



# City of Culver City

Mike Balkman Council  
Chambers  
9770 Culver Blvd.  
Culver City, CA 90232

## Staff Report

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**File #:** 16-217, **Version:** 1

**Item #:** PH-2

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**Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0120-ASPR and Tentative Parcel Map, P2016-0120-TPM, for the construction of a two-story, four-unit condominium development at 4034 La Salle Avenue in the Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (RMD) zone.**

**Contact Person/Dept:** Peter Sun, Assistant Planner  
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**Phone Number:** 310.253.5710

**Fiscal Impact:** Yes ☐ No ☒

**General Fund:** Yes ☐ No ☒

**Public Hearing:** ☒

**Action Item:** ☐

**Attachments:** ☐

**Public Notification:** Mailed to all property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius, Public Notice, emailed to the City's master distribution list, and posted on the City's website on September 7, 2016

**Department Approval:** Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (09/15/16)

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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, P2016-0120-ASPR and Tentative Parcel Map, P2016-0120-TPM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2016-P014 (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 July 6, 2016, an application was submitted for an Administrative Site Plan Review and Tentative Parcel Map to allow the subdivision of one (1) parcel into four (4) airspace condominium lots, and the construction of four (4) attached residential condominium dwelling units at 4034 La Salle Avenue in the Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone.

### Existing Conditions

The project site is located at 4034 La Salle Avenue on the northeast side of La Salle Avenue between Culver Boulevard and Braddock Drive. The lot is 50 feet in width and 135 feet in depth, having a lot size of 6,750 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 located in the Gateway Neighborhood and is subject to the Gateway Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines.

The project site is currently developed with one single-family home, single-story with attached one-car garage. All existing structures and site improvements are to be demolished as part of the proposed project.

The neighborhood surrounding the site is zoned RMD on both sides of La Salle Avenue between Culver Boulevard and Braddock Drive. The block is developed with a mix of one to ten-unit developments with the most frequent being three and four-unit developments.

La Salle Avenue is a 60-foot public right-of-way and identified as local street, as classified by the Circulation Element. La Salle Avenue acts as the bridge by which vehicles travel between private property to Braddock Drive, a 60-foot neighborhood feeder, and Culver Boulevard, a primary artery.

### Project Description

The project applicant proposes to construct four (4) condominium dwelling units in a two-story 28-foot high building. The four units are positioned with two units side-by-side in the front of the lot, and two units side by side in the rear. Each of the units are two-story with common areas on the ground floor and 3 bedrooms on the second floor. See below for unit breakdown.

	Unit A	Unit B	Unit C	Unit D
Bedrooms	3	3	3	3
Bathrooms	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
1 <sup>st</sup> Floor Living Area	615	698	930	880
2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Living Area	921	955	962	926
Total Living Area	1,536	1,653	1,892	1,806

The condominium building is designed in a style that is modern with references towards a traditional cottage which could be found in a beach city. Large aluminum windows line the sides of the building to allow for plenty of natural light ventilation into each of the units. Although none of the units have balconies on the second floor. A private roof deck is provided per unit to provide active and passive recreation space.

Parking is provided in a subterranean parking structure through a 10-foot wide ramp off La Salle Avenue. The new driveway ramp is located in the same location and width as the existing driveway, minimizing the changes to existing parkway and curb improvements that could reduce street parking. Each of the units are provided two (2) private tandem spaces in an enclosed garage in the subterranean garage. One (1) guest/handicap space is provided per zoning requirements.

## **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 6,250 square feet, a maximum of four (4) units may be allowed 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. However, permitted projections may project above the finished top plate.

The project meets all applicable standards of development of the RMD zone. The project complies with all setback requirements, providing a 15-foot setback in the front yard on the first story and 17-foot setback on the second story, 5-foot setback in the side yards, and 10-foot setback in the rear. The project is measured approximately 24 feet from grade to top plate and 28 feet to the top of parapet/guardrail. This complies with the maximum height of 30 feet in the RMD zone. Two staircase enclosures provide access to private roof decks for each of the units. Staircase enclosures are permitted projections above the maximum height, and the height measured to the top of the staircase enclosures is 33 feet 9 inches.

The project meets the minimum required livable area of 1,100 square feet for a three-bedroom unit. Each of the units is provided approximately 350 to 450 square feet of roof deck and 200 square feet of private yard space to comply with minimum open space requirements of 100 square feet per unit.

#### **Parking**

Parking is provided in a subterranean garage accessed from the La Salle Avenue. The project meets the parking requirement for a multi-family project by providing two (2) enclosed parking spaces per unit, for a total of eight (8) enclosed spaces. These private spaces are provided in tandem and enclosed in with a roll-up door. 150 cubic feet of storage is provided at the front of the spaces above the car hood. Each unit has individual access through a staircase into a private garage. One (1) guest parking space is provided in front of the trash room to meet the guest space requirement of 1 space per every 4 units. The guest parking space is also shared to be used as a handicap space.

The driveway ramp providing vehicular access to the subterranean garage is located at the north corner of the site and utilizes the same driveway apron on the street. The ramp is minimized to 11 feet in width to minimize the driveway visibility on the street and to minimize the impact of wider curb cuts which would reduce street parking availability. Common access to the subterranean garage is provided through an elevator lift to the small interior courtyard on the ground floor, and an exterior staircase in the side yard.

#### **Landscape**

As required by the CCMC, the applicant must landscape all front, side, and rear yards not devoted to paved driveways, walkways, or patios. Each of the two units in the front has a private front yard and landscaping.

The front yards are enclosed with 4-foot high wrought iron fence designed to mimic the wood picket fences found on the block. The two rear units will each have a private landscaped rear yards. All landscaped areas will be required to comply with the City's requirements for drought tolerant landscaping. A row of tall shrubs is proposed at the northern side yard near the rear property line, where the project team has identified a potential impact to privacy of the adjacent residence.

The applicant is also required to provide additional landscaping with drought tolerant planting consistent with the City's recently adopted parkway landscape standards. Currently, two palm trees are located in the parkway. The city arborist has required the removal of the northern most palm tree which is damaged and has recommended replacing both palms with cinnamomum camphora trees consistent with the City's Street Tree Master Plan.

### Architectural Design

The project is a modern design, but with references to more traditional forms of architecture in the front elevation. The front elevation is stepped back on the second story and massing is split into two sections. The roof form utilizes a gable pitch and metal seam roof to pay homage to traditional architectural forms. Entries are recessed in the front to provide additional articulation and shelter.

On the side and rear elevations, the building uses different colors and massing to provide architectural relief and articulation. On all elevations, the first story wall is recessed by at least 6 inches from the second story. The second story is a light green yellow; first story is light grey. This separation of the second and first story, and the articulation of massing helps to give the building visual interest.

A private roof-top deck is provided for each of the four units. The roof decks provide passive recreational open space for each of the occupants. The roof decks are set back from the edges of the building by 2 feet on the sides, 11 feet in the front, and 15 feet in the rear to reduce the appearance of the total height and massing of the building, and to help protect the privacy of abutting property owners. The wrought-iron railing on the roof deck also reduces the visibility of the roof deck and height of the overall building. Staircases to the roof deck are housed in two 8-foot structures of glass and anodized aluminum frame. The staircases are also set back from the edge of the building by at least the height of the structure. One is set back 15 feet from the rear; another is setback by 9 feet from the front. Each of the roof decks also has built-in planter boxes large enough for a small tree or shrub to obstruct sight lines.

### Neighborhood Compatibility

The project is located in the Gateway Neighborhood Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines (Guidelines) area. As such, the design of the project is informed by the Guidelines and is intended to be compatible with the existing neighborhood. The Gateway Neighborhood is a transitional multi-family neighborhood with many properties developed at higher densities consistent with the City's General Plan. Therefore, the block is comprised of varying architectural styles, building forms, and floor area ratios. The applicant has designed the project to be consistent with the General Plan and RMD zoning designation, and in a manner that respects the transitional building forms of the neighborhood.

In an effort to ensure neighborhood compatibility, the project is designed to be consistent with the average and prevailing front yard setback, lot coverage, and building height of surrounding properties (Identified as Block A in the Guidelines). Block A is comprised of nine properties on the northeast side of La Salle Avenue bounded by Culver Boulevard to the north and Braddock Drive to the south. Page G0.00 of the submitted plans

contains a detailed description of the project data and averages found on Block A.

	CCMC Req.	Avg.	Prevailing	Project
Front setback	12' (1/2 of height to top plate)	17'	15'	15'
Height	30' max	20'	20'	28' (to parapet)
Lot Coverage	N/A	44%	41-60%	61%

Throughout the different revisions that have been made to the project based on input from staff and the community, the project team has made several advances toward making the project more compatible with the averages of the block. The height of the overall structure was reduced several times by making small adjustments to the height of the top plate, the parapet, and height of the roof-top structure. The building front yard setback was also increased to minimize the scale of the building visible from the street. Given the transitional nature of block A, which is composed of single-family and multi-family developments, staff finds the project is consistent with the block averages and is compatible with the neighborhood. Please see the Design Narrative contained in Attachment No. 7

Furthermore, the project team also analyzed window alignment with adjacent buildings to identify potential impact to privacy and mitigate those impacts accordingly. Page A1.10 and A1.20 illustrate the windows found on adjacent buildings, and a breakdown of window distances, and solutions to address compatibility. Most privacy impacts on the first floor are mitigated by a 6-foot high fence or tall growing trees and shrubs.

Analyzing the proposed project as a whole, staff can conclude that the project meets all of the design objectives outlined in the Guidelines. The project reflects the development patterns and character of the neighborhood and the block, relative to prevailing lot size, building orientation, setbacks, height, yards, open space, and lot coverage. The project utilizes well-developed materials, massing, and detail that creates visual interest and contributes to overall architectural quality. Privacy and access to sunlight for adjacent residences remains protected. The existing parkway at the street is preserved, with minimum disruption to the street frontage. Landscaping is integrated within the project in private yards and roof decks to complement the building. Lighting is functionally placed and shielded to protect spillage into adjacent properties. Parking and parking access is designed to minimize visual impact and maximize open space.

## 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 6,750 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 four (4) condominium airspace units and meet the requirements of the Zoning Code. At the permitted density of 1 unit per 1,500 square feet

in the RMD zone, a 6,750-square-foot lot is permitted 4.5 or a maximum of four (4) units.

Tentative Parcel Map No. 74402 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 the project review process, one community meeting was held. 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.

### **Community Meeting**

A community meeting was held June 1, 2016 at the Culver City Senior Center at 4095 Overland Avenue. Invitations were sent by the applicant on May 12, 2016 to all property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the project site. Four community members signed in to the meeting.

The meeting discussion primarily involved proposed density, parking, privacy, and architectural style. Many of the community members who participated in the meeting lived in the immediate vicinity and to the back of the property. A summary of the community meeting (Attachment 6) was provided by the applicant as record of the discussion.

Although many of the participants live in multi-family housing developments in the vicinity, they strongly opposed the project because they feared that the impact of the increase in density on the project site would negatively affect their property.

The participants complained that there already exists a lack of available street parking, and that the project would add to the parking problem and affect their ability to find parking.

Concerns over privacy were also noted by community members, particularly to those properties abutting the subject property to the sides and rear.

Architectural style was also cited as a complaint. The community members communicated that they did not favor the modern architectural style. They found many of the new residential developments "distasteful".

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

One written comment was received during public comment period (Attachment No. 8).

## **CONCLUSION/SUMMARY**

Through the preliminary project review process, the applicant has worked with staff to design a project that 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 step back the front elevation, reduce the overall building height, and articulate the massing. The applicant also reduced the size of the roof decks and stepped them in from the edge of the roof in response to community input. Staff feels that the applicant has used creative methods to reduce the bulk of the building, create visual interest, and reasonably mitigate

privacy impact.

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, P2016-0120-ASPR, and Tentative Tract Map No. 74402, P2016-0120-TPM, can be made as outlined in Resolution No. 2016-P014 (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 four (4) attached residential dwelling units and the subdivision of the site into four (4) 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.

## **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

No fiscal impact is the result of approval of this project.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Draft Resolution No. 2016-P014 and Exhibit A: Conditions of Approval
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Preliminary Development Plans dated July 6, 2016
5. Tentative Tract Map No. 74065
6. Community Meeting Summary
7. Design Narrative
8. Public Comments