASPR and Tentative Parcel Map, P2016-0200-TPM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2017-P004 (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 October 31, 2016, an application was submitted for an Administrative Site Plan Review and Tentative Parcel Map to allow the subdivision of one (1) parcel into three (3) airspace condominium lots, and the construction of three (3) attached residential condominium dwelling units at 4234 Sawtelle Boulevard 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 noted above shall be reviewed simultaneously.

### Existing Conditions

The project site is located at 4234 Sawtelle Boulevard on the east side of Sawtelle Boulevard between Washington Boulevard to the north and Culver Boulevard to the south. The lot is 50 feet in width and 103 feet in depth, having a lot size of approximately 5,180 square feet. The property is zoned Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (RMD) and designated Residential Medium Density Multiple Family by the General Plan. The project site is currently developed with one single-family home, single-story with a detached two-car garage. All existing structures and site improvements are to be demolished as part of the proposed project.

Sawtelle Boulevard is zoned RMD on both sides of the street. It is also identified as a secondary highway in the 1994 adopted Circulation Element. This particular block of Sawtelle Boulevard between Washington Boulevard and Culver Boulevard is also an exit for the 405 southbound freeway. The block contains a mix of single-story single family homes and two-story 2-5 unit apartment buildings. Sawtelle Boulevard has two lanes northbound with available street parking on the east curbside; and two lanes southbound during peak traffic hours with the right lane permitted with street parking during limited hours.

### Project Description

As outlined in the Preliminary Development Plans (Attachment No.4), the project applicant proposes to construct three (3) condominium dwelling units in a two-story 28'-5" high building. The three units are positioned in a row from front to rear. The front unit has an entrance that is oriented to the street; two other units have entrances that are oriented towards the southern side yard. The southern side yard has a walkway to the second and third unit. The rear unit is also designed with a private yard in the rear. Each of the units are two-story with common areas on the ground floor and bedrooms on the second floor. See below for unit breakdown.

	Unit A	Unit B	Unit C
Bedrooms	2	3	3
Bathrooms	2.5	3	3
1 <sup>st</sup> Floor Living Area	812	925	898
2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Living Area	657	685	840
Total Living Area	1,469	1,610	1,738

Parking is provided in a semi-subterranean parking structure accessed by a 12-foot wide ramp off of Sawtelle Boulevard. The new driveway ramp is located in the same location as the existing driveway, minimizing the changes to existing parkway and curb improvements that could reduce street parking. The existing tree in the parkway will also remain. Each of the units are provided two (2) side-by-side private parking spaces in an enclosed garage in the semi-subterranean garage. No guest space parking is required because the project contains less than 4 units.

**ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION**

1. ADMINISTRATIVE SITE PLAN REVIEW

Standards of Development

The RMD Zone allows a density of 1 unit per 1,500 square feet of net lot area, up to a maximum of 9 dwelling units; therefore, based on the net lot area of 5,180 square feet, a maximum of three (3) units permitted on the site. The RMD Zone requires minimum setbacks of 10 feet or half the building height in the front, 5 feet on the side, and 10 feet in the rear or 5 feet when adjacent to an alley in rear. The maximum allowable height is two (2) stories and thirty (30) feet with allowances for parapet, stairwell and mechanical equipment projects above the finished top plate.

The project meets all applicable development standards of the RMD zone. The project complies with all setback requirements, providing a 14'-8" setback in the front yard on the first and second story, 6-foot setback in the side yards, and 10-foot setback in the rear. The project is measured approximately 28'-5" from grade to the top plate of the roof. This complies with the maximum height of 30 feet in the RMD zone.

The project meets the minimum required livable area of 1,100 square feet for a three-bedroom unit and 900 square feet for a two-bedroom unit. The project also meets the 100 square feet private open space per unit requirement. The front unit has a 123-square-foot balcony facing the street. The middle unit has 2 small balconies facing each side yard for a total of 129 square feet. The rear unit has a private rear yard on the ground for a total of 406 square feet. The front yard also meets the 55% landscape requirement. No common open space is required per Zoning Code.

Architectural Design

The condominium building is designed in a style that is simple and modern with flat roofs and an accentuated massing with varying roof lines and articulated stairwell on the southern elevation. Continuous aluminum

anodized windows also align vertically with each of the stairwells to provide light ventilation. Balconies on the front and both sides of the building further help to articulate the building while serving as private outdoor space for the tenants. These features help to reduce the scale of the building.

The color and materials used on the building is smooth stucco and white to match many of the homes on Sawtelle Boulevard. The project also incorporates use of wood panels. The garage entrance is setback from the street and tucked under the building minimizing its view from the street. The three unit condominium development is consistent with the transitional nature of the residential neighborhood by incorporating good site planning and design into a small multi-family project.

### Parking

Parking is provided in a semi-subterranean garage accessed from Sawtelle Boulevard. The project meets the parking requirement for a multi-family project by providing two (2) enclosed parking spaces per unit, for a total of six (6) enclosed spaces. These private spaces are provided side-by-side and enclosed. Due to the limited depth of the lot and sewer line in the rear, the buildable area for the subterranean parking garage was limited. Therefore, the subterranean garage is set back 10 feet from the rear to avoid encroachment with the sewer line, which allows for a 100% permeable landscaped area in the rear yard.

The driveway ramp providing vehicular access to the semi-subterranean garage is located at the north corner of the site measuring 12 feet in width. The ramp is at a maximum of 20% slope. The location of the ramp and width of parking garage also gives adequate back-up distance from each of the parking spaces.

### Trash and Storage

Each unit has individual access through a staircase into the private garage. Each of the units also has ample storage space in the subterranean garage. The first and last unit has roughly 200 square feet of storage. Per the requirements of the Environmental Programs and Operations Division, each of the units is provided one recycle bin and one solid waste bin. These bins may be stored in the garage where it is convenient for the tenants. One additional organic waste bin is also required to be shared by the tenants.

### 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 is landscaped with a mixture of drought-tolerant plants and lawn. A 36-inch box size Mediterranean Palm is located in the front yard. In the southern side yard, the project is set back by an additional 1 to 2 feet in order to fit a taller-growing 'green mountain' shrub to help provide privacy for the abutting property. In the rear, a Podocarpus shrub (Yew Pine) will provide an 8 to 10-foot high hedge to help provide privacy with the property abutting to the rear.

### Neighborhood Compatibility

The project has been designed to the allowable RMD development standards while at the same time attempting to be compatible to the development patterns of the block. As noted, this block of Sawtelle Boulevard is currently built with a mix of single-story single family homes and two-story 2-5 unit apartment buildings majority of single-family residences.

The attached plans include a map of the vicinity and an inventory of adjacent residences' density, number of stories, and lot coverage. The average lot coverage on the block is 45% ranging from a minimum of 33% to a maximum lot coverage of 56%; the project proposes 56% lot coverage. The project proposed at 28' high is within the height requirement of the RMD zone and compatible with the other two-story structures on the block.

Throughout the preliminary review process the applicant has made a number of modifications to the project based on staff's recommendations and community input. The design narrative (Attachment No. 7) describes the design process from initial to final design to create a more compatible project for the neighborhood. At its initial stages, the project was proposed with a roof deck in order to provide outdoor space to the tenants. At the request of the abutting neighbors, the applicant initially removed the roof deck and replaced it with balconies to meet the private open space requirement of the RMD zone and subsequently refined the design to remove the two rear balconies to respond to privacy concerns from neighbors. The applicant also responded to staff recommendations in creating larger setbacks, indenting side entrances, and providing space to plant taller growing shrubs and trees in the side and rear yards.

### 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 Culver City Bus Line No. 1 and bike lanes along Washington Boulevard and Culver Boulevard.

In order to address sustainability and accommodate alternative transportation the project is proposed to incorporate electric vehicle (EV) charging available at all parking stalls within the garages. Bicycle racks are also provided in each garage. 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.

## 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 5,173 square feet. Through the tentative parcel map review and site plan review process, the lot is determined to be adequate to support the development of three (3) condominium airspace units and meet the requirements of the Zoning Code.

Tentative Parcel Map No. 74145 has been reviewed and deemed complete by the City's Engineering Division. It includes the proper legal map descriptions, adequate preliminary site drainage and grading, and details to

be accepted for tentative approval.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

As part of public outreach for discretionary projects the City requires up to three community meetings prior to the formal Public Hearing. The applicant held two community meetings inviting owners and occupants of properties within a 500-foot radius to review the proposed project, provide comments and feedback, as well as to share any concerns regarding the proposed project. The applicant also contacted the individuals who participated in the community meetings via email to update them throughout the project review process.

### **Community Meetings**

The first community meeting was held on May 23, 2016 in the community room at Tilden Terrace at 11042 Washington Boulevard. Invitations were sent by the applicant on May 5, 2016 to all property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the project site. Eight community members signed in to the meeting. Their concerns were as listed below:

- Project height, massing
- Decrease in property value caused by new developments
- Availability of street parking
- Addition of traffic to Sawtelle Boulevard
- Inadequate amount of private parking within the project
- Construction liability, noise, schedule, and other impacts
- Roof deck noise and infringement on privacy
- Background and experience of the applicant

A second community meeting was held on November 17, 2016 in the community room at Tilden Terrace. Several revisions to the project had been made before this community meeting. They were as follows:

- Removal of roof decks
- Addition of five balconies
- Design, color, and material changes
- Height is reduced
- New landscape plan, with landscaping and shrubs planned to mitigate privacy impacts

During the second community meeting, the participants voiced many of the same complaints and concerns as the first meeting, with one new concern about the new balconies that were proposed on the sides and rear. One participant felt that the community meeting notice invitation was misleading because it talked about the project's removal of the roof deck but failed to mention new balconies. The balconies were put in in lieu of the roof deck; one for the front unit, two for the middle unit, and two for the rear unit. After some discussion, the applicant stated that the project team would explore the possibility of removing the rear balconies to address the concerns and use the rear yard to comply with open space requirements.

In December, the applicant revised the drawings to remove two balconies from the rear in order to address privacy concerns and enclosed a private rear yard for the rear unit. The applicant also emailed each of the neighbors a copy of the revised plans. As the project design did not change significantly from what was presented at the second community meeting, a third meeting was not held.

### **Comments Received During Public Comment Period**

No comments were received during the public comment period.

### **CONCLUSION/SUMMARY**

Through the preliminary project review process, the applicant has worked to address staff recommendations and neighborhood concerns to ensure that the project conforms to the Zoning Code and is compatible with the neighborhood and immediate surrounding properties. Since the first submittal for preliminary project review, the applicant has continuously worked with staff and made five or more revisions which included significant changes to reduce the overall building height, respond to privacy concerns, and soften the modern architectural style.

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, 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, P2016-0200-ASPR, and Tentative Tract Map No. 74145, P2016-0200-TPM, can be made as outlined in Resolution No. 2017-P004 (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 Class 3 and Class 15 Categorical Exemptions 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 three (3) attached residential dwelling units and the subdivision of the site into three (3) 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 serves 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. 2017-P004 and Exhibit A: Conditions of Approval
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Preliminary Development Plans dated December 12, 2016
5. Tentative Tract Map No. 74145
6. Community Meeting Summary
7. Design Narrative