



# City of Culver City

## Staff Report

File #: 22-430, Version: 1

Item #: A-1.

**PRCSC - Adoption of a Resolution Recommending to the City Council Approval of Comprehensive Plan Amendment P2021-0174-CPA, Allowing a Three-Story, 7,022 Square Foot Community Center, Six Dwelling Units, a Reconfigured Community Garden, and Associated Site Improvements at 10808-10860 Culver Boulevard.**

**Meeting Date:** November 2, 2021

**Contact Person/Dept:** Gabriela Silva, Associate Planner  
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Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director

**Phone Number:** (310) 253-5736 / (310) 253-5710

**Fiscal Impact:** Yes  No

**General Fund:** Yes  No

**Public Hearing:**

**Action Item:**

**Attachments:**

**Planning Commission Action Required:** Yes

No

**Date:** TBD

**City Council Action Required:**

Yes

No

**Date:** TBD

**Public Notification:** Meetings and Agendas - Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Commission (10/29/2021); Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department Updates (10/29/2021)

**Department Approval:** Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (10/25/2021); Armando Abrego, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Director (10/28/2021)

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services (PRCS) Commission adopt Resolution No. 2021-PRCS001 (Attachment 1) recommending to the City Council approval of Comprehensive Plan Amendment P2021-0174-CPA (Attachment 2), allowing a three-story, 7,022 square foot community center, six dwelling units, a reconfigured community garden, and associated site improvements at 10808-10860 Culver Boulevard.

### **BACKGROUND**

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

The Project site (Site) is located at 10808-10860 Culver Boulevard, on the south side of Culver Boulevard, west of Coombs Avenue and east of Elenda Street, and is bound by a 20-ft wide public alley (Attachment 3). The Site is a portion of land consisting of ±49,572 square feet, located within one (1) parcel that is comprised

of thirty (30) lots tied together; it is generally flat in topography and rectangular in shape, measuring ±67,700 square feet (1.55 acres). The overall parcel is owned by the City and the portions comprising the Project site (22 of the thirty 30 lots) will be leased to the Project operator (Wende) for 99 years. The development permit will include an indemnity, both for the land lease and all related entitlements.

The Site (Lots 9-30) is improved with one (1) single-story, 14,023 sq. ft., non-residential structure housing the Wende Museum, a two-story, 4,120 sq. ft. meeting and event facility building (formerly American Veteran Post 2; aka AmVets), a 4,507 sq. ft. community garden, and other associated site improvements, including landscape, fencing, and sculpture garden. On the remainder of the subject parcel (Lots 1-8), are located the Scout House, Rock and Mineral Club, and paddle tennis courts. Public surface parking abuts the Site along the northerly perimeter, serving the Site and uses on overall parcel, as well as uses in the adjacent Veterans Memorial Park. Vehicular access to the Site occurs only along the alley side where seven (7) off-street parallel parking spaces are provided and near the midpoint of the northerly edge where there is an existing driveway accessing the existing sculpture garden area for loading purposes. Existing two-way driveway aprons at each of the surrounding streets (Culver Blvd., Coombs Ave., and Elenda St.) provide access to the abutting public parking. The existing streetscape along the subject frontage consists of a 10 foot wide sidewalk, and abutting parking lot; a wide landscaped strip with mature vegetation abutting the parking lot along the northerly edge abutting Culver Boulevard.

The Land Use Element of the City's General Plan designates this site as Open Space, which is consistent with the site's zoning designation of Open Space (OS). Surrounding properties along Culver Boulevard are designated Low Density Single Family, Medium Density Multiple Family, and Open Space, and properties south of the Site are designated Low Density Single Family, consistent with their corresponding zoning designations. The Project Site represents a unique condition in the surrounding neighborhood in terms of size and uses, though it complements the uses at the adjacent Veterans Memorial Park. Properties to the north, south, and west are also flat, and are generally rectangular in shape as is typical for residential properties. The PRCS Commission is asked to provide a recommendation regarding the subject amendment because Zoning Code Section 17.250.030 provides that both the PRCS and Planning Commissions provide respective recommendations to the City Council regarding approval of Comprehensive Plans in the Open Space Zone.

The surrounding zoning and land uses are as listed below.

- North: Residential Single Family-Residential Zero Setback Overlay (R1-RZ) Zone (two-story single family residential neighborhood, known as Studio Estates, across Culver Boulevard)
- South: Residential Single Family (R1) Zone (one- and two-story single family residential uses, across public alley)
- East: Open Space (OS) Zone (Veterans Memorial Park, including Veterans Memorial Complex, the Teen Center and The Plunge Municipal Swimming Pool, across Coombs Avenue)
- West: Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone (one- and two-story single- and multi-family dwellings, across Elenda Street)

### Site and Project History

On April 28, 2014, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 2014-001, to rezone the subject parcel from Commercial Neighborhood (CN) to Open Space (OS) Zone (P2014018) and to approve a Comprehensive Plan (P2013176) for the project area within the subject parcel. By adopting the ordinance and approving the Comprehensive Plan (CP), the City allowed the adaptive reuse of the former National Guard Armory Building for the Wende Museum, as well as the continued use of the AmVets Post 2 facility for meetings and events. The approved Comprehensive Plan was implemented by the Wende Museum; however, no improvements had been planned at the AmVet Post 2 building. This building has required significant life-safety repairs and has been vacated by the former tenant.

Public discussions regarding the future of the former AmVets building have occurred over the past few years, and have included consideration of affordable housing. Accordingly, the Applicant worked with the City in order to craft a proposal that incorporates a creative community center that will complement the existing Wende Museum and other site improvement to provide a new community garden and six affordable housing units. As part of the lease agreement with Wende Museum, the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment P2021-0174-CPA (CPA; Attachment 2) is required to create a mixed-use site by incorporating a six-unit affordable housing project. Further, it was determined that in order to accommodate additional uses, such as affordable housing, a reconfiguration of existing improvements involving the community garden, would be necessary.

### Request

On June 30, 2021, an application was submitted by AUX Architecture (the Applicant) for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) to amend the existing Comprehensive Plan to allow the following:

- Demolition of an existing two-story, 2,200 sq. ft., portion of non-residential structure [American Veteran Post 2 (AmVets) meeting and event facility], leaving a one-story, 1,920 sq. ft. portion of the existing non-residential structure;
- Construction of a  $\pm$ 5,102 sq. ft. addition to the remaining one-story building, to create a three-story, 7,022 sq. ft., creative community center;
- Development of six (6), one-story, affordable (low-income) dwelling units; and
- Reconfiguration of existing the community garden

As further described below, the Project will also include certain airspace encroachments in the northerly abutting sidewalk (between the subject parcel and the abutting parking lot area), to allow improved articulation and enhanced architectural aesthetics by incorporation of a landscaped building overhang.

### Project Description

As illustrated in Comprehensive Plan Amendment P2021-0174-CPA (Attachment 2), the applicant proposes to maintain the Wende Museum building and to implement two (2) new phases of development. The existing museum development is identified as Phase 1 in the CPA which also includes Phase 2 and Phase 3; similarly, the project site area is organized into three (3) areas (Area 1, Area 2, and Area 3) corresponding to each phase. Phase 2 includes the demolition of a portion (2,200 sq. ft.) of the existing AmVets building and construction of a three-story, 39'-4"-high (5,102 sq. ft.) addition, resulting in a net increase of 2,902 square feet. The building will also include rooftop projections, such as stairs and elevator, consistent with allowances in the Zoning Code, for an overall maximum height of 54'-6". Horizontal projections will include landscaped overhangs, which will be allowed through the applicable process from the Public Works Department. The use of the building will continue to be a community center, including meetings and events, with an additional focus on creative, cultural, and educational programming, and thus referred to as the Creative Community Center. This center will also provide supportive services for the residents of the proposed housing in Phase 3.

Phase 3 includes the development of six (6) supportive housing units for low-income artists. The dwelling units will be modular, single-story structures, and each will measure 325 square feet in floor area. These are proposed to be placed in portions of the Site that are currently improved as a community garden. Therefore, the existing community garden is proposed to be reconfigured to maintain a portion ( $\pm$  1,780 sq. ft.) within the current general area and remaining  $\pm$ 2,731 square feet within the adjacent parking area, for a total of 4,511 square feet, in order to result in at least the same amount of area as the existing community garden configuration (i.e. 4,507 sq. ft.). Reconfiguration of the community garden will result in a loss of parking; in conjunction with improvements proposed for accessible parking and drop-off area, the total reduction in

parking will be 21 spaces, reducing the shared pool of parking to a total of 284 spaces in the six (6) public off-street lots associated with the park properties. These lots will continue to serve the project site; no additional parking is required for the proposed project based on the associated parking demand study. Associated improvements will include landscape and site fencing, including fencing around the reconfigured community garden spaces.

## **ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:**

### **Land Use**

As a Comprehensive Plan, the uses and development standards for the Project and Site can be tailored to the unique, thus being more restrictive or more flexible than the Zoning Code. The CPA includes a land use table that outlines allowable uses for each of the three (3) phases/areas of the project site. The existing Wendt Museum will remain as a museum and event space with ancillary office and storage areas, and will continue the use of the outdoor sculpture garden. The AmVets building (Phase/Area 2) will be allowed to continue as a meeting and event space, including performances, and will expand on the community services, which were previously focused on veterans, to include services and programs with a creative, cultural, and educational focus. Therefore, the uses for Phases/Areas 1 and 2 will be consistent with the Zoning and General Plan as determined in the original Comprehensive Plan.

The Land Use Table (Attachment 2, page 45) indicates allowable uses in Phase/Area 3 will be single- and multi-family dwellings, supportive housing, and transitional housing, subject to a Conformance Review before the Planning Commission. Once the dwelling units are constructed, home occupations will be allowed as a principally permitted use, in compliance with Zoning Code standards as referenced, and the community garden will also be principally permitted. The supportive affordable housing is also consistent with the Zoning designation, as it is allowed in combination with a commercial use (i.e. museum and community center) in the Open Space (OS) Zone by Zoning Code Section 17.400.065 - Mixed Use Development Standards.

### **Architectural Design**

The Project includes a three-story addition for a community center. The structure is characterized by a modern architectural style, incorporating straight, select angled features, with a combination of steeply pitched roof and flat roof with guardrail walls. The building is asymmetrical in shape and incorporates significant articulation at the front façade and throughout the building. The three-story structure will incorporate concrete and painted stucco walls in tones of grey, with anodized aluminum and composite wood for trim and select architectural features in grey and wood tone colors. The rooftop deck will incorporate landscaping as will several projecting overhangs along the northerly edge of the building and will also include projecting features for access, and a trellis for passive use. The color palette consists primarily of grey and earth tones in a subdued contemporary style. The proposed housing final design is still under consideration and will be subject to further City review, but will follow a similar color and material palette. The housing units are proposed as one story, one-bedroom individual modular units occupying a portion of the current community garden site.

The overall project design is consistent with the character of new development throughout the City and scaled away from the residential uses to the south in order to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

### **Landscaping**

Due to the building footprint and site size, as well as necessary allocations for walkways, there are limited opportunities for new additional landscaping. The existing sculpture garden between the museum and the proposed community center will remain as is, while new landscape will primarily occur along the northerly edge of the site, between the community center building and the abutting sidewalk. In addition, the building

design has incorporated landscape at each of the upper levels, including the roof, in the form of a green roof feature. Ground floor planting will include a combination of trees (e.g. palms and podocarpus) and various shrubs and ground cover. Landscape on levels two and three will be limited to shrubs and ground cover. Two (2) desert museum trees and various shrubs and ground cover will be provided on the roof level. Planting selections will complement existing landscape and will include variation to enhance the quality of the Project. Preliminary landscape information is included in the CPA document made part of this report (Attachment 2); final landscape and irrigation plans will be submitted for review during the plan check process.

### Traffic, Parking, Mobility and Circulation

The existing public right-of-way, Culver Boulevard, has been deemed by the Mobility and Traffic Engineering Division of the Public Works Department to be of adequate width to serve the site and the proposed development; no dedications or other similar right-of-way improvements are required. Based on the scope and size of the Project, a traffic study and Vehicle Miles Travel (VMT) or Level of Service (LOS) traffic analysis are not required. A Transportation Analysis was prepared by Crain and Associates outlining this conclusion (Attachment 4).

The Zoning Code requires, one (1) space for each 5 fixed seats, and one (1) space per 35 square feet of assembly or seating area with no fixed seats, plus required spaces for ancillary uses (e.g., restaurant), as well as 0.5 space per unit and one (1) guest space for every four (4) dwellings. Given the proposed area distribution of the 7,022 sq. ft. creative community center and the number of dwellings, the Project would be required to provide a total of eighteen (18) spaces for the assembly space of the community center and four (4) parking spaces for the residential. The Zoning Code parking requirement for the existing museum is one space per 350 sq. ft., for a total of 40 parking spaces. In accordance with the methodology established by the original CP, a Parking Demand Study (by Crain and Associates; Attachment 5) was prepared for the Project, demonstrating the proposed demand based on project area and operations will be met by the pool of public parking within the off-street lots.

The Site, as well as other onsite uses and the adjacent Veteran Park, all currently share a pool of public parking located on various lots, including four (4) lots along Culver Boulevard, between Overland Avenue and Elenda Street. These public lots provide a combined total of 305 parking spaces, which will be reduced to 284 spaces during implementation of Phase 3. Seven (7) onsite parallel parking spaces provided for the Wende Museum during Phase 1, located along the public alley, will remain. As indicated in the study, the pool of parking will be sufficient. Operations shall be restricted to prohibit simultaneous large events at the community center and museum, as well as simultaneous use of the assembly area and upper levels (e.g. office, classroom space) within the community center. All parking will remain under the jurisdiction of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services (PRCS). To the extent that the Creative Community Center requires reserved spaces, approval must occur through the PRCS process, which may require a rental fee for such parking spaces.

Vehicular access will continue to be from the existing driveways along Culver Boulevard, Coombs Avenue, and Elenda Street. There are no proposed changes to vehicular access. Pedestrian access will be along the public sidewalk to the north; disabled access will be provided by access ramps and by elevator.

The Wende Museum currently includes 6 bicycle parking spaces; additional bicycle parking will be provided for the community center and the proposed housing, including a total of 10 long term spaces and 12 short-term spaces.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

As part of the review process, two (2) community meetings were held virtually for the project. The first meeting

was held on Thursday, December 10, 2020, 6:00 pm, during the preliminary review phase, and the second meeting was held Tuesday, June 1, 2021, 6:00 pm, during the application review phase of the process. The applicant sent invitations two weeks before each 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 - December 10, 2020, 6:00 pm (18 attendees)

Topics of discussion:

- Overview of project and its evolution, including consideration of prior feedback from community meetings unrelated to the Project
- Questions centered on construction timelines, operation of the community center, type of housing, what specific changes were proposed to the community garden, if any changes were proposed to the Scout House
- Concerns included: building scale (3-stories versus 2), opposition to affordable housing at this location and consideration of alternative sites, opposition to reconfiguring the community garden space

Community Meeting 2 - June 1, 2021, 6:00 pm (9 attendees)

Topics of discussion:

- Overview of project and expected next steps
- Questions centered on construction timelines, implementation of Phase 3, operation of housing component (e.g. tenant selection, etc.), and proposed operations of the reconfigured community garden

Attendees of the meeting appeared to be primarily nearby residents. Based on the comments and questions there was initially concern about Phase 3, specifically regarding compatibility of affordable housing in this area of the City and the preservation of the community garden. Community reception of the project seemed to have evolved to a more favorable view at the time of the second community meeting though there are neighbors who still oppose the housing portion of the project.

### **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OPEN SPACE REQUIRED FINDINGS**

Pursuant to Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) Section 17.250.030 - Open Space (OS) District Requirements, a major modification to a Comprehensive Plan must be approved in the same manner as the original Comprehensive Plan. The Commission findings must be approved in a Resolution (Attachment 1).

### **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

There are no applicable fiscal considerations associated with the Commission's action on the proposed Resolution.

### **CONCLUSION/SUMMARY**

The proposed CPA will rehabilitate the remaining portion of the existing meeting/event facility (formerly AmVets

Post 2) to allow for continuation of the building's previously allowed purpose of serving as a community resource. By allowing for the development of affordable housing, the project will address an important component of the City's land use mix. The reconfigured community garden will allow the continuation of an existing community resource. Accordingly, the project is consistent with the proposed Zoning and current General Plan Land Use designations.

The addition of housing in this area is consistent with the City's revitalization planning goals for the area and good planning practice. The 3-story building is designed in a modern style with a minimalist material and color palette, incorporating balconies and landscaped overhangs to articulate the building planes. Various features, such as railings, screens, and the asymmetrical shape of the building provide variation and a break in the building bulk and mass. Based on the proposed CPA document, staff considers the project will provide a layout, architectural design, and landscape consistent with applicable standards and guidelines, with adequate public facilities, and consistent with the Culver City General Plan and the requirements of the Zoning Code. Staff believes the findings for Comprehensive Plan Amendment, P2021-0174-CPA, can be made as outlined above.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. 2021-11-02 - ATT 1 Draft Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Commission Resolution No. 2021-PRCS001
2. 2021-11-02 - ATT 2 Comprehensive Plan Amendment P2021-0174-CPA Dated October 2021
3. 2021-11-02 - ATT 3 Vicinity Map of 10808-10860 Culver Boulevard
4. 2021-11-02 - ATT 4 Transportation Analysis by Crain and Associates
5. 2021-11-02 - ATT 5 Parking Demand Study by Crain and Associates

### **MOTION**

That the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Commission:

Adopt Resolution No. 2021-PRCS001 recommending to the City Council approval of Comprehensive Plan Amendment (P2021-0174-CPA; Attachment 2), allowing a three-story, 7,022 square foot community center, six dwelling units, a reconfigured community garden, and associated site improvements at 10808-10860 Culver Boulevard.