



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 16-703, **Version:** 1

Item #: PH-2.

PC - Proposed Density Bonuses and Other Bonus Incentives, Site Plan Review, and Administrative Use Permit, (P2016-0072-DOBI, SPR, and AUP); for a proposed 4-story, 48,422 square foot, mixed use project consisting of 14 multi-family residential dwelling units above 4,898 square feet of ground floor retail commercial space with surface and subterranean parking including tandem parking spaces at 11281 Washington Place.

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Phone Number: (310) 253-5757
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Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☒

Action Item: ☐

Attachments: ☒

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Planning Commission (03/01/17); (Posted) Sign posted on the site (03/01/17); (Mailed) All the property owners and occupants within a 500 foot radius of the project site (03/01/17);

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (03/14/17)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt a Categorical Exemption as stipulated in CEQA Section 15332, Class 32 - In-Fill Development, finding that there are no potentially significant adverse impacts on the environment; and
2. Approve Site Plan Review and Administrative Use Permit, P2016-0072-SPR & -AUP; and Recommend to the City Council Approval of Density Bonuses and Other Bonus Incentives, P2016-0072-DOBI; subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2017-P004 (Attachment No. 1).

PROCEDURES:

1. Chair opens the public hearing and calls for a staff report and Commission poses

questions to staff as desired.

2. Commission 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 April 20, 2016, an application was submitted by Washington Place, LLC (the “Applicant”) for a Site Plan Review (SPR), Density Bonuses and Other Bonus Incentives (DOBI), and Administrative Use Permit (AUP) for a 48,422 square foot mixed use project consisting of 4,898 square feet of ground floor retail and 14 dwellings units, including two units to be covenanted for Low Income as part of State Density Bonus Law (the “State Law”) in return for an increase in density at 11218 Washington Place.

Per the State Law the Applicant proposes:

- 20% of base density units covenanted for Low Income or $20\% \times 10 \text{ units} = 2 \text{ units}$
- 35% increase in base density or $35\% \times 10 = 3.5 = 4 \text{ units}$
- Total Dwelling Units = $10 + 4 = 14$

The project proposes 14 commercial at grade parking spaces and 31 residential subterranean parking spaces; the residential parking includes 28 spaces for residences and 3 residential guest spaces.

The Planning Commission is being asked to consider the proposed Project development entitlements pursuant to the Zoning Code’s Chapter 17.540 (Site Plan Review), Chapter 17.530 (Administrative Use Permit - Tandem Parking), and Section 17.400.065 (Mixed Use Ordinance). The City Council based on a recommendation from the Planning Commission will consider the proposed density bonus pursuant to SB 1818 (the “State Law”) and Zoning Code Chapter 17.580 (Density Bonus and Other Bonus Incentives).

Existing Conditions

The project site, located at the northeast corner of Washington Place and Sawtelle Boulevard, contains an abandoned, dilapidated gas station on a 12,337 square foot property comprised of five lots (Lots 371 - 375 in Tract No. 6936). The property is unkempt with overgrown vegetation, and damaged fencing. The flat, rectangular shaped site is accessed off of Washington Place, Sawtelle Boulevard, and the alley north of and adjacent to the site.

General Plan/Zoning

The City’s General Plan Land Use Element designates this site as Neighborhood Serving Corridor with a zoning designation of Commercial General (CG). Surrounding zoning and existing land uses are:

West - CN/RMD - Sawtelle Blvd, 1 story commercial, & 1 & 2 story multi-family
East - RMD - 1 & 2 story multi-family & I-405 Freeway
South - CN/RMD - Washington Blvd, 1 story commercial, 1 & 2 story single/multifamily
North - RMD/R1 - alley, 1 & 2 story single/multifamily.

Site History

The project site was previously developed with a gas station and has been abandoned for over 20 years. There have been four projects proposed at this site since late 1984 in addition to the current development application.

- On April 11, 1984, the Planning Commission approved a Site Plan Review for a three story, 15,000 square foot office building. The project entitlements expired.
- In 1985 a Site Plan Review application for a 32-unit motel was submitted and then withdrawn in January of 1986.
- On February 9, 2005, the Planning Commission approved a mixed use project application consisting of a 5,340 square foot ground floor retail space and 8 residential units above. The project entitlements expired.
- On August 14, 2013 the Planning Division approved an Administrative Site Plan Review for a small shopping center consisting of a 6,294 square foot, 30-foot high, single story commercial retail building (with one restaurant), some surface parking, and one level of subterranean parking. The project was designed to contain 4 tenant spaces with only one space allowed to be a small restaurant. It included a 250 square foot roof top deck for outdoor dining. Similar to the 2005 mixed use project and the current project, surface and subterranean parking was to be accessed off of the alley directly north of the site along the alley. The project entitlements expired.

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:

Detailed Project Description

The project plans submitted with the application on April 20, 2016 proposed a 5-story, 48,987 square foot, mixed use project consisting of 4,898 square feet of ground floor retail and 14 dwellings units in 4 levels above (5 levels total), including two units to be covenanted for Low Income as part of State Law. The proposed height at the time of application submittal was 53'-10" from grade to the roof deck and 56 feet to the top of the elevator shaft. The setbacks were zero at the ground level at all frontages except at the alley which had a setback of 7 feet. A 5 foot step back was provided on the floors above the ground floor. The project did not include the mixed use required tiered 60 degree clear zone at the rear and east frontages facing residential zones. State Density law also requires cities to grant up to two concessions or relief from the development standards if at least 20% of the base density units are reserved for low income households. The Applicant's initial submittal included a request for height (56" as opposed to the code required 45 foot height limit for a mixed use building at this location) and setback (elimination of the tiered 60 degree clear zone requirement) concessions as noted above.

As part of its preliminary review, staff identified a number of compatibility issues and asked the

applicant to consider revising the project to lower the height and provide the tiered 60 degree clear zone at the rear of the project as required in the Zoning Code. On July 14, 2016, the Applicant submitted revised plans that shows the same ground floor commercial area, same number of units (14) and density, and same parking layout as the original submittal but with revised setbacks, and height.

The Preliminary Development Plans (Attachment No. 5) propose 45 foot high building from grade to the top of parapet walls with 4 levels (1 ground floor commercial and 3 residential above). A zero setback is provided at the ground level at the Washington and Sawtelle Boulevard frontages and at the interior side yard. The rear setback at the ground level facing the alley is 7 feet. A 5 foot step back is provided above the ground level on all sides of the building. The tiered 60 degree clear zone is provided at the rear facing the alley.

Further details for the dwelling units include private balcony/deck spaces for most units, open space areas at all residential levels that also serve as pedestrian access to units and a ground level residential only gym which also satisfies the open space requirements for units that have little or no private balcony/deck spaces, and 4 proposed ground floor commercial tenant spaces. As noted above, parking for the project will include 14 commercial at grade parking spaces and 31 residential parking spaces in the subterranean level. Each unit will be allocated 2 parking spaces with 26 of the spaces designed in tandem for 13 units; a 14th unit will have 2 parking spaces that are not in tandem. Three guest spaces will also be located in the subterranean parking level. Access for the surface parking will be off of the alley north of the site intersecting Sawtelle Boulevard and access to the subterranean parking will be from a ramp at the east end of the project site and also accessed off of the same alley. There will be no vehicular access off of Sawtelle Boulevard and Washington Place.

A ground level residential lobby with an elevator and the residential gym will face Washington Place at the east end of the project and will provide access for residents to both the units and the subterranean parking. A separate staircase only access for residents to both the units and the subterranean parking will also be provided off of Sawtelle Boulevard. Direct access to the commercial spaces will be provided at the street frontage and through individual tenant doors leading to the surface parking behind. The residential units will be a mix of two- and three-bedroom units and will be located on three levels with access to an outdoor roof deck. An open courtyard at the second level facing Washington Place leading to open corridors at the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th residential levels will be exposed to the air through openings in the roof providing air and light circulation for all units.

Density and Other Bonus Incentives (DOBI) and Concessions

Under State Density Bonus law the City is required to grant up to a 35% density bonus increase. Further, specified developer concessions for affordable units must be granted by the City, unless it can be demonstrated that the proposed concessions are not required to make the project financially feasible. The City is not permitted to apply any development standard which physically precludes the construction of the project at its permitted density with the granted concessions.

Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) Chapter 17.580 - Density and Other Bonus Incentives - requires

the City to follow State Density law for DOBI applications. Under a DOBI application (and State Density law) a developer can increase the base density for a housing development provided the development reserves, for 55 years, a certain percentage of the units for moderate to low income households. In addition and per State Law, a developer can ask for concessions, or relief from development standards such as height, setbacks, setback encroachments, and parking if such standards prevent the ability to provide the affordable units within the development. The City cannot deny a concessions request as part of the DOBI if it is clear that such concessions are needed to provide for the project's affordable housing costs. The number of concessions and the density increase that can be granted are based on a sliding scale of the percentage of units devoted to affordability and the percentage density increase. All calculations in a DOBI application are rounded up to the next whole number. It is important to note that the density increase and the concessions are provided per State law as an incentive for developers to provide affordable housing. With the dissolution of redevelopment agencies, several mechanisms that cities once had including direct funding for construction of affordable housing have been eliminated. Density Bonus Law is one method by which market housing developers can provide affordable housing within an otherwise market rate development, even if such housing is only a small percentage of the proposed project.

For purposes of the density bonus calculation, the project's base density is 10 dwelling units or 35 dwelling units per acre. Based on State Density Law, an applicant must be granted a 35% density increase if they reserve at least 20% of the total base density units for low income households. The income categories for affordable housing include extremely low income, very low income, low income, and moderate income. Housing sold or rented at the market rate is considered above moderate. Every year the State of California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) establishes for every California County, the income level criteria for extremely low income, very low income, low income, and moderate income levels.

The Applicant is requesting a density increase of 35% or $35\% \times 10 \text{ units} = 3.5 = 4 \text{ units}$. State Density Bonus Law requires that fractional remainders in density calculations be rounded up resulting in a density increase of 4 units. At least 20% of the 10 units must be made affordable to low income households or individuals. This equates to $20\% \times 10 = 2 \text{ units}$. The project will result in 14 units with 2 of the 14 units covenanted for 55 years for low income individuals or households. The applicant has proposed the project as rental units. In the event that a condominium conversion is requested in the future, the low income affordability covenant must be maintained whether the units are rental or for sale and a condition has been added to ensure conformance to this requirement if the project is approved.

State Density law also requires cities to grant up to two concessions or relief from the development standards if at least 20% of the base density units are reserved for low income households. The Applicant is proposing to provide 2 low income residential units or 20% of the total base residential units, which compels the City to grant two development concessions pursuant to SB 1818. The concessions are:

Setbacks: East Facing Side setback - Allow balconies and enclosed living areas to encroach in the required 10 foot side setback and 60 degree angle clear zone above the ground floor commercial level as required by the Mixed Use Development Standards. The project at this east facing setback will still provide a 5 foot setback beginning at the second level (residential) above the ground floor commercial level which will have a zero setback.

Projections: Allowed projections into setbacks - Allow balcony and landing encroachments into the 5 foot street fronting setback above the ground floor commercial level for 2nd level residential balconies fronting Sawtelle Boulevard and Washington Place, 3rd and 4th level residential balconies for units 10 and 14 fronting Sawtelle Boulevard, and portions of the residential staircase landings facing Sawtelle Boulevard as required by the Mixed Use Development Standards.

Attachment No. 7, Concessions Diagram, shows the 60 degree clear zone encroachment for the setback concession. This diagram indicates significant portions of the building would be eliminated without the concession and the overall site would have a “wedding cake” look with both the rear alley facing and east facing frontages pulled into the building with the a tiered look.

Architectural and Site Design

The project has been designed to conform to all applicable provisions of the Mixed Use Development Standards, Commercial General (CG) Zone, and all other applicable City development standards (except for the east facing setback and balcony/landing encroachment concessions discussed above). Modern in design, the mixed use building is comprised of straight lines with staggered vertical and horizontal surfaces creating an articulated effect. Exterior balconies and landings leading to unit entrances are partially covered by balconies and landings above each level.

The majority of the building uses smooth stucco finishes with different colors such as white, dark gray, and dark brown to delineate different surfaces. Metal cable railing for balconies, staircases, and landing; wood paneling at various sections; wood trellises extending from the roof; and aluminum window and door trim will provide further accenting and articulation. Residential and commercial units will have substantial glazing allowing natural sunlight. The ground floor commercial frontage will have full height glazing along the length of Washington Place and for a significant length of the Sawtelle Boulevard frontage. Wood paneling will define some street facing residential balconies along Sawtelle Boulevard.

The building makes use of full height along the street fronting property lines with a 5 foot setback providing an articulated street plane. Along the rear alley facing residential uses to the north, there are step backs on the upper floors consistent with Mixed Use standards requiring a 60 degree clear zone above 15 feet of height at a 10 foot setback (half the width of the alley is credited towards the 10 foot setback). The proposed setbacks, step backs, and height meet zoning code requirements, except the east facing setback and use of the 5 foot setback above the ground floor commercial level as noted above in the DOBI discussion. These portions of the building are consistent with State Law mandated concessions as noted above.

Landscaping

The building footprint maximizes use of the site and limits opportunities for on-site landscaping. The interior courtyards will be conditioned to require potted planting and new street trees, tree wells, and tree grates will be required along the project's Sawtelle Boulevard and Washington Place frontages. Further, a condition of the project will require the applicant to work with Public Works and the Planning Division to provide to the extent feasible, planter boxes either on the public sidewalk directly adjacent to the building at ground level or on private outdoor sidewalks at portions where the building

is setback at the ground level. The planter boxes will contain plant species that require only limited volume for root systems.

Mixed Use Requirements

Consistent with mixed use development standards, the project proposes 4,898 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor that meets the minimum commercial depth and floor area standards. This ground floor commercial area is tentatively planned for 4 tenant spaces ranging from 1,029 square feet to 1,478 square feet. Two spaces will front Washington Place, a corner space will front both Washington Place and Sawtelle Boulevard, and a fourth space will front Sawtelle Boulevard. Pedestrian access will be from street fronting doors and from the commercial parking behind these tenant spaces.

A residential only staircase well going from the subterranean parking to the ground level and to all residential levels will separate and break up the building along Sawtelle Boulevard frontage. Another residential only lobby with staircase, elevator and resident only gym will front Washington Boulevard and the elevator and staircase will lead to all levels including the subterranean parking. Vehicular access for both the commercial at grade parking and residential subterranean parking will be off of the alley adjacent to and north of the site. This will maintain an uninterrupted pedestrian street frontage along Sawtelle Boulevard and Washington Place.

As required by the Mixed Use Development Standards, access to the residential parking is secured by a gate at the entrance to the ramp leading down to the subterranean level. Access codes will be required for the stairs, elevator, and entrance to the residential only lobby and gym. Separate residential storage, bicycle parking, and trash will be located in the subterranean parking while commercial trash and bicycle parking will be located at ground level behind commercial tenant spaces.

Neighborhood Compatibility

The proposed development is located at a commercial intersection with single story and some 2-story commercial buildings. Although occupied and active, these buildings are older and in various states of upkeep. Beyond the intersection to the north, south, and west, the neighborhood contains older 1 and 2 story multi-family housing with more 2- story apartments located to the west and north. East of and adjacent to the site are older 2 story apartments while across the street there are older 1 and 2 story commercial buildings. Any new construction at the project site will contrast with the surrounding older buildings; however the uses will be compatible with the area. The 4,898 square foot ground floor retail with small commercial tenant spaces will be similar in intensity to the corner commercial uses and the commercial uses on the south side of Washington Place east of Sawtelle Boulevard. These surrounding commercial uses are represented by single story, small to medium size commercial uses like the project's commercial level. The 14 dwelling units located in 3 stories are also similar in use to the 2 story multi-unit apartments to the north and west of the site.

At 45 feet in height the project is consistent with the maximum height limit under the Mixed Use Development Standards for projects located in the in the CG Zone on lots less than 150 feet deep. Although taller than surrounding two-story buildings, future commercial and mixed use projects, could be built at the same (or similar) height (43 feet for commercial and 45 feet for mixed use). Further,

the tiered 60 degree zone at the rear, is consistent with code requirements and helps reduce the building massing. The project is stepped back 5 feet at the east frontage facing a 1 and 2 story apartment building which also helps articulate the building form. This side will also include differences in surface color, texture, and not as much glazing as the other elevations, increasing privacy with the neighboring apartment building. The commercial zero setback and 5 foot setback above the commercial level is oriented towards the commercial intersection of Sawtelle Boulevard and Washington Place. Articulation, use of varying materials, and a simple color palette will help integrate the project with the surrounding area. The commercial street frontage with full height glazing will help provide a pedestrian scale for the project's long commercial frontages and relate to surrounding commercial buildings.

Parking & Administrative Use Permit

As stated above the project provides the following parking allocation:

- 14 commercial spaces at the ground level;
- 26 residential tandem spaces for 13 units in the subterranean level;
- 2 residential non tandem spaces for 1 unit in the subterranean level;
- 3 residential guest spaces
- 45 total spaces

The 14 commercial parking spaces is calculated at one space per 350 square feet of commercial space. At 2 and 3 bedrooms, the dwelling units require 2 parking spaces each. The applicant is requesting an Administrative Use Permit for tandem parking because 26 residential spaces will be provided in tandem (13 pairs of tandem spaces for 13 units). Each tandem pair will be assigned to one unit. Bicycle parking is consistent with Culver City bicycle parking requirements for both short term and long term commercial and residential users.

Traffic and Circulation

Although not meeting minimum thresholds for requiring a traffic study, Staff requested the Applicant to prepare a Study to address neighborhood concerns regarding perceived traffic impacts. The Culver City's Traffic Engineering consultant reviewed and accepted a traffic impact analysis, dated December 8, 2016 prepared by Crain & Associates (Attachment No. 4). The traffic analysis evaluated the existing and forecast (year 2020) conditions at 2 intersections and 6 street segments in the vicinity of the project site during both the AM and PM peak hours. In addition a Synchro Queueing Analysis (SQA) was conducted to address concerns of potential traffic impacts at one intersection. These intersections, segments, and SQA were selected for analysis based on discussion with Culver City's Traffic Engineer and the City approved Memorandum of Understanding.

The 2 intersections selected for analysis were:

- Sawtelle Boulevard and Washington Place,
- Globe Avenue and Washington Place.

The 6 segments selected for analysis were:

- Sawtelle Blvd north of the alley

- Sawtelle Blvd south of the alley
- Globe Ave north of the alley
- Globe Ave south of the alley
- Alley east of Sawtelle Blvd
- Alley west of Globe Ave

The SQA intersection selected for analysis was:

- Southbound Globe Ave at Washington Place

The study determined that the project is expected to generate approximately:

- 315 daily trips
- 12 AM peak trips
- 23 PM peak trips

As noted above the AM and PM peaks are below the 50 trip threshold established by Culver City for requiring a traffic analysis. The study determined that project will not have significant traffic impacts at any of the intersections or segments studied during the AM and PM peak periods. The increase in traffic counts is below the City adopted thresholds of significance and no mitigation measures are required with regard to level of service and vehicle to capacity ratios at the study intersections and street segments. In addition no impacts to the Regional Transportation System, freeway system, or to bus/rail systems were identified - mainly due to the low number of project peak hour trips.

The SQA at Southbound Globe Avenue at Washington Place determined that the project traffic will not cause significant delays for southbound traffic at this location. Queuing lengths would increase at southbound Globe Avenue by less than 1 foot in both AM and PM peak hours which is not a significant impact. The SQA also studied the potential need for a traffic signal and a traffic signal is not warranted.

A project condition will require a NO RIGHT TURN SIGN for motorists exiting the project's driveway alley (in order to address community concerns about traffic at Globe Avenue). Other project conditions related to the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan will include installation of:

- Sharrows and related signage on Sawtelle Boulevard between Venice Boulevard and Washington Place
- Continental style crosswalks at all legs of the intersection of Sawtelle Boulevard and Washington Place.

Offsite/Streetscape Improvements

The project will be subject to standard public right-of-way improvements reflected in the project conditions of approval including new street trees, curb, gutters, and sidewalk. In addition the Applicant will be required to repave the full length of the alley from Sawtelle Boulevard to Globe Avenue and stripe new street parking spaces along Sawtelle Boulevard and Washington Place.

The Public Works Department in its review of the project did not require dedications for future public right-of-way street widening. According to the General Plan Circulation Element, Sawtelle Boulevard

is designated a Secondary Artery. The Circulation Element states that it is desirable for secondary artery right-of-way widths to be in the range of 80 feet to 94 feet; Sawtelle Boulevard is 80 feet wide between Venice Boulevard and Culver Boulevard (south of Culver Boulevard it varies between 80 and 90 feet). City base maps indicate no dedications have been required and property lines on either side of Sawtelle Boulevard follow a straight line with no indentations (which can be observed for Duquesne Avenue where dedications have been required over the years). Similarly, Washington Place, a designated Primary Artery that is 100 feet in width between Washington Boulevard and Centinela Avenue, is consistent with the desirable Primary Artery width of 95 feet or more. The Public Works Department has not identified either street in the general vicinity of the project site for future street widening and no widening is required for this project.

Phase I Environmental

The previous projects (described above) proposed at this location had been found to be Categorically Exempt pursuant to CEQA. A previous Los Angeles County Hazardous Material Underground Storage Closure Certification for underground tank removal was issued on April 24, 2000. A September 25, 2012 Preliminary Soils Engineering Investigation Report (T.K. Engineering) indicated that several storage tanks associated with the previous gasoline station had been removed. Nevertheless, the City required a Phase I Environmental Study after listening to the community's concerns over potential hazardous materials at the abandoned gasoline station site.

AEI Consultants conducted a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (the "ESA") dated October 10, 2016. Based on past records there was indications that total Petroleum Hydrocarbon as gasoline and diesel, Benzene, Toluene, Ethyl-Benzene, and Xylenes were not detected from soil samples, underground storage tanks in addition to the one reported in the April 24, 2000 County letter were most likely removed, and a clarifier was located inside the serviced bay; clarifiers are located directly below the surface. The ESA did not identify evidence of a past release of hazardous substances or petroleum products. There is a potential for lead and asbestos within the dilapidated structure; however the project will be subject to standard Federal, State, and local laws governing lead and asbestos removal. According to the National Pipeline Mapping System there is an active pipeline underneath Sawtelle Boulevard and AEI did not report any known environmental concerns with regard to the existing pipeline. As a condition of the project the Applicant will be required to communicate and coordinate with the owner of the pipeline during excavation to ensure the line is not damaged or ruptured. It is important to note the pipeline is not on private property.

Based on the ESA, AEI states that the all storage tanks may have been removed but recommends a Soils Management Plan due to potential encounter of tanks and the clarifier during construction. This plan will be made a project condition and will require that standard State and/or Federal stipulations be followed should any tanks or the clarifier be found during excavation. This includes among other steps, removal of soils around the tanks, vacuuming of the inside of the tanks and clarifier, and protection of soils around the tanks and clarifier during excavation and extraction. The study did not identify the presence of any significant hazardous materials that would preclude the construction of the project and recommends compliance with a Soils Management Plan during excavation and standard lead and asbestos removal requirements during demolition.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)

This project will address a portion of Culver City's share of the RHNA by constructing 12 market rate

units and 2 low income 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).

MOBILITY/SUSTAINABILITY

As a medium density mixed use project located at a commercial intersection of two major streets, the development will provide commercial services for area and project residents thereby potentially reducing vehicle trips. The project is located near bus transit stops that connect to the Expo Light Rail. The Project is situated near a proposed bicycle lane along Washington Place and will be required to install a Sharrow between Washington Place and Venice Boulevard. This will connect with the Venice Boulevard bicycle lane which has easy access to the nearby Expo Light Rail further east, and Venice further west. As noted above in the Traffic section, installation of the Sharrow and the Continental style crosswalks at the intersection of Sawtelle Boulevard and Washington Place is compliant with the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

The project is about 787 feet (0.15 miles) from the Washington Place/Sepulveda Boulevard intersection which has a Culver City Bus Line No. 6 stop. An additional 665 ft (0.13 miles) further south, or approximately 1,500 feet (0.29 miles), at the intersection of Washington and Sepulveda Boulevards, there is a Culver City Rapid No. 6 stop. Both these lines go from UCLA to the Metro Green Line Station at Aviation Boulevard and Imperial Highway (near LAX); connect to Venice Boulevard which has Metro lines 33 and 733 connecting Santa Monica with the Metro Expo Line Culver City station and Downtown Los Angeles; and connect to other local Culver City bus lines. The project is well adapted to multi-modal forms of transportation through its interconnectivity with bicycle and bus routes along well paved sidewalks.

Further, in order to accommodate alternative transportation technologies, the project is required to incorporate electric vehicle (EV) charging available at residential parking stalls, as well as bicycle parking as noted above. Due to the scale of the project solar photovoltaic improvements and overall compliance with the Culver City Green Building Program as set forth in CCMC Section 15.02.1100, et. seq. will be required.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Community Meeting

As part of public outreach for discretionary projects the City may require up to three community meetings prior to the formal Public Hearing. At these community meetings, the applicant invites interested persons to learn about the development project, provide comments and feedback, as well as to share any concerns regarding the proposed project. The applicant conducted 3 community outreach meetings on April 7, 2016, at Veterans Memorial Complex, June 21, 2016 at the Senior Center, and September 15, 2016 at Veterans Memorial Complex. Meeting summaries prepared by the applicant is included as Attachment No. 6.

Prior to application submittal, on April 7, 2016, the developer presented the project before a group of approximately 9 people. The project was 56 feet in height, 5 stories, and had about a 5 foot setback after the first 15 feet of height in all directions. There was no 60 degree clear zone step back at the rear. The applicant stated that under State Law the City must grant concessions if the project includes affordable housing and the plans showed both height and setback concessions. The community was concerned about housing density, massing, height, and design out of character for the area, parking impacts, and traffic.

After application submittal, staff asked the applicant to consider design changes that would lessen height and massing. The applicant at that time did not make significant changes to the plans the community saw on April 7, 2016. A second community meeting after application submittal was held on June 21, 2016 and several more people attended - approximately 30 people. There concerns were similar to the ones expressed at the first community meeting - housing density, massing, height, design out of character for the area, parking impacts, and traffic. An additional concern by the community included the potential for hazardous materials on site due to its previous gasoline station use. They asked to see a Phase I Environmental Assessment and a Traffic Study. Staff at time of application review determined the project was consistent with a CEQA Class 32 Categorical Exemption and no studies were required. Previous development projects at this site were also categorically exempt and the current project did not meet trip generation thresholds for requiring a traffic study.

In response to community concerns, staff stated at the meeting that it would not support the project as designed mainly because its height and lack of setbacks made it incompatible with the character of the surrounding area which is a Site Plan Review finding. Staff committed to work with the applicant in designing a more compatible project. Also, in response to community concerns staff stated a traffic study and Phase I Environmental Study would be required.

Prior to the third and final meeting staff and the applicant met regarding design changes. Staff acknowledged that if 60 degree tiered step back standards are required at the rear and east elevations, the dwelling unit living spaces would be severely limited and the project would have a wedding cake look. However staff reiterated the lack of compatibility the project posed and suggested a height reduction to the code maximum or 45 feet for mixed use developments and 60 degree tiered setback at the rear elevation. This could be achieved by eliminating one level and reducing unit sizes which were originally larger with some units planned at 2 stories. Additionally the Phase I Environmental Study and Traffic Study would determine if mitigations would be required. The applicant agreed to all changes and resubmitted plans for staff review on July 14, 2016. Attachment No. 8 shows diagrams and perspective depicting how the project changed.

At the third meeting on September 15, 2016, approximately 20 people attended and the applicant summarized the project changes - mainly that unit sizes and height had been reduced to the code maximum allowed of 45 feet and that the rear had a code compliant rear tiered setback. The project meets parking requirements and the concessions requested are the east facing setback of only 5 feet to the top of the building and balcony/landing encroachments as noted above. Further the applicant informed the community that both a traffic study and environmental study were being drafted (the studies were not ready at the time of the community meeting). The attendants still expressed the same concerns and did not feel the changes made the building more compatible. They felt the studies would reveal impacts; as described above the studies did not identify significant impacts or mitigations.

Comments Received During Public Comment Period

As of the writing of this report, staff has received one written public comment in support of the project (Attachment No, 9). Should staff receive other comments for or against the project after the staff report is finalized, they will be delivered to the Planning Commission under separate cover.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY:

The City has worked closely with the Applicant to reduce the massing of the project since the first community meeting and initial application submittal. Even though not warranted the applicant was required to provide traffic and Phase I Environmental studies and both studies did not identify required mitigations. The project is consistent with development standards except for the two concessions noted above which do not create significant impacts to adjacent residential properties. In reducing the height to 45 feet and providing a rear tiered setback, the project has resulted in a more compatible design with surrounding one and two story commercial and residential uses while providing 2 affordable units and potentially eliminating a blighted intersection with a functioning land use.

The proposed project will help to alleviate the long-term nuisance caused by the abandoned project site and introduce new ground level retail uses and new housing stock including affordable units. In addition the project will provide various public right of way improvements to the benefit of the area. The DOBI concessions granted under State Density Bonus law are partly mitigated by the project design which includes extensive building articulation above the ground level, pedestrian orientation with extensive store front glazing, private opens spaces and decks. Furthermore, the project will include residential amenities such as a gym and reconstruction of the rear alley and sidewalks. The project will contribute to the improvement to the area and add to the on-going revitalization of the City commercial corridors. Based on the analysis and conclusion contained herein staff recommends approval of the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines, initial review of the project by the City established that there are no potentially significant adverse impacts on the environment and the project has been determined to be Categorical Exempt per CEQA Section 15332, Class 32

- In-Fill Development.

The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan Neighborhood Serving Corridor designation and Commercial General (CG) zone; the proposed project is within the Culver City city limits on a 0.28 acre site surrounded by urban uses; currently, as a vacant lot with a dilapidated building and broken up paving, it has no value as a habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species; per a Traffic Impact Analysis the project will not have significant traffic impacts; as a mixed use project on a commercial street surrounded by commercial and multi-family housing and near a major freeway, noise generated by the project will be within established noise thresholds for commercial and residential uses; as a low density mixed use project consistent with surrounding low density commercial and multi-housing uses, impacts to air quality will not be significant; implementation of applicable public works storm water run-off standards will result in less than significant impacts to water quality; and the project can be adequately served by utilities and public services.

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 application is 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 application does not meet the required findings.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution No. 2017-P004 and Exhibit A Conditions of Approval
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Traffic Impact Analysis prepared by Crain and Associates, December 8, 2016
5. Preliminary Development Plans dated February, 2017
6. Applicant Summary of Community Meetings
7. Concessions Diagrams
8. Diagram of before and after changes to project
9. Written Public Comments