



# City of Culver City

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

## Staff Report

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**File #:** 16-902, **Version:** 1

**Item #:** PH-1.

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**PC - Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0228-ASPR, and Tentative Parcel Map No. 73877, P2016-0228-TPM, for the Construction of a Three (3) Unit Condominium Subdivision at 12464 Washington Place in the Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone.**

**Meeting Date:** April 26, 2017

**Contact Person/Dept:** Gabriela Silva, Associate Planner;  
Michael Allen, Contract 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 (04/04/17); (Email) Master Notification List (04/5/17); (Posted) City website (04/05/17); (Sign) Posted on the site (04/05/17).

**Department Approval:** Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (04/17/17)

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### **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, P2016-0228-ASPR and Tentative Parcel Map No. 73877, P2016-0228-TPM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2017-P008 (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 December 27, 2016, an application was submitted for an Administrative Site Plan Review (ASPR) 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 three (3) airspace condominium subdivision, and the construction of three (3) attached residential condominium dwelling units (i.e. one (1) dwelling unit on each of the proposed airspace lots) within the project site located at 12464 Washington Place in the Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone. This item is coming before the Planning Commission as an Administrative Site Plan Review per Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) Section 17.540.015.C.3, which requires referral of a Site Plan Review application to the Planning Commission (otherwise 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 CCMC are being considered in the Planning Commission hearing.

### **Existing Conditions**

The site is located on the south side of Washington Place, east of Wasatch Avenue and west of Colonial Avenue, and bound on the south by an existing twenty (20) foot wide alley, as identified in the Vicinity Map (Attachment No. 2). The Land Use Element of the City's General Plan designates this site and abutting properties as Medium Density Multiple Family Residential, which is consistent with the site's zoning designation of RMD. Properties to the east and west are also zoned RMD, while properties to the south, across the existing public alley are zoned R1, and properties to the north, across Washington Place, are located in City of Los Angeles and zoned R3. The parcel is rectangular in shape, generally flat in topography, and measures 6,470 square feet. The neighborhood surrounding the site to the north, south, east, and west consists of largely rectangular parcels, similar in size, with most parcels being ten (10) to twenty (20) feet shorter, and up to thirty (30) feet shorter for the parcels across Washington Place; development is primarily single- and multi-story multi-family housing along Washington Place, with mostly single family dwellings in the neighborhood to the south beyond the public alley.

The subject site is currently developed with a single-story single family dwelling and detached garage totaling 1,460 square feet that is currently accessible from the public alley. There is a landscaped front yard, including a large tree, and various hardscape areas throughout the site. All existing structures, as well as various on-site and off-site improvements will be removed and/or reconstructed as part of the project.

### **Project Description**

As outlined in the Preliminary Development Plans (Attachment No.4), the project applicant proposes to construct three (3) condominium dwelling units. The proposed condominium dwelling units have been designed as attached two-story structures. The proposed project has a maximum overall building height of 28 feet - 4 inches to the top of the building roof and 29 feet - 2 inches to the top of the tallest parapet. Each unit is proposed to have its own private 2-car garage, incorporated into the ground floor level of the corresponding dwelling unit. Pursuant to the CCMC Section 17.320.020, no guest parking spaces are required, thus, a total of six (6) 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 the front dwelling unit entry will be oriented towards Washington Place, followed by the two (2) rear dwelling units accessed from side facing entries

located parallel to the westerly property line and which are designed to be recessed further from the main building wall. Secondary egress is provided for all three (3) units through the attached garage for each unit. The front unit will measure approximately 2,121 square feet, while the rear units will be 2,153 and 2,110 square feet; all units will contain three (3) bedrooms and two and one half (2 ½) bathrooms, as well as a mezzanine area within the second floor of each unit. All improvements are consistent with the provisions of the 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 6,470 square feet, a maximum of four (4) units may be allowed on the site. The RMD Zone requires minimum front-yard setbacks of ten (10) feet or half the building height, side-yard setbacks of five (5) feet, and rear-yard setbacks of ten (10) feet or five (5) feet when adjacent to an alley. 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 structure is 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. 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, stone tile, and metal flashing/trim throughout the façade. The overall design and street view is further enhanced with a decorative pop-out with a wood trellis, as well as a metal balcony railing at the front unit. The building is designed with the main entry of the front unit facing the street, and along with the various architectural elements aids 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, and rear portions being taller, so as to reduce the massing along the street frontage. The building façade also utilizes changes in the building plane, creating the appearance of width variation. The building is designed with architectural treatment 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 white and light grey (stucco, tile), dark brown (wood siding), and dark grey (metal fascia/trim), providing depth and contrast throughout the building.

The proposed off-street parking garages are designed to be accessed from the public alley at the rear of the property, through a proposed ten (10) foot wide driveway located at the easterly edge of the property, with only the rear unit garage being directly accessed and visible from the alley, thereby eliminating the visual impact of the off-street parking facilities.

The overall architectural style of the proposed project contrasts with the existing residences on the block, which were constructed in the late 1940's and early 1950's and are characterized by the architectural style of that time period. Nevertheless, the proposed style is consistent with the style of new residential development, including single family dwellings, throughout the City. Further, it can be expected that the architectural style of this neighborhood will transition over time as existing multi-family zoned properties on Washington Place which are currently developed with single family dwellings are redeveloped. The design and scale of the proposed project has been created with consideration of the 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.

### 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 will have approximately 92% landscape coverage, and will comply with the minimum required 75% of landscape coverage for the front yard for triplex developments per CCMC Section 17.310.020, and will include two large trees. 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, the proposed driveway and provision of required vehicle maneuvering areas, there are limited opportunities for landscaping beyond the front yard. Nevertheless, site landscaping will be maximized by providing plantings at all remaining areas, including landscape strips along the side elevations of the building. Additional significant planting areas will be provided at the easterly setback, which will include small shrubs and three (3) trees, and a segment of the rear setback, which will also contain small shrubs and larger sized plants. Proposed landscaping will be required to complement the building and enhance the aesthetic appearance of the development. New landscaping will also include at least one (1) street tree on Washington Place, 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 balconies, which are accessed from common areas, such as living room, dining room, and kitchen, at the second floor hallway of each of the proposed units. Each balcony measures 101 to 121 square feet, with the rear unit having the largest area, thereby meeting the minimum requirement of one hundred (100) square feet of private open space per unit. The balcony open space areas are bounded by decorative railings, measuring 3 feet - 6 inches in height, and will have a minimum width of seven (7) feet. A largely landscaped 750 square foot front yard provides a significant amount of useable open space for the overall development.

### Neighborhood Compatibility

The proposed development is located along Washington Place, which is a primary artery developed with a variety of one-story and multi-story multiple and single family residences. The north side of the street is located in City of Los Angeles within the R3 Zone, while the smaller surrounding streets (Colonial Avenue and Wasatch Avenue) south of the site are within Culver City in the R1 Zone. The proposed multiple-family development is consistent with the higher density designation (Medium Density Multiple Family Residential) envisioned for the Washington Place corridor by the City's General Plan Land Use Element.

Generally consistent with the average density for the subject block and the two (2) adjacent blocks along the south side of the Washington Place corridor (3.3 dwelling units), and in compliance with the RMD Zone and corresponding General Plan designation, the site allows four (4) dwelling units proposed units, the project proposes three (3) dwelling 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 found along the Washington Place corridor.

The average front setback for the block is fourteen (14) feet, while the minimum Code required setback, based on the RMD zone requirement of ten (10) feet or half the building height, is fourteen (14) feet and two (2) inches. 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, supplemental setbacks are applied to portions of the building façade, creating step-backs and overhangs that minimize the amount of building mass located closest to the front property line, with a setback of up to eighteen (18) feet at the first floor. The second floor will have setbacks ranging between fifteen (15) and twenty-two (22) feet.

Further, while the maximum allowed building height is thirty (30) feet, the proposed roof height is 28'-4", with the parapets extending to a maximum of 29'-2", and with portions of the front façade as low as ten (10) feet and 23'-2" at the street front, so as to be sensitive to single-story development immediately abutting the site, which has an average height of fifteen (15) feet. However, when considering the existing development on Washington Place more broadly, it can be determined that there is a significant number of multi-story developments with building heights in the mid-twenties and comparable to the proposed project.

Lastly, the Zoning Code does not restrict lot coverage; however, the project proposes approximately 65% overall for the site, inclusive of second story cantilever and projections/overhangs. Similar to building height, the average lot coverage for the immediately surrounding properties is approximately 37%, compared with the prevailing lot coverage in the vicinity of the project which is approximately 60%.

The proposed development is consistent with the general multi-family residential development along the Washington Place corridor. The project is sensitive to the neighborhood character, and also to the goal of preserving privacy for abutting properties. Therefore, there are no roof decks proposed. The preservation of privacy is also considered by the project relative to window locations in order to minimize direct views into the abutting properties.

#### Traffic, Parking, and Circulation

The existing 133 foot wide public right-of-way, Washington Place, 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 parkway along the project's frontage are required to be removed and replaced, and will include the installation of at least one (1) street tree as more specifically outlined in the recommended conditions of approval. In addition, due to the access of off-street parking from the rear alley public right-of-way, the applicant will also be required to be paved for the full width 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 CCMC, each of the proposed units will be provided with the minimum required two (2) parking spaces, for a total of six (6) parking spaces, which will be provided in a standard side-by-side configuration within three separate garages. No guest parking is required or provided in the development. A new ten (10) foot wide common driveway along the easterly edge of the property will be provided for vehicular access to the site and the garages of the two (2) front units, while the garage of rearmost unit will be accessed directly from alley. Each garage is designed to provide a minimum height clearance of eight (8) feet, allowing for additional space beyond the required minimum of seven (7) feet of overhead clearance. Each of the two (2) interior located garages is provided with at least the minimum CCMC required maneuvering space. A back-up clearance of 25'-0" is provided for the middle unit garage, 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 the public alley in a forward direction. The front unit garage will be

provided with the minimum required backup which is designed for vehicles to back out of the site onto the alley, as allowed by the CCMC, although sufficient area is provided to allow exiting in a forward direction with multiple maneuvers within the site. The rear unit garage will have direct access from the alley, which when combined with the five (5) foot building setback will provide a back-up clearance of twenty-five (25) feet. Pedestrian access is provided from each garage into the corresponding unit.

Primary pedestrian and disabled access from the public street to the entries of the units is proposed via at-grade walkways, one at the center of the site for the front unit, and a second along the westerly edge of the site to the rear units. The side-facing unit entries are recessed beyond the main building wall and setback, providing a 6'-7" or 8'-11" 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 public alley, and is proposed to be screened from the neighboring property by a six (6) foot high wood and masonry wall.

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 two (2) 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 bicycle lanes on Washington Boulevard and Washington Place, and is near Culver City Bus Line No. 1 and No. 2 along Washington Boulevard and additional bus lines on Centinela Avenue and Wade Street.

In order to address sustainability and accommodate alternative transportation, the project is proposed to incorporate electric vehicle (EV) charging at least one (1) parking stall within each of the parking garages, as well as one (1) bicycle parking space per unit, and will be a condition of the project if approved. The bicycle parking will be in a common area so as to also be available to guests. 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 CCMC 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 5,540 to 7,800 square feet, with some outlier parcels measuring as little as 3,600 square feet and as much as 20,500 square feet. The subject site measures 6,470 square feet, consistent with the average size of most of the parcels along the south side of Washington Place in the segment between Colonial Avenue and Wasatch 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 Culver West Park (4162 Wade Street) on Tuesday, October 11, 2016 during the Preliminary Project Review (PPR) phase. The applicant sent invitations on September 27, 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. Five (5) persons from the public were 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 attendees.

The community members in attendance had general questions and expressed concern regarding specific topics as discussed below; however, the general tone of the meeting was not of opposition to the general project (Attachment No. 6). The primary topics of discussion were regarding parking and vehicular access, height, privacy, and site and neighborhood conditions during construction. In terms of parking, there was the general question of how much was required and proposed to be provided by the project, due to concerns about existing parking constraints along Colonial Avenue. The applicant summarized the proposed parking information for the project and CCMC requirements. Questions pertaining to parking also related vehicular access and whether turns into and out of the alley could be restricted and whether the entire alley would be paved. The applicant explained that there was no indication from the City that restricted turns would be necessary as a result of the project and that they would likely be responsible for paving the project fronting portion of the alley.

There were interrelated questions relating to the height and massing of the building and how that would affect privacy and sunlight to the property abutting the project site to the west. The applicant clarified that required setbacks typically address air and sunlight, and that the building was not maximizing the allowable height; he

also explained that windows are required at specific rooms per the building code and that they were making sure to locate them in consideration of adjacent windows where possible, but whether someone looks down into an abutting yard cannot be reasonably expected to be controlled. The questions related to construction focused on potential impacts to street parking and related to dust, trash, and debris generated during construction activities. The applicant shared the estimated construction timeline and indicated 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, noise, dust control, etc., including the submittal of a construction management plan and traffic control plan that would identify any street staging and traffic related controls. Since there were not any significant project changes identified, and there were no direct statements of opposition to the overall project at the conclusion of the meeting, no further community meetings were scheduled.

#### 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 providing the required parking in a manner that would avoid a podium condition, and reducing building height.

Care has been taken in the design to break up the bulk and mass of the building with varying building heights and the inclusion of architectural projections and material variation to create visual relief, as well as a pedestrian-friendly façade. 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 CCMC. 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, P2016-0228-ASPR, and Tentative Parcel Map No. 73877, P2016-0228-TPM, can be made as outlined in Resolution No. 2017-P008 (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 three (3) attached residential dwelling units and the subdivision of the site into three (3) 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-P008 and Exhibit A: Conditions of Approval
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Preliminary Development Plans dated April 3, 2017
5. Tentative Parcel Map No. 73877
6. Community Meeting Summary