



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 16-552, **Version:** 1

Item #: PH-2.

PC - Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0188-ASPR, and Tentative Parcel Map No. 74728, P2016-0188-TPM, for the Construction of a Four (4) Unit Condominium Subdivision at 3832 Bentley Avenue in the Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone.

Meeting Date: February 22, 2017

Contact Person/Dept: Gabriela Silva, Associate Planner;
Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager

Phone Number: (310) 253-5736

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 (02/16/2017)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt a Class 3 and Class 15 Categorical Exemption 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, P2016-0188-ASPR and Tentative Parcel Map No. 74728, P2016-0188-TPM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2017-P001 (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 12, 2016, an application was submitted for an Administrative Site Plan Review and Tentative Parcel Map to allow the demolition of an existing single family dwelling and detached accessory structure (garage), the subdivision of the subject site into a four (4) airspace condominium subdivision, and the construction of four (4) attached residential condominium dwelling units (i.e. one (1) dwelling unit on each of the proposed airspace lots) within the project site located at 3832 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.

Existing Conditions

The site is located on the east side of the Bentley Avenue, south of Venice Boulevard and north of Matteson Avenue, as outlined in the Vicinity Map (Attachment No. 2). The Land Use Element of the City's General Plan designates this site and surrounding areas as Medium Density Multiple Family Residential, which is consistent with the site's zoning designation of RMD. Properties to the north, south, east and west are also zoned RMD; the site is the fourth property north of Venice Boulevard, where the Culver City boundary abuts City of Los Angeles. The parcel is rectangular in shape, generally flat in topography, and measures 6,600 square feet. The neighborhood surrounding the site to the south, east, and west consists of largely rectangular parcels, similar in size, with those to the east being about twenty (20) feet deeper and those to the west being about thirty (30) feet shorter in depth than the subject parcel, and developed with a mix of multiple-family and single-family housing, in both single story and multi-story designs. To the west, the site abuts an existing public alley and beyond the alley are residential properties fronting Tilden Avenue.

The subject site is currently vacant as all structures have been demolished in anticipation of future development. The site was previously developed with a single-story, single family dwelling and a detached garage accessible from the rear twenty (20) foot wide alley. The existing large mature tree at the front yard area will likely be removed per Public Works Department requirements, due to its close proximity to the public right-of-way and potential to damage the future sidewalk or other improvements in the public right-of-way. Vehicular access to the existing garage was provided through the alley; an additional parking space was provided on a parking pad at the southerly area of the front yard. The access driveway apron serving the parking pad will be removed to provide new sidewalk, curb, gutter, and driveway apron per the requirements of the Culver City Public Works Department.

Project Description

As outlined in the Preliminary Development Plans (Attachment No.4), the project applicant proposes to construct four (4) condominium dwelling units. The proposed condominium dwelling units have been designed as attached two-story structures, located above a subterranean parking garage. The proposed project has a maximum overall building height of 24 feet - 6 inches to the top of the building roof and (twenty-eight) 28 feet to the top of the tallest parapet. The proposed stairwell projection extends above the roof to a maximum

height of 32 feet - 5 inches. Each unit will have its own set of 2-car parking spaces within the proposed subterranean garage. In addition, one (1) guest parking space is proposed, thus, a total of nine (9) off-street parking spaces will be provided. The dwellings are arranged in a linear pattern from the front of the parcel to the rear. The building layout is such, that all four (4) dwelling units will be accessed from side facing entries located parallel to the northerly property line and which are designed to be recessed further from the main building wall. Secondary egress is provided for the three (3) rear units along the northerly side of the building/property, connecting to a small outdoor patio area, while the front unit will have secondary access and outdoor patio area along the front of the building facing Bentley Avenue. The front unit will measure approximately 1,936 square feet, while the remaining units will be 1,805 square feet; all units will contain three (3) bedrooms and two and one half (2 ½) bathrooms. All improvements are consistent with the provisions of the Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC).

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:

The RMD Zone allows one (1) unit per 1,500 square feet of net lot area, up to a maximum of nine (9) dwelling units; therefore, based on the lot area of 6,600 square feet, a maximum of four (4) units may be allowed on the site. The RMD Zone requires minimum setbacks of ten (10) feet or half the building height, five (5) feet, and ten (10) feet or five (5) feet when adjacent to an alley, for the front, sides, and rear respectively. There is a minimum dwelling size based on the number of bedrooms that must be met, and the maximum allowable height is two (2) stories and thirty (30) feet. As shown in the Project Summary (Attachment No. 3), the proposed development conforms to all regulations of the RMD Zone.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE SITE PLAN REVIEW

Architectural Design

The structures are designed in a modern architectural style, characterized by straight lines, and ninety (90) degree angles. The building incorporates flat roofs with parapets of varying heights, as well as sloped style roof segments at the stairwell projections. The two-story structure is dressed with a smooth stucco finish on the primary exterior walls on all elevations, with certain wall segments and features selectively clad in wood siding, metal panels, and metal flashing/trim throughout the façade. Glass is also significantly featured in the design, by incorporating numerous large windows and doors, particularly on the south elevation, as well as a large second floor balcony guardrail that wraps around the northerly corner of the front facade. Rooftop decks will incorporate perimeter landscaping to preserve privacy and enhance the appearance of the building.

The overall design and street view is further enhanced with a metal canopy and glass balcony railing, as well as a vertically oriented metal façade at the front unit. Despite having the main entries oriented to the side of the building, the secondary egress of the front unit faces the street and along with the various architectural elements aids in maintaining communication with the street and contributes to the pedestrian-oriented quality of the streetscape. The building mass is articulated and broken up by the use of variation in the building height, with portions of the front façade being lower in height than the rear portions, so as to reduce the massing along the street frontage. The building also utilizes varying building widths, widening on the second floor and as it extends to the rear of the site. The building is designed to be attractive on all sides, providing changes in the building plane and materials variations along the sides and rear facades, further adding to the multi-dimensional appearance of the building. The color palette consists of light, natural tones with dark accents, including light grey (stucco), walnut (wood siding), medium grey (metal fascia/trim), and dark grey (metal façade panels), providing depth and contrast throughout the building.

The proposed subterranean garage is designed to be accessed from Bentley Avenue through a proposed twelve (12) foot wide driveway located at the southerly edge of the property, and the entry is set back

approximately fifty (50) feet from the front property line, thereby minimizing the visual impact of the off-street parking facilities.

Overall, the design of the proposed project is compatible with residential structures in the neighborhood and the building height and massing is consistent with the zoning standards of the RMD Zone, and intent of the ASPR required findings. Materials samples for the project will be available at the meeting.

Landscaping

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 have approximately 75 percent landscape coverage, and will comply with the minimum required 55% of landscape coverage for the front yard for multi-family developments per CCMC Section 17.400.105. Landscape will include a variation in plant materials, including trees, and colors to soften the building façade and enhance the street view aesthetics of the site. Due to the need for walkways to access the various unit entries and secondary egress from the subterranean garage, the proposed driveway, and the provision of the required parking in a subterranean garage, there are limited opportunities for landscaping beyond the front yard. Nevertheless, site landscaping will be maximized by providing plantings at all remaining areas, including a substantial amount of landscape along the side property lines and the southeast setback area of the site, which will have plantings similar to the front yard. The northerly setback area will be used primarily for a walkway, but will have a planting strip with screening plants (e.g. bamboo or other type of hedge) to provide a visual buffer and increase privacy between the site and the northerly property. Similarly, planters with small shrubs and approximately three (3) larger trees will be provided along the southerly setback between small outdoor patio areas and the abutting property where a larger multi-family building is located. The rooftop decks will also have planters, along the southerly edges closest to the abutting side property line, with plantings that will provide visual screening to preserve privacy on the subject site and the abutting property. Proposed landscaping will be required to complement the building and enhance the aesthetic appearance of the development. New landscaping will also include two (2) street trees on Bentley Avenue, the species of which shall be in accordance with the City's Street Tree Master Plan; permanent irrigation will be required to be provided as part of the on-site irrigation. Preliminary landscape information is included in the preliminary development plans made part of this report (Attachment No. 4).

Open Space

The proposed development provides the required open space for each unit by means of private rooftop decks, which are accessed from the second floor hallway area of each of the proposed units. The rooftop decks will be located on the southerly half of the unit footprint. Each rooftop deck measures approximately 325 to 355 square feet, with the front unit having the largest area, thereby meeting the minimum requirement of one hundred (100) square feet. The rooftop open space areas are bounded by the building parapet walls, measuring 3 feet - 6 inches in height, and are provided with landscape planters along the most southerly edge. These planters serve to preserve the privacy of the open areas and surrounding properties. Additionally, each unit has a supplementary outdoor open space area at the ground floor, measuring approximately 130 to 140 square feet; for Units 2 through 4 it is located at the secondary egress point along the southerly side of the building, and for Unit 1 is located at the front yard.

Neighborhood Compatibility

The proposed development is located along the 3800 block of Bentley Avenue, which is a local residential street developed with a variety of one-story and two-story single and multiple family residences. The block and surrounding streets (Matteson Avenue and Tilden Avenue have been transitioning to multiple-family

development consistent with the higher density designation (Medium Density Multiple Family Residential) envisioned for the neighborhood by the City's General Plan Land Use Element.

Generally consistent with the average density for the block (2.9 dwelling units) and in compliance with the RMD Zone and corresponding General Plan designation, the site permits the four (4) proposed units. The units are proposed in one (1) building, which is adequately set back to conform to and exceed zoning requirements. The building also incorporates architectural features and materials that break-up the massing and bulk of the development so as to be compatible with development in the neighborhood, and in particular with those multiple-family developments that have been constructed and/or approved in the past several years. The average front setback for the block is twenty-two (22) feet, while the minimum Code required setback, based on the RMD zone requirement of ten (10) feet or half the building height, is twelve (12) feet and six (6) inches feet. Therefore, the proposed front setback of fifteen (15) feet is sensitive to the average setback condition on the block and exceeds the minimum code requirements. In addition, the fifteen (15) foot setback applies to a portion of the building façade, creating step-backs and overhangs that minimize the amount of building mass located closest to the front property lines, with a setback of up to twenty (20) feet at the first floor. The second floor has setbacks ranging between 17 feet - 6 inches and nineteen (19) feet. Further, while the maximum allowed building height is thirty (30) feet, the proposed roof height is 24'-6", with the parapets extending to a maximum of twenty-eight (28) feet, and with portions of the front façade as low as 13'-3" at the street front, so as to be compatible with the average block height of twenty-two (22) feet. The building serves as an appropriate transition between the 16-19 foot structures on the north-abutting property and the thirty (30) foot high building to the south. Lastly, the Zoning Code does not restrict lot coverage; however, the project proposes approximately 64% overall for the site, inclusive of second story cantilever and projections/overhangs. The average lot coverage range for the block is 42 to 50%, with approximately 50% of the lots in the block having lot coverage between fifty (50) and fifty-seven (57) percent. Thus, the proposed development aims to be consistent with the average range for the block with regard to ground floor coverage and the provision of ground level open space, while maximizing the unit floor areas consistent with the higher lot coverage of other multi-family developments in the block.

The project is sensitive to the neighborhood character, and also to the goal of preserving privacy for abutting properties. Therefore, roof decks are required to have rooftop planters with landscape screening. The preservation of privacy is also considered by the project relative to window locations in order to minimize direct views into the abutting properties. Where windows/doors do overlap, the opening on the subject site is set back 8'-6" and the openings on the abutting site are 10'-0" feet from the dividing property line.

Traffic, Parking, and Circulation

The existing eighty (80) foot wide public right-of-way, Bentley Avenue, has been deemed by the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department to be of adequate width to serve the site and the proposed development. The gutter, curb, sidewalk, and driveway approach along the project's frontage are required to be removed and replaced, and will include the installation of two (2) street trees as more specifically outlined in the recommended conditions of approval. In addition, due to the anticipated utility cuts within the Bentley Avenue public right-of-way, the applicant may also be required to slurry seal the full width of Bentley Avenue along the project's frontage, per the Engineering Division's requirements. The density of the overall development will not create any significant traffic impacts and is below the threshold requiring a traffic study or off-site improvements related to traffic.

In accordance with the Zoning Code requirements, each of the proposed units will be provided with the minimum required two (2) parking spaces, for a total of eight (8) parking stalls, which will be provided in a standard side-by-side configuration. In addition, the CCMC requires on-site guest parking for every four (4)

dwellings; therefore, one (1) guest parking stall is required, for a total of nine (9) off-street parking stalls within a proposed subterranean garage to be shared by all four (4) units. The existing driveway located along the southerly property line will be removed and a new twelve (12) foot wide common driveway will be provided in closer proximity to the southerly edge of the site, providing vehicular access to the required off-street parking for the project. The garage is designed to provide a minimum height clearance of 8'-2", allowing for additional space beyond the required minimum of seven (7) feet of overhead clearance. A back-up clearance of 24'-8" is provided, exceeding the minimum Code requirement of twenty-four (24) feet and allowing a sufficient turning radius and circulation area to maneuver in and out of each parking stall, and exit back onto Bentley Avenue in a forward direction. Pedestrian access from the subterranean garage to the unit entry level is provided by a stairway at the rear of the building. Disabled access is provided by an elevator also located between Unit 1 and 2; the side-facing entry to Unit 1, which has been designed with disabled access in mind, allows for the most convenient access from the elevator to the unit, instead of travelling to the front of the building.

Primary pedestrian and disabled access from the public street to the entries of the units is proposed via an at-grade walkway along the northerly end of the site, which meets the minimum four (4) foot wide access path required by the Zoning Code. The unit entries are recessed beyond the main building wall and setback, providing an 8'-0", 8'-6", or 9'-0" setback, which provides an additional buffer from the abutting property and also allows a person to stand at the entry without obstructing the common walkway. This walkway continues to the rear of the site, where it connects to the stairs that provide access to the parking garage below, and is proposed to be screened from the neighboring property by a 5'-6" high masonry wall and landscape plantings.

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 are designed in accordance with all applicable CCMC standards. Based on the above, the proposed project is in conformance with all applicable CCMC requirements relating to parking, circulation, and traffic.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)

This project will address a portion of Culver City's share of the RHNA by constructing a net new 3 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 sustainability and accommodate alternative transportation, the project is proposed to incorporate electric vehicle (EV) charging at all parking stalls within subterranean parking garage, as well as one (1) bicycle parking space per unit, and will be a condition of the project if approved. The bicycle parking will have a dedicated area within the subterranean parking 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 parcel 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. A majority of the lots in the area measure approximately 5,000 to 7,600 square feet, with some outlier parcels measuring as little as 4,800 square feet and as much as 18,650 square feet. The subject site measures 6,600 square feet, as do most of the parcels on the east side of Bentley Avenue in the segment between Venice Boulevard and Matteson Avenue; therefore, the overall site complies with this requirement and there will not be any changes to the current overall lot area. One of the various objectives of the tentative parcel map process is to allow the City to review the proposed condominium subdivision to ensure all necessary improvements and requirements are provided. The Public Works Department has reviewed the tentative parcel map (Attachment No. 5) for proposed the condominium subdivision and found it to be in compliance with all applicable State and local regulations as more specifically outlined in the recommended conditions of 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. As part of the project review process, a community meeting was held at the project site on Tuesday, July 19, 2016 during the Preliminary Project Review (PPR) phase. The applicant sent invitations on July 5, 2016 to property owners and occupants within a 500 foot radius, inviting interested persons to learn about the development project, provide comments and feedback, as well as to share any concerns regarding the proposed project. One person from the public was in attendance, in addition to the project team and City staff. The project team provided an overview of the project, including proposed density, height, and off-street parking, and allowed for questions from the person in attendance.

The community member had general questions and did not indicate he had any objections or major concerns regarding the project; he expressed the item of interest for him was related to the project construction activities (Attachment No. 6). Further, the primary topics of discussion were regarding parking, site conditions during construction, and length of construction. In terms of parking, there was only the general question of how much was required by code and how much was proposed to be provided by the project and whether the project would provide sufficient parking for the number of units, as well as guest parking. The applicant summarized the proposed parking information for the project and the Zoning Code requirements. The questions related to construction focused on the timeline and site conditions during that time. The applicant shared the estimated construction timeline and indicated they aimed to minimize the length of the construction phase, and that they would abide by all applicable City requirements and Conditions of Approval with regard to allowed construction hours, construction vehicle queuing, on-site and off-site staging, etc. 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

As of the writing of this report, staff has not received any public comments, in writing or any other form, on the proposed project.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY:

The applicant has worked with Staff to produce a project that is compatible with the neighborhood and the immediately surrounding properties, and addresses the issues of importance to the Culver City residential community. Specifically, the applicant followed staff direction with regard to lowering the parking further below grade to avoid a podium condition, reducing building height, and providing additional step backs and articulation to the building. Care has been taken in the design to break up the bulk and mass of the building with varying building heights and widths and the inclusion of architectural projections and material variation to create visual relief, as well as a pedestrian-friendly façade in scale with the surroundings. In addition, the locations of windows and doors have been considered in order to ensure privacy with abutting properties. Based on the proposed preliminary development plans and recommended conditions of approval, staff considers 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, P2016-0188-ASPR, and Tentative Parcel Map No. 74728, P2016-0188-TPM, can be made as outlined in Resolution No. 2017-P001 (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 a Class 3 and Class 15 Categorical Exemption 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 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 applications do not meet the required findings.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution No. 2017-P001 and Exhibit A: Conditions of Approval
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Preliminary Development Plans dated December 22, 2016
5. Tentative Parcel Map No. 74728
6. Community Meeting Summary