City of Culver City

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Staff Report Details (With Text)

File #:	21-632 **Version:** 1	**Name:**	
Type:	Public Hearing	**Status:**	Public Hearing
File created:	1/23/2021	**In control:**	PLANNING COMMISSION
On agenda:	2/10/2021	**Final action:**	2/10/2021
Title:	PC: Development of a Three (3) Unit Townhome Style Subdivision and an Exception to Certain Subdivision Requirements at 4044 Madison Avenue in the Residential Medium Density (RMD) Zone (P2020-0249-ASPR, P2020-0249-TPM).		
Sponsors:			
Indexes:			
Code sections:			
Attachments:	1. 21-02-10_ATT NO 1_Draft Resolution P2021-002 and Exhibit A Conditions of Approval.pdf, 2. 21-02-10_ATT NO 2_Vicinity Map.pdf, 3. 21-02-10_ATT NO 3_Project Summary.pdf, 4. 21-02-10_ATT NO 4_Preliminary Development Plans Dated January 22, 2021.pdf, 5. 21-02-10_ATT NO 5_Tentative Parcel Map No. 83372.pdf, 6. 21-02-10_ATT NO 6_Applicant Summary of Community Meetings.pdf, 7. 21-02-10_ATT NO 7_Public Comment Received Prior to Agenda Finalization.pdf		

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
2/10/2021	1	PLANNING COMMISSION		
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PC: Development of a Three (3) Unit Townhome Style Subdivision and an Exception to Certain Subdivision Requirements at 4044 Madison Avenue in the Residential Medium Density (RMD) Zone (P2020-0249-ASPR, P2020-0249-TPM).

Meeting Date: February 10, 2021

Contact Person/Dept: Michael Allen, Current Planning Manager
William Kavadas, Assistant Planner;

Phone Number: 310-253-5727 / 310-253-5706

Fiscal Impact: Yes [] No [X] **General Fund:** Yes [] No [X]

Public Hearing: [X] **Action Item:** [] **Attachments:** [X]

City Council Action Required: Yes [X] No [] **Date:** TBD

Public Notification: (Mailed) Property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the site (01/20/2021); (Sign Posted) on Project Site (01/20/2021); (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Planning Commission (02/05/2021); (Posted) City Website (01/20/2021)

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (01/27/2021)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission 1) Adopt Class 3 and 15 Categorical Exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act; 2) Approve Administrative Site Plan Review P2020-0249-ASPR and Tentative Parcel Map No. 83372, P2020-0249-TPM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2021-P002, and 3) Recommend to the City Council approval of an exception to a subdivision design standard (CCMC Section 15.10.085) regarding lot frontage.

PROCEDURES

1. Chair calls on staff for a brief staff report and the Planning Commission poses questions to staff as desired.

2. Chair opens the public hearing and receives comments from 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 10, 2020, Madison Ave Ventures, LLC (the “Applicant”) applied for an Administrative Site Plan Review and Tentative Parcel Map to allow the development of three (3) detached townhome units on small lots within the project site located at 4044 Madison Avenue (the “Project Site”) in the Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone.

Existing Conditions

The project site is located on the northeast side of Madison Avenue, midblock between Culver Boulevard and Braddock Drive, as shown on the Vicinity Map (Attachment No. 2). The site is generally flat in topography and rectangular in shape with dimensions of 50 feet in width by 135 feet in depth. The project site topography and shape are consistent with parcels in the immediate vicinity. The subject site is currently developed with a single-family residential structure.

Surrounding Area/General Plan/Zoning

The surrounding neighborhood is predominately developed with multi-family dwellings and several single-family, duplex, and triplex buildings. Development patterns in the immediate vicinity include one-story structures facing the street with taller, two-story structures towards the rear of the property. The City’s General Plan Land Use Element designates the site Medium Density Multiple Family, and the site is zoned Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential (RMD). Surrounding zoning and land uses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

Location	Zoning	Land Use
North	RMD	4-Unit Apartment
South	RMD	Single Family
East	RMD	4-Unit Apartment
West	RMD	4-Unit Apartment and Triplex

Project Description

The proposed three (3) detached townhome units are of a contemporary design. The dwelling units are two-stories totaling 29 feet in height, over a semi-subterranean garage. Each unit includes direct internal access to two (2) parking spaces located in individual garages. A 16-foot wide driveway from Madison Avenue provides automobile access to the garage, with pedestrian access to each unit provided along the southern property line. Pedestrian access is also provided to the garages via a mid-property and rear yard staircase. The project development program is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Development Program

	Unit 1	**Unit 2**	**Unit 3**
Size (sq. ft.)	1,623	1,705	1,919
Bedrooms	3	3	3
Bath	4	3	4
Open Space (sq. ft.)	410	420	370

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:

The RMD Zone allows up to one (1) dwelling unit per 1,500 square feet of net lot area, up to a maximum of nine (9) dwelling units. A maximum of four (4) dwelling units are permitted on the 6,750 square foot site; the applicant proposes three (3) units. Construction of new residential projects of less than ten (10) units are subject to an Administrative Site Plan Review pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.540.010. The Planning Commission must act on both the proposed Administrative Site Plan Review and a Tentative Parcel Map as the project proposes subdivision for townhome purposes. The proposed development conforms to all regulations of the RMD zone as illustrated in the Project Summary (Attachment No. 3).

ADMINISTRATIVE SITE PLAN REVIEW

Architectural Design

The contemporary structure includes smooth grey and white stucco facades that are compatible with surrounding properties. The building reaches a maximum height of 25 feet, 6 inches with an additional 3 feet, 6 inches of parapet height on the rooftop deck, for a total height of 29 feet. This building height is below the Code permitted 30 feet. Variations in the building façade reduce massing of the structures. Additional setbacks and sloped metal roofs on upper floors reduce massing along property lines. A windowed front façade creates a transition zone between public and private space along the public right-of-way, while windows along the side elevations add façade articulation and ensure adjacent windows do not line up across property lines. Front doors for the rear units face away from side property lines to increase privacy to neighboring residents. Façade treatments include a mix of subdued grey stucco material with beige metal roofs. Rooftop decks are enclosed by frosted glass railing. Exterior stairwells provide access to rooftop decks and follow the architectural design of the building exterior to integrate them with the overall design. Rooftop decks are set towards the center of the structures, providing greater setbacks from property lines than would otherwise be required.

Landscaping and Open Space

The applicant must landscape all front, side, and rear yard areas not devoted to paved driveways, walkways, or patios as required by the Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC). Small flowering trees, California Western Redbud, are provided along the front and rear of the property, and 12 existing Blue Italian Cypress trees are

preserved along the rear yard setback. An existing Ficus tree will remain along the parkway. A mix of shrub and groundcover are provided in the front yard and along the main pedestrian walkway to each unit.

A minimum 100 square feet of open space is required per unit in the RMD zone. Each unit provides more than the minimum open space requirement by way of rooftop decks and ground floor patios. The project's rooftop decks and ground level open space provide 1,200 total square feet of useable open space area.

Table 3: Private Open Space per Unit

	Unit 1	**Unit 2**	**Unit 3**
Ground Level Private Patio (sq. ft.)	130	130	150
Rooftop Deck (sq. ft.)	280	290	220
Total Open Space (sq. ft.)	**410**	**420**	**370**

Neighborhood Compatibility and Multi-Family Guidelines

The proposed development is located along the 4000 block of Madison Avenue and surrounded by mostly multi-family uses of one to two stories with sloped roofs. The project design complies with RMD development standards as well as Block C of the Gateway Neighborhood Multi-Family Design Guidelines. The block and surrounding neighborhood have overall transitioned to higher density housing developments consistent with density designations (Medium Density Multiple Family) envisioned for the neighborhood by the City's General Plan Land Use Element. Table 4 summarizes neighborhood typologies.

Table 4: Neighborhood Typologies

	Coverage	**Height**	**Setback**
Gateway	40%	18'	23'
4044 Madison	38.7%	29'	23'-6"

Building typologies used in the neighborhood compatibility analysis are intended as a baseline to ensure new structures are compatible with the neighborhood block and adjacent parcels development patterns. The overall 29-foot height of the structure and parapet walls is taller than the block average; however, the offset of the upper levels with additional setbacks and sloped roofs reduces potential height impacts. The applicant also complies with coverage and setback averages per the typologies as seen above.

Overall, the project complies with the guidelines. A mix of façade treatments and articulation reduces massing along street frontages. Subterranean parking is not visible from side or rear yards and setback areas are landscaped. The windows and a street facing front entrance for Unit 1 create an active street façade. Non-aligned windows and setback rooftop decks increase privacy for the subject and neighboring properties.

Traffic, Parking, Storage, Circulation

Individual garages provide the Code required six (6) subterranean parking stalls (two (2) per unit). The Zoning Code does not require guest parking when there are less than four (4) units total. A 16-foot wide driveway from Madison Avenue provides access to the subterranean garage. The proposed slope of the driveway deviates from the Code required three percent (3%) for the first 20 feet. Such deviation may be permitted per CCMC Section 17.320.035 which allows for alternate slope when it can be demonstrated that vehicles may continue to pass over changes in slope without interference with an average vehicle's undercarriage, and allows vehicle entrance and exit of the garage while maintaining visibility and appropriate stopping distance considering ramp slope, speed, and distance to the right-of-way. The Applicant provided the proposed driveway configuration (Attachment 4) demonstrating vehicles may pass without interference with average vehicle's undercarriage, and in consideration of slope, speed, and distance to right-of-way, shows an adequate line-of-sight when cars exit onto the public right-of-way to avoid potential vehicle to vehicle or vehicle to

pedestrian conflict.

Enclosed garages provide resident parking and meet minimum width, length, and overhead clearance standards. The garage level includes 180 to 200 square feet of private storage space per unit. The subterranean level also includes additional utility rooms for the parking of bicycles. The individual garages provide direct access to the interior of each unit. A minimum required 24-foot back-up drive aisle provides adequate turning radius and circulation area to maneuver in and out of parking stalls in a forward-facing manner.

A pedestrian pathway along the southern property line provides front door access to each unit from Madison Avenue. The pedestrian pathway also provides stair access to the garage level by way of mid-property and rear yard staircases.

EV charging and EV ready spaces are not required for a three-unit project per CCMC; however, the applicant has provided that all garages are EV capable in preparation for future EV charging stations.

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 complies with all applicable CCMC standards. The density of the development will not create significant traffic impacts and is below the threshold required for a traffic study.

TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP

The State Subdivision Map Act and CCMC Chapter 15.10 regulate land division and require the submittal of a tentative parcel map for subdivision of three (3) townhome small lot parcels. In addition, CCMC Section 17.210.020 - Table 2-4, Residential Districts 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 the proposed subdivision, whichever is greater. However, this section also states that 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 is comprised of a 6,750 square foot lot. The 50-foot lot width will not change and the overall lot depth of 135 feet will not change. Through the subdivision process, three (3) small land lots for townhome style development will be created within the existing lot effectively creating a small lot subdivision.

The key objective of the tentative parcel map process is to allow the City to review the proposed subdivision to ensure all necessary improvements and requirements are provided. The Public Works Engineering Division reviewed the Tentative Parcel Map (Attachment No. 5) for the proposed subdivision and found it to follow all applicable State and local regulations as more specifically outlined in the recommended conditions of approval. However, the rear lots are not provided with the City Subdivision minimum street frontage standard of a 10-foot stem providing access to the right-of-way. CCMC Section 15.10.085 provides an exception process if the Planning Commission determines that the conditions affecting the site warrant such exceptions to portions of the Subdivision ordinance, and referral to the City Council.

The 50-foot lot width does not allow for 10-foot wide stems lots for each townhome unit because the resulting driveway would be 30 feet wide, diminishing the area of the parcel that could be developed or improved. The project does provide a 16-foot wide driveway easement serving the lots on which the dwellings will be located, thus providing access to the public right-of-way for each dwelling unit and maximizing the number of units that can be supported. If the project were a standard condominium wherein airspace units are developed, the driveway and land surrounding the units would typically be held in common and shared access would be secured through Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs). While this project is consistent in design and function with condominium and attached townhome developments in the area, the proposed subdivision

will enable each resident to own their dwelling as well as the surrounding land.

The Applicant is requesting an exception to the subdivision requirements, pursuant to CCMC Section 15.10.085, because the proposed 16-foot-wide driveway easement provides access to each unit's garage, similar to the provision of individual driveways. Similarly, a 30-foot-wide driveway decreases the area to build habitable living space. The requested exception does not violate the Subdivision Map Act because a 16-foot wide easement for common driveway purposes assures public right-of-way access for each lot within the development.

All required subdivision findings can otherwise be made for the Project and all required vehicular, pedestrian, and utility/drainage easements will be made a part of the final map assuring all lots have required access to the public right-of-way. This exception will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare nor injurious to the property or improvements in the immediate vicinity. For these reasons, an exception can be made to the requirement for public street frontage and the minimum stem size required for access to the public street via a flag lot.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Two community meetings were held as part of the project review process; the first on February 21, 2020 at the Veterans Memorial Building and the second on October 8, 2020 via video conference consistent with Culver City "Safer-at-Home" Public Orders. The applicant invited interested persons to learn about the development project, provide comments and feedback, and share any concerns regarding the proposed project.

Approximately five (5) people who live in the project neighborhood attended the first community meeting. Below is a summary of the meeting:

- Concern from property owners to the north regarding window placement. The applicant informed the property owners that window placement had been designed to avoid direct alignment with existing windows on adjacent properties.
- Concern regarding traffic impacts resulting from construction and a net increase of two dwelling units. The applicant explained that the units would provide new housing in a job-rich area and increase options for people to live near where they work. The applicant also pointed out that the total number of dwelling units (three) was less than what CCMC allowed (four). Staff noted that a Construction Traffic Management Plan would be provided to and approved by the Public Works Department prior to construction to reduce any adverse traffic impacts to the surrounding community.
- Concern regarding rooftop decks and potential noise. The applicant explained that the rooftop decks were small and not intended for large numbers of people. The applicant also explained that rooftop decks were setback towards the center of the property, increasing privacy by increasing the deck separation from adjacent properties.

Approximately six (6) people who live in the project neighborhood attended the second community meeting. Below is a summary of the meeting:

- Concerns regarding construction impacts, especially during Safer-at-Home orders and neighbor compensation. Neighbors inquired about fees to assist residents during construction including renter compensation, streetscape improvements, and traffic calming.
- Concern regarding loss of 1920's neighborhood character was also voiced by residents.

Staff worked with the applicant to design a project that met neighborhood design guidelines and helped fit into the neighborhood. Construction impacts will be mitigated through best practices enforced by the Community Development Department staff.

Comments Received During Public Comment Period

As of the writing of this report, one letter of objection to the subject project was received from the public. That letter is included in Attachment No. 7.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

The proposed development results in code compliant structures and parking. Staff worked with the applicant to propose a project that is compatible with the neighborhood and the immediately abutting properties. The applicant has redesigned and modified the project to meet Zoning Code requirements and better reflect the goals of the Gateway Neighborhood Multi-Family Neighborhood Design Guidelines.

Based on the proposed preliminary development plans and recommended conditions of approval, staff considers the project: compatible with the surrounding neighborhood; adequately served by public facilities; and, consistent with the General Plan, Zoning Code, and all CCMC and State subdivision requirements. Staff believes that findings for Tentative Parcel Map P2020-0249-TPM and Administrative Site Plan Review P2020-0249-ASPR can be made as outlined in Resolution No. P2021-002 (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 Categorically Exempt per CEQA Section 15303, Class 3, New Construction of Small Structures and Section 15315, Class 15, Minor Land Divisions.

- The project includes the construction of no more than three residential units in an urbanized area.
- The project consists of the subdivision of the site into three (3) small lots, thereby establishing one residential unit on each small lot.
- The project is deemed consistent with the applicable General Plan and RMD zoning designation and regulations without any variances or exceptions to said General Plan or Zoning Code,
- The project does not involve a parcel from a larger subdivision within the previous two (2) years,
- The project will not result in a parcel with an average slope of greater than 20 percent.
- The project will be adequately served by all required utilities and public services; and will have all services and access to local standards.

MOTION

That the Planning Commission:

Adopt Class 3 and 15 Categorical Exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act; 2) Approve Administrative Site Plan Review P2020-0249-ASPR and Tentative Parcel Map No. 83372, P2020-0249-TPM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2021-P002, and 3) Recommend to the City Council approval of an exception to a subdivision design standard (CCMC Section 15.10.700.C) regarding lot frontage.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Resolution No. 2021-P002 and Exhibit A Conditions of Approval

2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Preliminary Development Plans Dated January 22, 2021
5. Tentative Parcel Map No. 83372
6. Applicant Summary of Community Meetings
7. Public Comments Received Prior to Agenda Finalization